




# 2023 CFB BETTING GUIDE



# STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS

TEAM	POWER RATING	TEAM	POWER RATING	TEAM	POWER RATING
GEORGIA	70.5	PITTSBURGH	47.5	ARMY	36.0
OHIO ST	69.0	SYRACUSE	47.0	EAST CAROLINA	36.0
ALABAMA	67.5	BOISE ST	46.0	SOUTHERN MISS	36.0
MICHIGAN	67.0	BYU	46.0	UAB	35.0
LSU	62.5	KANSAS	46.0	COLORADO	34.5
TEXAS	62.5	MICHIGAN ST	46.0	MIAMI OHIO	34.5
USC	62.0	NEBRASKA	46.0	SAN JOSE ST	34.5
PENN ST	61.5	PURDUE	46.0	GEORGIA ST	34.0
CLEMSON	59.5	WASHINGTON ST	46.0	STANFORD	34.0
FLORIDA ST	59.5	CALIFORNIA	45.5	TEMPLE	33.5
OREGON	59.5	WAKE FOREST	45.5	GA SOUTHERN	33.0
UTAH	59.0	SMU	45.0	RICE	33.0
NOTRE DAME	58.5	WEST VIRGINIA	45.0	C MICHIGAN	32.5
WASHINGTON	58.0	MEMPHIS	44.5	JACKSONVILLE ST	32.5
OKLAHOMA	57.5	TROY	44.5	MIDDLE TENN ST	32.5
TENNESSEE	56.5	TX-SAN ANTONIO	44.5	CONNECTICUT	32.0
OLE MISS	56.0	S ALABAMA	44.0	E MICHIGAN	32.0
TEXAS A&M	56.0	CINCINNATI	43.5	BUFFALO	31.5
TEXAS TECH	54.0	HOUSTON	43.5	N ILLINOIS	31.5
WISCONSIN	54.0	ARIZONA	43.0	SOUTH FLORIDA	31.5
NORTH CAROLINA	53.5	ARIZONA ST	42.5	TULSA	31.5
OREGON ST	53.5	FRESNO ST	42.5	UNLV	31.5
KANSAS ST	53.0	TOLEDO	42.0	BALL ST	30.5
TCU	53.0	AIR FORCE	41.5	COLORADO ST	30.0
KENTUCKY	52.5	MARSHALL	40.5	LOUISIANA TECH	30.0
ARKANSAS	52.0	W KENTUCKY	40.5	UTAH ST	30.0
AUBURN	52.0	FLA ATLANTIC	39.5	UTEP	30.0
BAYLOR	52.0	JAMES MADISON	39.5	ARKANSAS ST	28.0
FLORIDA	52.0	VANDERBILT	39.5	BOWLING GREEN	28.0
IOWA	51.5	VIRGINIA TECH	39.5	OLD DOMINION	27.5
UCLA	51.5	GEORGIA TECH	39.0	TEXAS ST UNIV	27.5
MINNESOTA	50.5	INDIANA	39.0	NEVADA	26.5
MISSISSIPPI ST	50.5	SAN DIEGO ST	39.0	NEW MEXICO ST	26.0
SOUTH CAROLINA	50.5	VIRGINIA	39.0	W MICHIGAN	26.0
ILLINOIS	50.0	BOSTON COLLEGE	38.5	CHARLOTTE	25.0
LOUISVILLE	50.0	LA LAFAYETTE	38.5	LA MONROE	24.5
MARYLAND	50.0	NORTHWESTERN	38.5	AKRON	24.0
UCF	50.0	RUTGERS	38.5	HAWAII	23.0
MIAMI FL	49.5	WYOMING	38.0	SAM HOUSTON ST	23.0
MISSOURI	49.5	APPALACHIAN ST	37.5	FLA INTERNATIONAL	21.5
TULANE	49.0	COASTAL CAROLINA	37.5	NEW MEXICO	21.0
IOWA ST	48.5	NAVY	37.0	KENT ST	20.5
NC STATE	48.5	LIBERTY	36.5	MASSACHUSETTS	17.5
DUKE	47.5	NORTH TEXAS	36.5		
OKLAHOMA ST	47.5	OHIO U	36.5		

A man in a dark hoodie and visor is celebrating, holding a large, shiny gold trophy high in the air. He is smiling and looking upwards. The background is filled with confetti and other people, suggesting a victory celebration. The lighting is bright, highlighting the trophy and the man's face.

# COLLEGE FOOTBALL PRESEASON TOP 25

by Matt Youmans

# #1 GEORGIA

Kirby Smart

At the time, Nick Saban was probably unaware he was creating a monster. Saban's singular focus on winning and the process of maintaining dominance made him the king of college football. He has won seven national championships, including six as Alabama coach.

The monster Saban helped create was Kirby Smart, who served as his defensive coordinator from 2008 to 2015, when the Crimson Tide won four titles. Smart got his head-coaching start at Georgia in 2016, and look who's on top now.

The Bulldogs have won 29 of 30 games the past two years and are eyeing a national championship three-peat, a feat not even accomplished by Saban. Smart has become the new dominant force of the Southeastern Conference, and Georgia has earned the right to be the starting point for VSiN's college football power rankings in 2023.

"I still have Georgia No. 1, so I'm definitely buying in," South Point sports book director Chris Andrews said. "It seems like they are reloading every year, and I hate to use that expression, but it's really true."

After winning the 2021 title, the Bulldogs had a record 15 players selected in the 2022 NFL Draft. Smart reloaded and went 15-0 to record back-to-back championships. Georgia lost 10 players in this year's draft, including two-year starting quarterback Stetson Bennett. It's remarkable a program could lose 25 players to the draft in two years and remain preseason No. 1.

The Bulldogs' projected starting quarterback is sophomore Carson Beck, who attempted only 35 passes last year, and some might see a new QB as a sign of weakness. But Alabama and Ohio State also must replace star quarterbacks — Bryce Young and CJ Stroud, respectively — so no other team is an obvious pick to knock Georgia from the top spot.

"I'm just not sure who I would power-rate over Georgia," Fox Sports analyst Chris "The Bear" Fallica said. "Ohio State lost a ton, including on the offensive line, which most are not talking about. I guess Michigan would be the answer, but are we buying into that team which gave up 51 points to TCU in the playoff? It almost feels like a by-default situation. I do know someone who sees Georgia every day and said this is the best two-deep Smart has had. Maybe not the best from an

elite NFL draft-pick standpoint right now, but they are stacked. It's on the QB."

From a quarterback standpoint, USC owns the best starting point in reigning Heisman Trophy winner Caleb Williams. The Trojans were a win away from the four-team playoff last season before falling to Utah in the Pac-12 title game, and coach Lincoln Riley has more horses in his second season.

