



ESPN.com: College Football

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Friday, January 23, 2009

Prestige Rankings: Nos. 1-5

By Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton
ESPN Research

Who is No. 1? That debate rages weekly during each college football season, and often long after the season is over and the trophies have been handed out. The debate is as much a part of the annual ritual as the touchdowns, fight songs and bowl games.

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ESPN's Prestige Rankings are a numerical method of ranking the best FBS college football programs since the 1936 season. Point values were assigned for certain successes (win a national title, earn 25 points) and failures (get your program banned from the postseason, lose two points). The research department ran all the numbers through the computer to come up with the No. 1 program (and Nos. 2 to 119) of the past 73 seasons.

ESPN.com will be rolling out the rankings all week. Final stop: teams 1 to 5. Take a look:



1. Oklahoma Sooners

Total points: 1,968

Positives: When you look at the big picture of college football since 1936, no program has achieved greatness as consistently as Oklahoma. We didn't even count the fact that Oklahoma owns the longest win streak in FBS history (47) or leads the nation with a .765 winning percentage since World War II. The 1956 Oklahoma team catapulted the Sooners past Notre Dame to the top of the Prestige Rankings, and it's been in the top spot ever since. OU's seven national titles have spanned four decades. The Sooners have finished in the final poll's top 5 an astounding 29 times. But the real fuel for OU's rise to the top of our rankings has been its conference dominance. The Sooners finished the regular season with at least a share of their conference's best record a stunning 39 times, seven more than any other program in the country.

Negatives: Oklahoma was downright mediocre in the '90s. The Sooners ranked 51st in that decade's rankings, directly behind Hawaii. OU also didn't have a single major bowl win and suffered through three losing seasons. The Oklahoma program also has been punished by the NCAA to varying degrees six separate times in its history.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 1st | 1968: 1st | 1978: 1st | 1988: 1st | 1998: 1st

Did you know? Oklahoma has been voted the No. 1 team in the country by the AP a record 97 times, including twice this past season to break a tie with Notre Dame.

Prestige Rankings

Where does your team rank in ESPN Research's countdown of the top teams from 1936-2008? Check it out.

The Countdown: 1-119

- [Nos. 1-5: OUt in front](#)
- [Nos. 6-10: Star power](#)
- [Nos. 11-15: South's rise](#)
- [Nos. 16-20: Power play](#)
- [Nos. 21-119: The pack](#)



2. USC Trojans

Total points: 1,897

Positives: With 513 points in 11 seasons (almost 100 more than its nearest competitor), the Trojans have been the undisputed king of the BCS era. USC's special 2004 season accounted for 118 points, which is one point shy of '93 Florida State's Prestige Rankings season record. It has enjoyed the services of an astounding 17 consensus All-Americans in the last seven seasons. USC has finished in the top 3 in annual Prestige Points in each of those seven seasons. USC also is the top-scoring program in the 1970s and is tied with Notre Dame and Ohio State for the most all-time Heisman winners with seven.

Negatives: It's amazing how USC's recent success has overshadowed its mediocrity in the 1990s. The Trojans didn't enjoy a single 10-win season between 1989 and 2001. It is barely over .500 (37-35) in the last five years of that stretch before Pete Carroll came to town. If you look at just the '90s, USC has fewer Prestige Points than schools like Syracuse, Wisconsin and BYU. USC was also docked for minus-29 points on our probation scoring system.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 8th | 1968: 5th | 1978: 3rd | 1988: 3rd | 1998: 5th

Did you know? If you altered our points system such that it did not include any points for best conference records or conference title game bonuses, USC would edge Oklahoma for the top spot by 11 points.



3. Ohio State Buckeyes

Total points: 1,655

Positives: Dripping with football tradition, Ohio State has been a fixture in the Prestige Rankings for the past half-century. In 1968-69, the Buckeyes racked up 190 points alone. As a point of reference, that's more than the highly successful Boise State program has earned in the last decade combined. OSU is the No. 5 program in the 1970s, and it could have been much higher had it not been for its "Ten-Year War" with Michigan during that time. Even for all the flack that John Cooper received for his 2-10-1 record against Michigan, he is responsible for a boatload of NFL 1st-round draft picks. The recent knock on OSU has been its failure to win the big bowl games, but that hasn't stopped them from finishing in the top 5 in all but two of the last seven seasons. Plus, the five-time national champions should like their spot in the Prestige Rankings ahead of their longtime rival to the north.

