

College Football: Pick-Six Categories — Contenders, Heisman Favorites, Sleepers And Sliders

BY KEVIN LYTTLE

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NATIONAL TITLE SHOTS

Alabama: Some people are being too cute reaching for a new No. 1. The Tide have won three of the last four titles and have the entire package to make it four of five. Vegas says they're the 3-to-1 favorite.

Ohio State: Maybe it takes an ex-SEC two-time national champ to beat an SEC champ. Urban Meyer has a much smoother road to the BCS final through the soft Big Ten. Vegas: 6-to-1.

Oregon: Chip Kelly's gone, but his jacked-up offense isn't. The Nike flagship program has 16 returning starters from a 12-1 team, though the Ducks won't be plus-21 in turnover margin again. Vegas: 8-to-1.

Georgia: The Bulldogs were so close last year. They have eight 10-or-more win seasons under Mark Richt. Talk about knocking on the door. But the opening schedule is a beast. Vegas: 12-to-1.

Stanford: One of the most ferocious defenses returns nine starters. A road-grading offensive line has four starters back, and Kevin Hogan is an emerging force at QB. His receivers are unproven. Vegas: 17-to-1.

Texas A&M: Seems like there's bad karma here. So much depends on the status of Johnny Manziel. The Aggies also need to overhaul a defense that wasn't anything special last year. Vegas: 18-to-1.

STOCK RISING

Texas: The Longhorns could find the perfect storm. They have 19 returning starters from a 9-4 team that won its bowl game, and there is a serious power void atop the Big 12. Somebody's got to fill it.

Miami: The Hurricanes are flying below the radar, but they appear poised to emerge from the NCAA doghouse with a vastly improved team led by QB Stephen Morris and RB Duke Johnson.

Ole Miss: Even though the top-10 recruiting class won't make much impact this year, the Rebels are on the rise with 18 returning starters from a bowl winner that improved dramatically late in the year.

USC: After last year's spectacular flameout, the Trojans are being discounted. But there are too many blue-chippers on campus to go 7-6 again.

Arizona State: The Sun Devils have 15 starters, including QB Taylor Kelly, back from an 8-5 team that won its bowl game 62-28.

Indiana: The Hoosiers welcome back 19 starters from a 4-8 team. Experienced losers? Perhaps, but former Oklahoma OC Kevin Wilson has a



Taylor Martinez of Nebraska runs through the Penn State defense during their meeting last November. The Sept. 14 matchup between Nebraska and UCLA could be one of the non-conference games to watch this season.

NABIL K. MARK/CENTRE DAILY TIMES/MCT

good vibe going with the Hoosiers.

STOCK FALLING

LSU: We're not predicting dire things for the Tigers, but it will be near impossible for a team that lost 11 guys to the NFL to win 10 games against a schedule that includes Georgia, Florida, Ole Miss, Alabama, Texas A&M and TCU. Especially with a mediocre passing attack.

West Virginia: If the Mountaineers could only go 7-6 with last year's spectacular offensive talent, what will they do without all that firepower in 2013? Mississippi State: The Bulldogs have just a dozen starters back from a team that went 1-5 in its last six games. The SEC West is the wrong place to be.

Rutgers: The Scarlet Knights won nine games in 2012 and nearly beat Louisville to make their first BCS bowl. Now they rebuild with just 10 starters back and a challenging schedule.

Syracuse: The Orange went 8-5 and won a bowl last year and figure to slip way back in their ACC debut without coach Doug Marrone (Buffalo Bills), QB Ryan Nassib (N.Y. Giants) and his receivers.

North Carolina State: Losing QB Mike Glennon and half their starters from a 7-6 bowl team and bringing in a new coaching staff spells overhaul for the Wolfpack.

HEISMAN CONTENDERS

Braxton Miller (Ohio State QB): Meet your new Heisman favorite. Miller led the Buckeyes to 12-0 by passing for 2,039 yards and 15 TDs and running for 1,271 and 13 TDs. He's sort of like Manziel without the baggage.

Teddy Bridgewater (Louisville QB): The Cardinals precocious junior already is showing up No. 1 overall in some 2014 NFL mock drafts after completing nearly 70 percent of his darts in 2012.

Jadeveon Clowney (South Carolina DE): Charles Woodson (Michigan '97) is the only primary defender to win the statue, but Clowney has the necessary hype (and skill) to at least get in the conversation.

Johnny Manziel (Texas A&M QB): Odds are falling like a rock on Johnny Football, who's gone from 4-to-1 to 12-to-1. Only Archie Griffin (1974-75) has won it twice.

Aaron Murray (Georgia QB): The SEC has become a quarterback-strong league, and Murray might be the best pure passer in the bunch.

T.J. Yeldon (Alabama RB): Or it could be A.J. McCarron, Alabama QB. But if Yeldon (1,108 yards, 6.3 average, 12 TDs) is the work horse, he'll be formidable.