Paul Stone, a college football handicapper from Texas, said LSU and USC are teams with second-year coaches that could make the playoff if any other top teams stumble. Brian Kelly won 10 games in his first year with the Tigers and returns quarterback Jayden Daniels.

"I believe the landscape in college football is ripe for a team outside the usual suspects to make the playoff," Stone said. "Georgia, Ohio State and Alabama all have first-time starting quarterbacks, so the door's at least slightly open."

Stone offered his analysis of several teams and provided his power rankings, which I combined with my own rankings to form the VSiN preseason Top 25.

## 1. GEORGIA

I have suspicions about the superiority of this team, but there's no proof of significant decline, and a soft schedule will help the Bulldogs avoid upsets while their new quarterback matures. Georgia's only true road tests will be at Auburn (Sept. 30) and Tennessee (Nov. 18), so Kirby Smart should be secure at the top until reaching the SEC title game.

## 2. OHIO STATE

The schedule is stacked against the Buckeyes, who play Notre Dame, Wisconsin and Michigan on the road, so they face a few high hurdles on the way to the playoff.

Stone: "Ohio State has some uncertainty at quarterback entering the season, but if Kyle McCord or Devin Brown can just be good — they don't have to be great — the Buckeyes will once again field one of the nation's premier offenses. Ohio State is absolutely loaded at both receiver and running back and will be better defensively."

Kyle McCord





Quinn Ewers

### 3. USC

Caleb Williams passed for 4,537 yards and 42 touchdowns with only five interceptions while rushing for 10 touchdowns last season. He's the college version of Patrick Mahomes and the likely No. 1 pick of the draft. A defense that allowed 29.2 points per game returns nine starters and adds several transfers, including tackle Bear Alexander (Georgia) and linebacker Mason Cobb (Oklahoma State). I rank the Trojans No. 2, and Stone ranks them No. 6. "USC's Achilles' heel last year was clearly its defense," Stone said, "but the Trojans will be significantly improved on that side of the ball through transfer additions."

### 4. MICHIGAN

Wolverines coach Jim Harbaugh has won back-to-back Big Ten titles and brings back his most productive offensive players — quarterback J.J. McCarthy and running backs Blake Corum and Donovan Edwards. The defense is a minor concern after getting exposed in last season's final two games against Purdue and TCU.

### 5. LSU

Jayden Daniels is the top returning quarterback in the SEC, and linebacker Harold Perkins could be the conference's top defensive player. Brian Kelly's first year in Baton Rouge produced a victory over Alabama and a 20-point loss to Georgia in the SEC title game.

### 6. ALABAMA

It's tough to rank the Tide outside the top five, but Nick Saban has only 10 starters returning and must replace quarterback Bryce Young and both coordinators. Young worked some miracles to get Alabama to 11-2. Ty Simpson, Jalen Milroe and Notre Dame transfer Tyler Buchner are battling for the starting quarterback job.

### 7. CLEMSON

Sophomore quarterback Cade Klubnik has some questions to answer after a poor finish to last season, but he's a dual threat with a lot of talent. The Tigers also return running back Will Shipley, an experienced offensive line and eight defensive starters.

### 8. PENN STATE

The Nittany Lions won 11 games, losing only to Michigan and Ohio State, and return eight starters on both sides of the ball. Nicholas Singleton and Kaytron Allen form an elite backfield tandem, and new quarterback Drew Allar could be an upgrade at the position.

### 9. TEXAS

The Big 12 preseason favorite, Texas has not won the league since 2009. The Longhorns have stayed Under their win total in 10 of the past 11 years, so underachieving is a long trend. Third-year sophomore Quinn Ewers leads an offense that should be explosive. The schedule is far from easy, and coach Steve Sarkisian is one game over .500 after two seasons in Austin. According to Stone, "Texas clearly has the best roster in the Big 12, and there are no glaring weaknesses. If Ewers can take the next step and fulfill his immense promise, the Longhorns could be one of college football's biggest stories."

### 10. WASHINGTON

Kalen DeBoer took an offense that averaged 21.5 points the previous year and improved it to 39.7 points per game in his debut as coach. Michael Penix ranked second in the nation with 4,641 passing yards last season, and Jalen McMillan and Rome Odunze are elite receivers. The Huskies will be a legit threat to win the Pac-12, so circle their Nov. 4 game at USC.

### 11. FLORIDA STATE

The development of quarterback Jordan Travis, who passed for 24 touchdowns and rushed for seven, was the key to coach Mike Norvell's turnaround to 10-3 in his third season in Tallahassee. The Seminoles, who return 17 starters, will get tested against LSU and Clemson in September.

### 12. NOTRE DAME

Sam Hartman, a transfer from Wake Forest, will give the Irish the quarterback play they need to complement coach Marcus Freeman's veteran defense. Ohio State and USC visit South Bend.

### 13. WISCONSIN

Expect a big bounce-back season for the Badgers, who return 18 starters and get a quarterback upgrade from SMU transfer Tanner Mordecai. Braelton Allen and Chez Mellusi will lead a powerful running attack. New coach Luke Fickell will design one of the nation's top defenses.

### 14. OREGON

Ducks coach Dan Lanning, a former Georgia defensive coordinator, enters his second year with eight starters back on both sides of the ball. Senior quarterback Bo Nix, a burnout at Auburn, was rejuvenated last season in a new conference and accounted for 43 total touchdowns.

## 15. TENNESSEE

The Volunteers must replace star quarterback Hendon Hooker, who beat LSU and Alabama, and former Michigan transfer Joe Milton has been a talented enigma in his career. Still, most signs are encouraging for coach Josh Heupel after an 11-win season and a dominant 31-14 victory over Clemson in the Orange Bowl.

## 16. UTAH

Kyle Whittingham is a classic tough-guy coach who could have the toughest offensive and defensive lines in the Pac-12. The Utes finished 10-4 in each of the past two seasons and won the conference championship game in a blowout each year. Senior quarterback Cameron Rising suffered a torn ACL in the Rose Bowl loss to Penn State, but he's reportedly ahead of schedule in rehab and expects to be ready for the Aug. 31 opener against Florida.

## 17. TEXAS A&M

The Aggies (5-7) were a jumbo disappointment for coach Jimbo Fisher last year, but he's got 20 starters returning and gambled on hiring Bobby Petrino as offensive coordinator.

## 18. KANSAS STATE

Chris Klieman, the Big 12's best coach, knocked off TCU in the conference title game, and he's got eight starters back on offense. Running back Deuce Vaughn will be missed, but veteran quarterback Will Howard is a winner.