Negatives: The Buckeyes would have been a threat for the top spot in our rankings if not for the lack of dominating seasons in the '80s after Woody Hayes was fired. And if they had been able to knock off Florida and LSU in the two recent BCS National Championship Games, the Buckeyes would have really been nipping at USC's heels for the BCS-era crown.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 5th | 1968: 6th | 1978: 6th | 1988: 6th | 1998: 6th

Did you know? Ohio State has just five losing seasons since 1936 (and just two since 1960). That's the fewest among any program that's been around that long.



4. Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Total points: 1,579

Positives: A true blue blood of the sport, Notre Dame is synonymous with college football. The Fighting Irish won four national titles in a seven-year span in the '40s. The Golden Domers had another golden era in the '70s, when a national-high 18 consensus All-Americans helped them win it all two more times. Notre Dame was also the early dominator in our Prestige Rankings through 1955. The next season was a historic one, with ND's Paul Hornung winning the Heisman Trophy despite being on a 2-8 Irish squad. Notre Dame is still the all-time leader in consensus All-Americans with 77.

Negatives: Notre Dame haters would be quick to notice that the Irish earned almost a third of their Prestige Points before 1950. Of course, Notre Dame's recent struggles have been well documented, but we have to continue to pile it on here. ND has just one bowl win since 1994. Since 2000, Notre Dame has a third of the first-round draft picks that Boston College has (2 to 6). And since 1998, Notre Dame ranks 30th in the country, behind four non-BCS schools and both Oregon teams.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 2nd | 1968: 2nd | 1978: 2nd | 1988: 4th | 1998: 2nd

Did you know? Since 1995, Notre Dame has fewer consensus All-Americans than Northwestern.

N 5. Nebraska Cornhuskers

Total points: 1,553

Positives: Nebraska has five national titles, including two sets of back-to-back titles (1970-71, 1994-95). They followed up the 1994-95 titles with a shared title in 1997. The Huskers also have enjoyed the services of three Heisman winners: RB Johnny Rodgers (1972), RB Mike Rozier (1983) and QB Eric Crouch (2001). Nebraska ranks in the top five in numerous categories such as major bowl appearances (30, T-2nd), 10-win seasons (23, 3rd), bowl appearances (45, 4th), conference titles (26, T-4th), weeks at AP No. 1 (70, 5th) and major bowl wins (14, 5th).

Negatives: Nebraska isn't among the elite in the first three decades of the AP poll era. The Huskers are in 35th place in the Prestige Rankings when the 1950s began. Things didn't turn around quickly after that either. In fact, Nebraska had 17 losing seasons in a 21-season span between 1941 and 1961. More recently, Nebraska has produced only two first-round picks this decade, while finishing the season unranked in four of its last five seasons.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 49th | 1968: 23rd | 1978: 8th | 1988: 7th | 1998: 4th

Did you know? Nebraska had a record 35 consecutive bowl appearances from 1969 to 2003. The longest current bowl-appearance streak belongs to Florida State, which has 27.



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Thursday, January 22, 2009

Updated: January 23, 8:07 AM ET

Prestige Rankings: Nos. 6-10

By Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton
ESPN Research

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ESPN.com will be rolling out the rankings all week. Fourth stop: teams 6 to 10. Take a look:



6. Alabama Crimson Tide

Total points: 1,534

Positives: Alabama has won seven national titles, tying with Oklahoma and USC for the second-most by any program. Three of those five titles came in a five-year span in the '60s. The Tide had another big run with three in a seven-year span in the '70s. It's no wonder that Alabama was the second-best program in the '70s, trailing USC in the decade by a single point. Bama has the most bowl appearances (52) and bowl wins (28) of any program.

Negatives: Alabama was not its usual dominant self in the '80s, finishing 15th in that decade. But the thing holding the Tide back in the overall standings is the BCS era (since 1998), in which they rank 28th. They have had three losing seasons this decade, the most in a decade since the 1950s (1954-57). Bama hasn't won a major bowl game since 1992 and hasn't had a first-round draft pick since 2000.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 12th | 1968: 3rd | 1978: 4th | 1988: 2nd | 1998: 3rd

Did you know? Despite all its tradition, Alabama has never had a Heisman winner.

Prestige Rankings

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- [Nos. 16-20: Power play](#)
- [Nos. 21-119: The pack](#)



7. Texas Longhorns

Total points: 1,494

Positives: Texas has claimed four national titles, with three of them coming in an eight-year span from 1963 to 1970. The Longhorns won their most recent title behind Vince Young's incredible Rose Bowl performance in the 2005 season. They have had two Heisman winners: Earl Campbell in 1977 and Ricky Williams in 1998. UT has 22 10-win seasons (fourth-most of any program), including 10 victories in each of the past eight seasons. The Horns' 48 bowl appearances are the second-most of any program. They were dominant in the 1950s and '60s, earning the second-most points, trailing only rival Oklahoma.