IMPACT DEFENDERS . . .

(not named Clowney)

Anthony Barr (UCLA OLB): The converted running back set the world on fire in his first year as a defensive starter. He had 13.5 sacks, 83 tackles, 10 for losses, and five pass breakups. The senior is projected as a top-10 NFL draft pick.

Kyle Van Noy (BYU OLB): The only player in the country who posted a stat in every defensive column, plus a blocked kick and a fumble-return TD, according to Phil Steele. Had 13 sacks and eight other QB hits.

Anthony Johnson (LSU DT): An inside run-stuffer who also provides a push up the middle and looks like the next great LSU d-lineman.

C.J. Mosley (Alabama ILB): This year's leader of the fierce Tide defense does a bit of everything. Had 107 tackles, four sacks and two interceptions in 2012.

Bradley Roby (Ohio State CB): Topped the Big Ten with 19 passes defended, and NFL scouts say he'll go in the top 15 next May.

Louis Nix (Notre Dame NG): Nobody budged this 6-3, 357-pounder. OK, Alabama did. But nobody else.

EARLY ATTRACTIONS

(non-conference games)

Georgia at Clemson (Aug. 31): The week 1 highlight. The Bulldogs are No. 5 in the coaches poll, the Tigers No. 8. These should be two of the more explosive offenses in the country, and it's also an

early Heisman QB showdown between Murray (3,893 yards, 36 TDs) and Tajh Boyd (3,896 yards, 36 TDs).

TCU vs. LSU (Aug. 31, Arlington): One of two Big 12 vs. SEC showdowns on opening day, and this outshines Oklahoma State-Mississippi State. Which QB steps up: the Frogs' Casey Pachall or the Tigers' Zach Mettenberger. Will The Mad Hatter outfox Gary Patterson? Notre Dame at Michigan (Sept. 7): Always a classic, the ND-UM stakes were raised when Brady Hoke chided the Irish for "chickening out" of the series by announcing it will end in 2014.

Florida at Miami (Sept. 7): The Sunshine State rivals haven't hooked up in five years. The Hurricanes, after some tough times, should finally have a team that can wrestle with the Gators.

UCLA at Nebraska (Sept. 14): Fascinating QB showdown between the Bruins' Brett Hundley and the Huskers' Taylor Martinez (doesn't this seem like his eighth year at NU?).

Oklahoma at Notre Dame (Sept. 28): Intersectional heavyweight matchups are few and far between, so treasure round two of this one. The Irish probably won't contend for a national title again, but Brian Kelly has awakened the echoes in South Bend.

MARQUEE CONFERENCE GAMES

South Carolina at Georgia (Sept. 7): After starting with Clemson, the Dawgs draw the

Gamecocks. Jadeveon Clowney chases Aaron Murray. That ought to be entertaining.

Alabama at Texas A&M (Sept. 14): If the Crimson Tide avenges its home-field defeat to the Aggies last fall, it should be clear sailing until Nov. 9 against LSU, a game that's in Tuscaloosa.

Florida State at Clemson (Oct. 19): If the ACC produces a national contender, it should come out of this game. The Seminoles look sneaky good; the Tigers might have their best shot since 1981.

Georgia vs. Florida (Nov. 7): The old cocktail party retains its elite status with the Dawgs' irresistible offensive force vs. the Gators' immovable defensive object.

Oregon at Stanford (Nov. 7): Somebody's gotta face the SEC champ in the BCS title game. Perhaps it will be the survivor of this Pacific Northwest showdown. Great contrast in styles between the Ducks' finesse and the Cardinal's power.

Ohio State at Michigan (Nov. 30): The Buckeyes have a good chance to take an 11-0 record into the Big House for the annual Big Ten grudge match.

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Iowa State High On QB Sam Richardson

BY LUKE MEREDITH
AP Sports Writer

AMES, Iowa (AP) — Nearly all the so-called surprise teams in the Big 12 in recent years were led by big-time quarterbacks who put their programs over the top.

Can Iowa State sophomore Sam Richardson be the next unknown to emerge as a star?

The Cyclones believe so — even though he's only thrown 79 career passes.

Iowa State thinks they've finally found a dual-threat playmaker in Richardson, a sophomore who will get his third career start on Saturday against Northern Iowa.

Of course, no one is ready to declare Richardson a program-changing talent along the lines of Robert Griffin III or Kansas State's Collin Klein just yet. But the Cyclones can't stop raving about their promising quarterback.

"The best quality that Sam is that he's always composed, he knows what's going on and he's aware," Iowa State senior running back Jeff Woody said. "He's got a good arm, and (the) dude can run. But the best thing Sam has got is between his ears, and that's something that instills confidence in the team because we know exactly what's going on."

Richardson's resume is limited to a three-game stretch that was both brilliant and inconclusive.