## 19. OREGON STATE

Jonathan Smith's work in Corvallis has been extraordinary, coaching the Beavers from 2-10 in his first year to 10-3 in his fifth year. The new quarterback is Clemson transfer DJ Uiagalelei, who was inconsistent while going 22-6 as the starter. Oregon State went 12-1 at home the past two years and hosts UCLA, Utah and Washington.

## 20. MISSISSIPPI

Despite his efforts to escape Oxford and get to Auburn, coach Lane Kiffin is back with nine starters on offense and seven on defense. He has three quarterbacks — Jaxson Dart, Oklahoma State transfer Spencer Sanders and freshman Walker Howard — competing for the top job. The schedule will take Kiffin to Alabama, Auburn and Georgia.

## 21. OKLAHOMA

Brent Venables was a bust in his first year as a head coach. The Sooners finished 6-7 for their first losing record since 1998. Oklahoma, which suffered five losses by seven points or fewer, faces a weaker schedule, and quarterback Dillon Gabriel returns.

## 22. IOWA

Michigan transfer Cade McNamara will be the new quarterback for the Hawkeyes, who were in desperate need of a competent passer. The defense will be typically strong. Iowa will challenge Wisconsin atop the Big Ten West.

## 23. TEXAS TECH

Eleven starters return on offense, including quarterback Tyler Shough, and six on defense for underrated coach Joey McGuire. Don't be too surprised if the Red Raiders are playing for a Big 12 title on November 24 at Texas.

## 24. NORTH CAROLINA

Drake Maye passed for 4,321 yards and 38 touchdowns last season. He also ran for 698 yards and seven scores. He's the likely No. 2 draft pick behind USC's Williams. The Tar Heels bring back 17 starters for coach Mack Brown.

## 25. TCU

A fall from the Top 25 would not be surprising for the Horned Frogs, who were crushed 65-7 by Georgia in the national title game and waved goodbye to quarterback Max Duggan. TCU coach Sonny Dykes gets the benefit of the doubt with this ranking.



DJ Uiagalelei

# BUILDING A POWER RATING MODEL

by Adam Burke

For the last several seasons, I have put together college football power ratings. In concert with my home-field advantage values, I use these team ratings to create spreads for every game. That allows me to look at season win total markets, but also to have an idea of where I think a line should be in a given game throughout the season.

Power ratings can be as basic or detailed as you want them to be, depending on how much time and effort you want to dedicate to the process. My process is fairly basic, but my goal is to get ahead of some line moves on Sunday and Monday by taking positions based on my ratings for the teams. If I have a line -7 and the market has -4, I anticipate that line to move towards my line as the week goes along, which gives me some incentive to grab -4.

The measure of a good set of power ratings is to have more lines move toward your numbers than move against them. Sometimes your line will be wrong. Sometimes an injury slips through the cracks. Sometimes bettors with a lot of market influence like the other side, and the line will move in the other direction. Sometimes those bettors will be wrong. Sometimes your power ratings will be wrong.

Starting with a good foundation is important because it can be a cat-and-mouse game throughout the season. Let's start with the foundation and then move into how to adjust and adapt as the season goes along.

I do what I consider to be "Positional Power Ratings". I use seven positions to determine my rating for a team on a scale of basically 40-100. The Georgias and Alabamas of the world will be closer to 100. The FIUs and New Mexicos of the world will be closer to 40. Why a 40-100 scale? I break my position groups down like this: QB, OL, DL, and coaching/special teams are graded up to 15 (60 total points). RB, WR, LB, and DB are graded up to 10 (40 total points). Therefore, a perfect score would be 100.

The position units for the top teams will be closer to the highest possible number, while the best players in Group of Five schools might lead to a rating 2-3 points away from the highest possible number. Mid-tier teams in Power Five conferences would have position groups graded similarly to the best of the best in the Group of Five.

The goal is to look at the rosters, the returning production, and the offensive and defensive schemes to develop these values. On an Air Raid team, the running backs won't be as productive and probably won't be a position of emphasis in recruiting. But a QB and a WR group are going to be weighted differently.

Are these an exact science and 100% accurate? Absolutely not. But, they give me a starting point for the season and something to go off as the season goes along so that I'm not blindly saying things like "this line looks too low" or "that line is too high" without having it based on anything other than opinion or conjecture.

So, let's take the two-time reigning National Champion Georgia Bulldogs, the highest-rated team for me going into the season.

## OFFENSE

### WIDE RECEIVER: 9.5/10

Brock Bowers might be the best tight end in football (TE are included here), and Ladd McConkey, when healthy, has been a reliable option. There are a bunch of highly-touted recruits here, plus Oscar Delp, who was the No. 1 TE in the class of 2022.

### OFFENSIVE LINE: 15/15

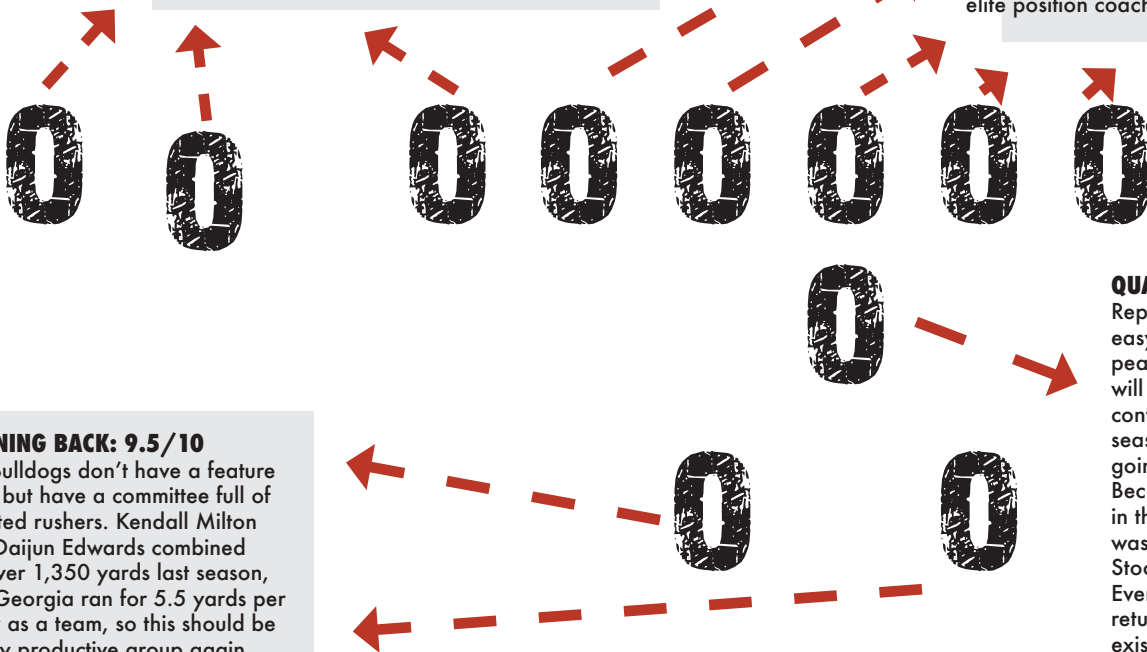
Georgia allowed nine total sacks last season, with those 5.5 yards per carry and over seven yards per play. It all starts with the guys up front. Three starters are back, with new starters at the tackle position, but again, these are four and five-star recruits. Remember, a lot of elite programs also have a lot of elite position coaches and awesome recruiters.

### RUNNING BACK: 9.5/10

The Bulldogs don't have a feature back but have a committee full of talented rushers. Kendall Milton and Daijun Edwards combined for over 1,350 yards last season, and Georgia ran for 5.5 yards per carry as a team, so this should be a very productive group again.

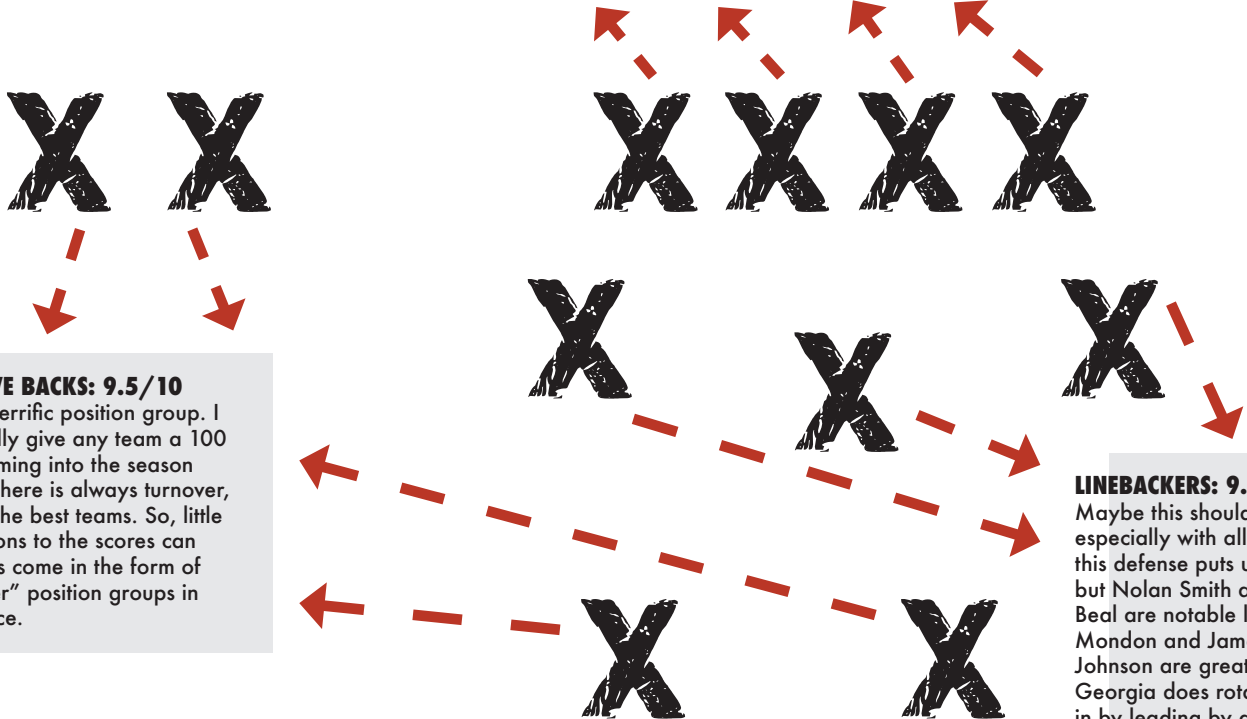
### QUARTERBACK: 13.5/15

Replacing Stetson Bennett will not be easy as Georgia looks for a three-peat. However, a program like this will recruit at a very high level. The contenders for the job, including last season's backup Carson Beck, are going to be four and five-star guys. Beck, for instance, was a four-star kid in the class of 2020. Brock Vandagriff was a four-star in 2021, while Gunner Stockton was a four-star in 2022. Even though experience is low and returning production is basically non-existent, there's a ton of talent here, and one of them should emerge.



**DEFENSIVE LINE: 15/15**

If there's anything we know about the Georgia defense, it will reload annually. The Bulldogs have allowed under 80 rushing yards per game in each of the last four seasons. They've allowed under five yards per play in each of the last six—just elite.



**DEFENSIVE BACKS: 9.5/10**

Another terrific position group. I don't really give any team a 100 grade coming into the season because there is always turnover, even for the best teams. So, little moderations to the scores can oftentimes come in the form of the "lesser" position groups in importance.

**LINEBACKERS: 9.5/10**

Maybe this should be a 10/10, especially with all the special stats this defense puts up year-to-year, but Nolan Smith and Robert Beal are notable losses. Smael Mondon and Jamon Dumas-Johnson are great players, but Georgia does rotate a lot of guys in by leading by a ton more often than not.

**TOTAL**  
**96.5/100**

**COACHING/SPECIAL TEAMS: 15/15**

Georgia is 29-1 over the last two seasons. There are other talented teams around the country, but few maximize their potential like the Bulldogs. Kirby Smart is one of the nation's elites, and his coordinators and position coaches are quite good as well. This is also a perennial Top 25 team in special teams, which makes sense when the guys on those units are also four and five-star kids just waiting for the chance to be an every-down player.

Some nitpicking here and there, but this is the No. 1 team in the country for me. If Beck, Vandagriff, or Stockton can take the bull by the horns and make the offense hum, I'll quickly adjust them up. We won't find out for a little while because of the schedule, but until proven otherwise, this is the nation's best team.

By comparison, UTSA is my top Group of Five team at 72.5, which is equal to UCF and right around teams like Tulane and Louisville.

The difference between teams is the line on a neutral field, and then I apply my home-field advantage values to make the spread.

The science of maintaining a good set of Power Ratings throughout the season is where the difficult part comes in. My process of updating them has three steps, and teams will move up or down based on three criteria - the closing spread, the box score, and injuries. That is something I'll do throughout the season on the VSiN website.

For now, focus on putting together a good set of initial ratings, and you can even cross-check and confirm with the lines that are already out there to make sure you have a good foundation.