But that brief look at the

end of 2012 was enough to convince coach Paul Rhoads and his staff that Richardson could be something special.

Richardson was buried on the depth chart nearly all season as the third-stringer. He only got a shot in mid-November because the coaching staff had become completely exasperated with co-starters Jared Barnett and Steele Jantz.

Richardson was put in during the third series against Kansas with bowl eligibility on the line. Richardson was a revelation, throwing for 250 yards and four touchdowns on 23 of 27 passing — albeit against one of the nation's worst defenses — in a 51-23 win.

Richardson wasn't nearly so spectacular in losses to West Virginia and Tulsa to close out the season. But Iowa State's loss to the Mountaineers came on a day when extremely gusty wind made

CYCLONES | PAGE 11B

Heisman

From Page 9B

Murray a shot to get a huge jump on the competition. Boyd has three big tests to pass (Georgia, Florida State, Oct. 19, and at South Carolina, Nov. 30) in an otherwise ho-hum schedule.

Clemson needs to go at least 2-1 in those games and win the Atlantic Coast Conference for Boyd to win the Heisman.

4) AJ McCarron, QB, Alabama. The Crimson Tide are almost too good to have a Heisman winner. With so much talent surrounding McCarron (receiver Amari Cooper, tailback T.J. Yeldon, etc.) it's hard for him to stand out. And his raw numbers will always lag behind other top quarterbacks because of Alabama's balance and ability to easily dispatch so many opponents. To separate himself from the pack, McCarron will need more moments like he had at LSU last season, when he led the Tide to a last-minute, game-winning touchdown. Another trip

to the BCS title game is also a must for a McCarron Heisman.

5) Jadeveon Clowney, DE, South Carolina. If Clowney is going to be the first defensive player to win the Heisman, he'll need to put up a huge sack total. The official NCAA record is 24 by Terrell Suggs of Arizona State in 2002. The late Derrick Thomas had 27 for Alabama in 1988 before sacks became an official stat. The magic sack number for Clowney? Twenty sounds about right. Also, he'll probably need to score a touchdown and/or pick off a pass. And lead the Gamecocks to the SEC title game. Despite all the hype, realistically, Clowney is a long shot to win the Heisman.

6) Marcus Mariota, QB, Oregon. Mariota's problems are similar to McCarron's. As good as Mariota is, the Ducks are loaded. Do-everything-back De'Anthony Thomas might be the most dynamic and dangerous player in the country. The Ducks' propensity to pound their opponents provides plenty of fourth-quarter rest for Mariota. And anything less than a

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Wagner Red Raiders

Football

8/30 @ Tri-Valley	7 p.m.	10/4 @ Todd County	7 p.m.
9/6 McCook Central-Montrose	7 p.m.	10/11 Bon Homme	7 p.m.
9/20 Parkston	7 p.m.	10/18 Canton	7 p.m.
9/27 Beresford	7 p.m.	10/24 @ Winner	7 p.m.

Volleyball

8/31 Parkston Tourm.	8:30 a.m.	10/8 Scotland	6:30 p.m.
9/3 @ Platte-Geddes	6:30 p.m.	10/12 Chester Classic	TBA
9/5 @ Chamberlain	6:30 p.m.	10/14 Mount Vernon-Plankinton	6:30 p.m.
9/12 Gregory	6:30 p.m.	10/15 @ Parkston	6:30 p.m.
9/17 @ Avon	6:30 p.m.	10/17 Andes Central	6:30 p.m.
9/21 Cavalier Clash	8:30 a.m.	10/22 Winner	6:30 p.m.
9/24 Bon Homme	6:30 p.m.	10/26 SESD (Chamberlain)	10 a.m.
9/30 @ Vermillion	6:30 p.m.	10/28 @ Burke-South Central (Bonesteel)	6:30 p.m.
10/3 @ Winner	6:30 p.m.		
10/5 @ Tri-Valley	1:30 p.m.		
10/7 @ Tripp-Delmont-Armour (Armour)	6:30 p.m.		

Cross Country

8/31 Mitchell Inv.	10 a.m.	9/21 Wagner Inv.	9 a.m.
9/3 McCook Central-Montrose (Salem)	4:15 p.m.	9/23 Bon Homme Inv.	2 p.m.
9/7 Corsica-Slickney Inv.	9 a.m.	9/28 Platte-Geddes Inv.	10 a.m.
9/8 Scotland Inv.	4:15 p.m.	10/3 South Central Inv.	4:15 p.m.
9/19 Chamberlain Inv.	2:30 p.m.	10/7 SESD (Scotland)	3 p.m.
		10/10 Parkston Inv.	4:15 p.m.

Boys' Golf

9/5 Chamberlain Inv.	10 a.m.	9/17 Winner Inv.	10 a.m.
9/9 Parkston Inv. (Mitchell)	TBA	9/23 Pre-Regional (Pierre)	TBA

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