# EAST CAROLINA PIRATES

HEAD COACH: MIKE HOUSTON (5TH)  
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: DONNIE KIRKPATRICK  
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: BLAKE HARRELL

## BY ADAM BURKE

Head coach Mike Houston has officially put his stamp on the East Carolina program as the Pirates ride back-to-back bowl game appearances into the 2023 season. Well, sort of. The 2021 Military Bowl was canceled, but the Pirates went to the 2022 Birmingham Bowl and rocked a shorthanded Coastal Carolina team for the program's first bowl win since 2013. This may be Houston's last year in Greenville, especially if he excels with a tall task.

### OFFENSE

For seemingly the first time in a decade, Holton Ahlers will not be the QB at ECU. Ahlers left as the program's all-time leading passer after five seasons of games in purple and gold. Redshirt sophomore Mason Garcia looks to get the first crack after throwing 12 passes last season, but three-star freshman Raheim Jeter could be knocking on the door very quickly. Nothing is really set in stone at the position.

It isn't just the loss of Ahlers and his 28/5 TD/INT ratio that looms large. The Pirates also have to replace 1,452 rushing yards and 14 scores from Keaton Mitchell, along with replacing two 1,000-yard receivers in Isaiah Winstead and CJ Johnson. With only four starters back from an offense that averaged 5.3 yards per carry and 6.6 yards per play, OC Donnie Kirkpatrick and Houston have a lot to figure out.

### DEFENSE

ECU was stout against the run last season, holding opponents to just 3.4 yards per carry and 112 yards per contest, but the Pirates were shredded through the air. They did force 15 interceptions with a high-risk, high-reward strategy from DC Blake Harrell. The Pirates finished +13 in turnover margin, but they gave up over 290 passing yards per game and the 10th-highest completion rate in the nation.

Between injuries and the style of play, the Pirates rotated in a lot of guys, as nobody had more than 87 tackles, and sack leader Jeremy Lewis had 4.5 sacks. Nobody had more than six pass breakups, and that player (Malik Fleming) is gone, along with co-leader Jireh Wilson in interceptions. ECU did have 29 sacks, the program's most since 2018, but still hasn't held an opponent under six yards per play in a decade.

### OUTLOOK

This is a huge test for Houston and his staff with only 10 returning starters, a bunch of transfers, and the major loss of production on offense. The 51-year-old FCS National Champion with James Madison in 2016 will be highly sought-after, and you wonder how that will impact the roster as the season goes along. The nonconference schedule is tricky, and the conference slate is also rather tough. My projections call for 5.74 wins, but if anybody can overachieve, it is a coach like Houston. I'd still lean toward a more pessimistic outlook with all the turnover.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY  
**UNDER 5.5**

STEVE MAKINEN'S  
**POWER RATING 36**

NATIONAL RANK: #91 OF 133

CONFERENCE RANK: #8 OF 14

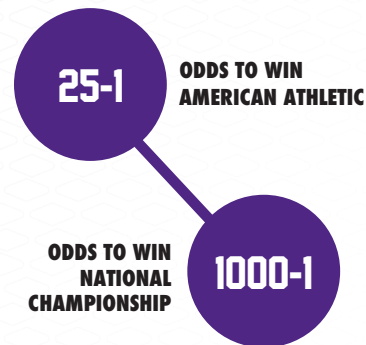
## 2023 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	EST. LINE	OPP PR
9/2	at Michigan	34	67
9/9	MARSHALL	2	40.5
9/16	at Appalachian St	4	37.5
9/23	GARDNER WEBB	-14.5	24.5
9/30	at Rice	-1	33
10/12	SMU	6.5	45
10/21	CHARLOTTE	-14	25
10/28	at TX-San Antonio	11.5	44.5
11/4	TULANE	10	49
11/11	at Fla Atlantic	6	39.5
11/18	at Navy	3.5	37
11/25	TULSA	-7	31.5

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **39.41**  
#70 TOUGHEST OF 133

FIELD RATINGS **2.8 / 0.3**  
(HOME/ROAD)

## 2023 ODDS



RETURNING STARTERS **10** OFFENSE: 4  
DEFENSE: 6

## 2022 STATS AND RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT/RANK	DEFENSE STAT/RANK
Points Per Game	31.2 36	28.6 76
Yards Per Point	14.5 75	14.4 61
Plays Per Game	71.2 57	
Time of Possession	31:23 32	
3rd Down Conv. %	45.9% 18	43.4% 108
Total Yards Per Game	451.9 23	411.1 88
Yards Per Play	6.4 18	6.1 113
Rush Attempts Per Game	31.9 106	
Rush Yards Per Game	162.4 56	118.9 21
Yards Per Rush Attempt	5.1 22	3.7 31
Pass Attempts Per Game	38.1 20	
Completion %	65.9% 15	66.8% 123
Passing Yards Per Game	289.5 15	292.2 130
Yards Per Pass Attempt	7.6 49	8.8 127
Turnovers	0.6 2	1.5 51

## 2022 RESULTS

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	ATS
9/3	NC STATE (12.5)	20-21	L	W
9/10	OLD DOMINION (-13)	39-21	W	W
9/17	CAMPBELL (-32.5)	49-10	W	W
9/24	NAVY (-16.5)	20-23	L	L
10/1	at South Florida (-9.5)	48-28	W	W
10/8	at Tulane (3)	9-24	L	L
10/15	MEMPHIS (-5.5)	47-45	W	L
10/22	UCF (6)	34-13	W	W
10/28	at BYU (3)	27-24	W	W
11/11	at Cincinnati (4.5)	25-27	L	W
11/19	HOUSTON (-6)	3-42	L	L
11/26	at Temple (-9.5)	49-46	W	L
12/27	vs. Coastal Carolina (-7)	53-29	W	W



# NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

HEAD COACH: MACK BROWN (5TH)  
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: CHIP LINDSEY  
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: GENE CHIZIK / CHARLTON WARREN

## BY ZACHARY COHEN

Mack Brown's return to the North Carolina Tar Heels has felt like a failure at times, but he did win nine games in 2022. That was the most the Tar Heels have won since Brown came back, and they'll now look to improve upon that in 2023. Fortunately for North Carolina, Drake Maye is back and hoping to show NFL scouts that he's a better player than USC quarterback Caleb Williams.

Maye might miss Phil Longo this season, as the offensive coordinator left to take a job with Wisconsin. But Maye is a good fit in any offense, and he happens to have a good group of pass catchers to throw to. This season will just come down to how the Tar Heels' defense plays. North Carolina was atrocious on that side of the ball last year, and it's hard to win games when you can't get stops.

### OFFENSE

Not only is Maye back after throwing for 4,321 yards with 38 touchdowns and only seven picks last year, but the Tar Heels were able to add transfer Devontez Walker from Kent State. Walker caught 58 passes for 921 yards and 11 touchdowns last year, so he should be a huge asset for North Carolina.

The question is whether the offensive line will give Maye the time to work his magic. Maye is a legitimate candidate to be the top pick in the 2024 NFL Draft, but that'll mean nothing if he isn't kept upright. The Tar Heels will also need a little more out of their running game, which hasn't been the same since Michael Carter and Javonte Williams went to the NFL.

### DEFENSE

For as good as North Carolina's offense has looked in recent years, the defense has been equally as horrible. Last year, the Tar Heels gave up a miserable 31.0 points per game, giving them the worst scoring defense in the ACC. This group simply has to be better in 2023, as it puts far too much pressure on Maye and the offense to score whenever they're on the field.

The Tar Heels did add some reinforcements in the secondary, as Brown was able to land some key transfer portal additions. If those moves work out for North Carolina, this team will have a chance of achieving its goals next season. The Tar Heels can also use more consistency up front.

### OUTLOOK

It wouldn't be all that surprising if the Tar Heels' defense doesn't come around. And if that's the case, North Carolina will have a very hard time reaching nine wins in 2023. Something else to consider is that a slow start for the Tar Heels could lead to Maye sitting some games at the end of the season. He needs to protect his body for the NFL Draft, much like former North Carolina quarterback Sam Howell had to do a few years ago.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY  
**UNDER 8.5**

STEVE MAKINEN'S  
**POWER RATING 53.5**

NATIONAL RANK: #21 OF 133

CONFERENCE RANK: #3 OF 14

## 2023 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	EST. LINE	OPP PR
9/2	vs. South Carolina	-3.5	50.5
9/9	APPALACHIAN ST	-18.5	37.5
9/16	MINNESOTA	-5.5	50.5
9/23	at Pittsburgh	-4	47.5
10/7	SYRACUSE	-9.5	47
10/14	MIAMI FL	-6.5	49.5
10/21	VIRGINIA	-17.5	39
10/28	at Georgia Tech	-13	39
11/4	CAMPBELL	-38	19
11/11	DUKE	-9	47.5
11/18	at Clemson	8.5	59.5
11/25	at NC State	-2	48.5

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **43.60**  
#61 TOUGHEST OF 133

FIELD RATINGS **2.9 / 0.1**  
(HOME/ROAD)

## 2023 ODDS



RETURNING STARTERS **17**  
OFFENSE: 9 QB  
DEFENSE: 8

## 2022 STATS AND RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT/RANK	DEFENSE STAT/RANK
Points Per Game	32.8 27	31.3 104
Yards Per Point	13.8 49	14.2 68
Plays Per Game	76.6 15	
Time of Possession	29:50 66	
3rd Down Conv. %	46.0% 16	42.1% 95
Total Yards Per Game	452.6 22	444.3 111
Yards Per Play	5.9 37	6.1 114
Rush Attempts Per Game	36 67	
Rush Yards Per Game	142.2 73	173.6 92
Yards Per Rush Attempt	3.9 76	4.6 97
Pass Attempts Per Game	37.5 23	
Completion %	64.6% 28	65.2% 118
Passing Yards Per Game	310.5 10	270.7 111
Yards Per Pass Attempt	8.3 19	7.9 105
Turnovers	1.1 22	0.9 119

## 2022 RESULTS

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	ATS
8/27	FLORIDA AM (-46)	56-24	W	L
9/3	at Appalachian St (3)	63-61	W	W
9/10	at Georgia St (-7)	35-28	W	T
9/24	NOTRE DAME (-2.5)	32-45	L	L
10/1	VIRGINIA TECH (-9.5)	41-10	W	W
10/8	at Miami Fl (4)	27-24	W	W
10/15	at Duke (-7)	38-35	W	L
10/29	PITTSBURGH (-3)	42-24	W	W
11/5	at Virginia (-7.5)	31-28	W	L
11/12	at Wake Forest (4.5)	36-34	W	W
11/19	GEORGIA TECH (-21)	17-21	L	L
11/25	NC STATE (-6.5)	27-30	L	L
12/3	vs. Clemson (7)	10-39	L	L
12/28	vs. Oregon (13.5)	27-28	L	W



# NORTH CAROLINA STATE WOLFPACK

HEAD COACH: DAVE DOEREN (11TH)  
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: ROBERT ANAE  
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: TONY GIBSON

## BY ZACHARY COHEN

The North Carolina State Wolfpack had crazy hype heading into the 2022 season. NC State had quarterback Devin Leary coming back after having thrown for 3,433 yards with 35 touchdowns and only five picks in 2021. And the Wolfpack had plenty of returning starters elsewhere, and the team's defense was a force to be reckoned with.

The problem is that none of that really amounted to anything. NC State went just 8-5 on the season, finishing the year with a loss to Maryland in the Duke's Mayo Bowl. This year, the Wolfpack face much more uncertainty heading into the season. But maybe they're better off in that position than having true expectations. But one thing NC State can probably count on is another winning season. The Wolfpack have finished above .500 in eight of the last nine years.

### OFFENSE

Leary decided to transfer to Kentucky after the season, but Dave Doeren was able to act quickly and bring Brennan Armstrong over from Virginia. Armstrong was miserable last season, but he did throw for 4,449 yards with 31 touchdowns and 10 picks two years ago. He also has a good set of wheels, so it's not outrageous to think that this is an upgrade at the position.

Unfortunately, the Wolfpack are relatively weak everywhere else. NC State rolls with a committee in the backfield, with none of the options being special. And the Wolfpack don't have a great offensive line or wide receiver group — although the latter could change with the team adding 6-5 wideout Bradley Rozner from the Rice Owls. That means there will be a lot of pressure on Armstrong to improvise and make plays. Fortunately, he's a guy that is comfortable being uncomfortable. Armstrong is also reuniting with offensive coordinator Robert Anae, who brought the best out of him at Virginia.

### DEFENSE

NC State had one of the best defenses in the country last year, and things shouldn't be very different in 2023. The Wolfpack brought back quite a bit of talent from last year's team. Payton Wilson is one of the best linebackers in the nation, and he'll make plays all over the field — alongside a talented group of linebackers.

NC State also has some playmakers along the defensive line, while Shyheim Battle and Aydan White make up a great duo in the secondary. Look for the Wolfpack to be very tough to score on this year. The only question is whether the offense will do its part in helping these guys stay off the field.

### OUTLOOK

There aren't many bets that look better than the NC State Over, at least on paper. The Wolfpack have a tough schedule this season, but their defense should win them a lot of games this year. The offense is definitely a little concerning, but the group won't be counted on to score too many points. And this number is just too low for a team that has proven it can win games.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY  
**OVER 6.5**

STEVE MAKINEN'S  
**POWER RATING 48.5**

NATIONAL RANK: #43 OF 133

CONFERENCE RANK: #6 OF 14

## 2023 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	EST. LINE	OPP PR
8/31	at Connecticut	-14	32
9/9	NOTRE DAME	7.5	58.5
9/16	VMI	-45.5	6
9/22	at Virginia	-6.5	39
9/29	LOUISVILLE	-1.5	50
10/7	MARSHALL	-10.5	40.5
10/14	at Duke	1.5	47.5
10/28	CLEMSON	8.5	59.5
11/4	MIAMI FL	-1.5	49.5
11/11	at Wake Forest	0.5	45.5
11/18	at Virginia Tech	-6.5	39.5
11/25	NORTH CAROLINA	2	53.5

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **42.98**  
#62 TOUGHEST OF 133

FIELD RATINGS **3 / 0.2**  
(HOME/ROAD)

## 2023 ODDS



RETURNING STARTERS **11**  
OFFENSE: 6  
DEFENSE: 5

## 2022 STATS AND RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT/RANK	DEFENSE STAT/RANK
Points Per Game	21.8 99	20.5 15
Yards Per Point	14.9 81	16.7 19
Plays Per Game	71.4 55	
Time of Possession	30:59 38	
3rd Down Conv. %	35.2% 96	35.0% 29
Total Yards Per Game	323.3 109	341.7 26
Yards Per Play	4.5 116	5 32
Rush Attempts Per Game	33.3 95	
Rush Yards Per Game	105.2 115	106.1 13
Yards Per Rush Attempt	3.2 120	3.4 15
Pass Attempts Per Game	35.9 32	
Completion %	57.1% 95	58.5% 37
Passing Yards Per Game	218.2 83	235.6 80
Yards Per Pass Attempt	6.1 116	6.8 40
Turnovers	1.3 42	1.6 38

## 2022 RESULTS

**SU: 8-5, ATS: 4-9, O/U: 6-7**

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	ATS
9/3	at East Carolina (-12.5)	21-20	W	L
9/10	CHARLESTON SOUT (-45.5)	55-3	W	W
9/17	TEXAS TECH (-10.5)	27-14	W	W
9/24	CONNECTICUT (-38)	41-10	W	L
10/1	at Clemson (6.5)	20-30	L	L
10/8	FLORIDA ST (-3.5)	19-17	W	L
10/15	at Syracuse (3)	9-24	L	L
10/27	VIRGINIA TECH (-13.5)	22-21	W	L
11/5	WAKE FOREST (3)	30-21	W	W
11/12	BOSTON COLLEGE (-18)	20-21	L	L
11/19	at Louisville (4)	10-25	L	L
11/25	at North Carolina (6.5)	30-27	W	W
12/30	vs. Maryland (-2.5)	12-16	L	L



# WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

HEAD COACH: DAVE CLAWSON (10TH)  
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: WARREN RUGGIERO  
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: BRAD LAMBERT

## BY ZACHARY COHEN

Sam Hartman is no longer the starting quarterback for the Wake Forest Demon Deacons, as he will now be under center for Notre Dame. It's going to be a little bizarre seeing their offense without Hartman, and the team will actually have to face him when the Demon Deacons travel to South Bend on November 18th.

Overall, this feels like it could be a retooling year for head coach Dave Clawson, who has turned in winning seasons in six of the last seven years. Wake Forest doesn't have a lot of talent returning from last year, and Mitch Griffis will likely take some bumps in his first season as the team's quarterback. But Clawson is a good coach, and he should have this figured out soon.

### OFFENSE

Griffis had a very good game against VMI last year, throwing for 288 yards with three touchdowns and no picks. ACC competition will, however, be a lot different than that, and it's hard to see Griffis not having an up-and-down season in his first year of action. The only real positive is that Hartman's absence early last season gave Griffis some valuable reps with the first-team offense.

If Wake Forest's rushing attack can improve in 2023, it might help Griffis make an instant impact. That would also potentially allow the Demon Deacons to be an under-the-radar threat in the ACC. But there are a lot of moving parts with this group, and there's not much that suggests this will be an above-average unit this season. The most important thing these players can do is learn to make waves in 2024.

### DEFENSE

Last year's Demon Deacons defense was miserable, and there isn't much to be optimistic about heading into 2023. One of the few things Wake Forest did well last year was defend the run, but the team's defensive line is actually a question mark right now. If the Demon Deacons don't find a way to replicate the success of their 2022 run defense, opponents will score against them at will. Wake Forest doesn't have the talent required in the secondary to slow down some of the better quarterbacks in this conference. The only thing helping in that regard is that the Demon Deacons should have a decent pass rush.

### OUTLOOK

Wake Forest is normally a team that can be counted on to exceed expectations, but the path to seven wins seems nonexistent in 2023. The Demon Deacons have a number of difficult road games, and the team will also have trouble with some of its home opponents. Overall, this feels like a relatively low-risk play. Even if the Under doesn't win, it's highly unlikely you won't push. But don't get used to going Under on a Clawson-led group. He'll find somebody he's comfortable with to fill Hartman's shoes and Wake Forest will get back to consistently winning football games quickly.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY  
**UNDER 6**

STEVE MAKINEN'S  
**POWER RATING 45.5**

NATIONAL RANK: #55 OF 133  
CONFERENCE RANK: #10 OF 14

## 2023 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	EST. LINE	OPP PR
8/31	ELON	-24	25
9/9	VANDERBILT	-9.5	39.5
9/16	at Old Dominion	-16	27.5
9/23	GEORGIA TECH	-10	39
10/7	at Clemson	16.5	59.5
10/14	at Virginia Tech	-4	39.5
10/21	PITTSBURGH	-1	47.5
10/28	FLORIDA ST	10.5	59.5
11/2	at Duke	4	47.5
11/11	NC STATE	-0.5	48.5
11/18	at Notre Dame	15.5	58.5
11/25	at Syracuse	4	47

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **44.27**  
#52 TOUGHEST OF 133

FIELD RATINGS **3.4 / 0.1**  
(HOME/ROAD)

## 2023 ODDS



RETURNING STARTERS **11** OFFENSE: 5  
DEFENSE: 6

## 2022 STATS AND RANKS

	OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
	STAT/RANK		STAT/RANK	
Points Per Game	35.4	17	29.8	87
Yards Per Point	12.4	10	14.1	71
Plays Per Game	78.1	8		
Time of Possession	28:15	103		
3rd Down Conv. %	45.8%	19	43.4%	109
Total Yards Per Game	439.8	30	419.9	97
Yards Per Play	5.6	48	5.7	84
Rush Attempts Per Game	38.3	48		
Rush Yards Per Game	126.4	89	140.8	43
Yards Per Rush Attempt	3.3	111	3.9	44
Pass Attempts Per Game	36.7	26		
Completion %	63.2%	38	60.7%	69
Passing Yards Per Game	313.4	8	279.2	121
Yards Per Pass Attempt	8.5	12	7.8	101
Turnovers	1.5	72	1.3	86

## 2022 RESULTS

SU: 8-5, ATS: 8-5, O/U: 5-8

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	ATS
9/1	VMI (-33.5)	44-10	W	W
9/10	at Vanderbilt (-13.5)	45-25	W	W
9/17	LIBERTY (-18)	37-36	W	L
9/24	CLEMSON (8)	45-51	L	W
10/1	at Florida St (6)	31-21	W	W
10/8	ARMY (-16.5)	45-10	W	W
10/22	BOSTON COLLEGE (-20)	43-15	W	W
10/29	at Louisville (-3)	21-48	L	L
11/5	at Nc State (-3)	21-30	L	L
11/12	NORTH CAROLINA (-4.5)	34-36	L	L
11/19	SYRACUSE (-9.5)	45-35	W	W
11/26	at Duke (-3)	31-34	L	L
12/23	vs. Missouri (-2.5)	27-17	W	W



# APPALACHIAN STATE MOUNTAINEERS

HEAD COACH: SHAWN CLARK (4TH)  
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: FRANK PONCE  
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: SCOTT SLOAN

## BY ADAM BURKE

The 2022 season for Appalachian State was a major outlier. The Mountaineers failed to finish with a winning record for the first time since 2013 and did not participate in a bowl game because two of their six wins came against FCS foes. It was such a strange season for App State, as they lost 63-61 in the opener to North Carolina and then beat Texas A&M and Troy, but also lost to lowly Texas State and went 1-4 in conference games decided by seven or fewer points. There are some positive indicators, but also some major questions.

### OFFENSE

For the first time in seemingly forever, the Mountaineers have a stable of quarterbacks without experience. Redshirt freshman Ryan Burger may get the first crack, but he had six pass attempts to his name last season. JUCO transfer Joey Aguilar has experience but below D-I. App State will have to throw to keep opposing defenses honest, while RB Nate Noel leads a group of backs that will get a ton of work.

Noel led the team with 604 yards and 6.9 yards per carry, but four backs had at least 76 carries. It projects to be something of a timeshare again, but the more experienced Noel should get more totes than anybody else. The top four receivers are all back. The quarterback that wins the job is likely to run a bit more, as Frank Ponce returns after serving as the OC in 2021. The Mountaineers have to replace both starting tackles, so QB runs may also be out of necessity to evade pass rushers.

### DEFENSE

The Mountaineers also have a new defensive coordinator who is also a familiar face. Scott Sloan was the defensive backs coach in Boone from 2011-16 and then served as Georgia Southern's defensive coordinator from 2018-21, so he has lots of experience calling plays and plenty of Sun Belt exposure. There are only four returning starters on this defense. The top two tacklers, Nick Ross and Andrew Parker, are among them, but top corner Steven Jones leaves with 15 pass breakups.

What makes App State's mediocre season even more surprising is that they were +9 in turnover margin, even though the defenders only had seven interceptions. The Mountaineers were strong against the run with 3.6 yards per carry allowed and only allowed 26.8 points per game, though that was the most since 2014. The Mountaineers also took a big tumble on special teams last season.

### OUTLOOK

This is a hard team to project for 2023. They were +8.1 points per game, +1.3 yards per play, and had that +9 TO margin, but finished 6-6. They outgained opponents by over 100 yards in three of their six conference losses and outgained North Carolina by 82 yards in that Week 1 defeat. A lot of indicators are pointing up in that regard, but the further head coach Shawn Clark gets from Scott Satterfield and the one year of Eli Drinkwitz, the more you wonder if the talent pipeline is the same. I ultimately like App State and have them for 8.08 wins, while the season win total line is 6.5. I have them favored in all but two games, as they avoid both Troy and South Alabama.

SEASON WIN TOTAL PLAY  
**OVER 6.5**

STEVE MAKINEN'S  
**POWER RATING 37.5**

NATIONAL RANK: #86 OF 133

CONFERENCE RANK: #7 OF 14

## 2023 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	EST. LINE	OPP PR
9/2	GARDNER WEBB	-16	24.5
9/9	at North Carolina	18.5	53.5
9/16	EAST CAROLINA	-4	36
9/23	at Wyoming	3	38
9/30	at LA Monroe	-10.5	24.5
10/10	COASTAL CAROLINA	-2.5	37.5
10/21	at Old Dominion	-8.5	27.5
10/28	SOUTHERN MISS	-4.5	36
11/4	MARSHALL	0.5	40.5
11/11	at Georgia St	-1.5	34
11/18	at James Madison	5	39.5
11/25	GA SOUTHERN	-7.5	33

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **35.26**  
#91 TOUGHEST OF 133

FIELD RATINGS **2.8 / 0.3**  
(HOME/ROAD)

## 2023 ODDS



RETURNING STARTERS **11** OFFENSE: 7  
DEFENSE: 4

## 2022 STATS AND RANKS

	OFFENSE STAT/RANK		DEFENSE STAT/RANK	
Points Per Game	32.8	26	31.8	106
Yards Per Point	13.4	37	12	124
Plays Per Game	73	41		
Time of Possession	31:31	31		
3rd Down Conv. %	38.9%	61	45.9%	117
Total Yards Per Game	440.7	29	380.1	55
Yards Per Play	6	28	5.6	72
Rush Attempts Per Game	40.5	24		
Rush Yards Per Game	191.9	28	129	33
Yards Per Rush Attempt	4.7	39	3.9	38
Pass Attempts Per Game	30.9	76		
Completion %	61.8%	52	62.6%	95
Passing Yards Per Game	248.8	46	251.1	95
Yards Per Pass Attempt	8.1	32	7.7	98
Turnovers	1	16	1.7	29

## 2022 RESULTS

**SU: 6-6, ATS: 3-9, O/U: 6-6**

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	ATS
9/3	NORTH CAROLINA (-3)	61-63	L	L
9/10	at Texas A&M (18)	17-14	W	W
9/17	TROY (-14)	32-28	W	L
9/24	JAMES MADISON (-6)	28-32	L	L
10/1	THE CITADEL (-39)	49-0	W	W
10/8	at Texas St Univ (-19)	24-36	L	L
10/19	GEORGIA ST (-9)	42-17	W	W
10/29	ROBERT MORRIS (-50.5)	42-3	W	L
11/3	at Coastal Carolina (-3)	28-35	L	L
11/12	at Marshall (-2.5)	21-28	L	L
11/19	OLD DOMINION (-16)	27-14	W	L
11/26	at Ga Southern (-6.5)	48-51	L	L



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