Negatives: The 1980s and '90s weren't kind to Texas, which finished 22nd and 19th, respectively, in those decades. The Longhorns had the best record in conference play just once from 1991 to 2004. It's hard to believe, but the program won only one bowl between 1982 and 1993.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 7th | 1968: 4th | 1978: 5th | 1988: 5th | 1998: 7th

Did you know? Texas is one of only two programs to win a bowl game in each of the past five seasons (Utah is the other).



8. Michigan Wolverines

Total points: 1,332

Positives: Michigan owns two national titles. The second of those championship teams, the 1997 squad, included a Heisman winner, Charles Woodson. Woodson is one of three Heisman winners from Michigan, joining RB Tom Harmon in 1940 and Desmond Howard in 1991. The Wolverines were a top-5 program in the 1980s and '90s and were ninth in the '70s. Over the past 40 years, Michigan has had just one losing season, this past season. Michigan football also has never been on probation.

Negatives: The Wolverines have only one major bowl win in the BCS era and only two since 1992. Can you believe Michigan hasn't spent a week at No. 1 since that title season in 1997? Or that it has only one bowl win in the past six seasons? The 1950s and '60s weren't kind to Michigan, either; the Wolverines finished 21st, easily their worst ranking of any era.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 10th | 1968: 15th | 1978: 7th | 1988: 8th | 1998: 8th

Did you know? Before this past season, the Wolverines had the longest active streak of bowl appearances with 33 (1975-2007).



9. Florida State Seminoles

Total points: 1,110

Positives: No team dominated college football as completely for such an extended period of time as Florida State did in the '90s. Between 1990 and 1999, Florida State led the nation in major bowl appearances (nine), major bowl wins (seven), consensus All-Americans (19), weeks at No. 1 (58), 10-win seasons (10), first-round draft picks (13) and top-5 finishes (10). The 1993 season was especially great, with three consensus All-Americans, the Heisman winner (Charlie Ward) and a national championship. The Seminoles gained 119 points that year, a Prestige Rankings single-season record.

Negatives: If you wanted a refresher on just what Bobby Bowden has accomplished in Tallahassee, consider this: Florida State hasn't had a losing season since Bowden's first year there in 1976. In the 23 seasons before that, though, FSU had 10 losing campaigns and just one bowl win (1965 Gator Bowl over Oklahoma).

Through the decades: Through 1958: 75th | 1968: T-70th | 1978: T-69th | 1988: 31st | 1998: 11th

Did you know? In the 1990s, Florida State's dominance added up to 640 Prestige points. To put that into perspective, that is almost 100 points more than Notre Dame has accrued since 1970.



10. Miami Hurricanes

Total points: 1,109

Positives: The '80s were all about excess, and Hurricanes football was no different. The Canes racked up 427 points in the decade, far and away the best in the country. They had six major bowl appearances in the 10-year span (going 4-2), spent 20 weeks in the top spot of the AP poll and claimed three national titles. The program has flooded the NFL since 1970. Miami has had a national-best 54 first-round draft picks since then, one more than USC.

Negatives: Miami totaled just three points this past season, which allowed a couple of rivals to do some damage to it in our rankings. Florida's 2008 national championship moved the Gators past the Hurricanes into fourth place in the BCS era. And Florida State used its Champs Sports Bowl win to squeak past the Canes into ninth place all time.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 60th | 1968: 52nd | 1978: 33rd | 1988: 17th | 1998: 12th

Did you know? Between 1946, when the NCAA recognized its football program as "major," and 1979, Miami had just two bowl wins.

Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton are researchers at ESPN.



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Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Updated: January 23, 8:07 AM ET

Prestige Rankings: Nos. 11-15

By Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton
ESPN Research

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ESPN.com will be rolling out the rankings all week. Third stop: teams 11 to 15. Take a look:



11. Penn State Nittany Lions

Total points: 1,088

Positives: Penn State's two national championships were won in the 1980s ('82, '86). The Nittany Lions' 26 bowl wins are tied with USC for the second most overall, trailing only Alabama (31). RB John Cappelletti won the Heisman Trophy in 1973. The program has never been put on probation by the NCAA. Going 11-2 while claiming its third Big Ten title in 2008 catapulted PSU past Tennessee into 11th in our rankings.

Negatives: When you consider that Penn State has had six undefeated seasons, it's hard to believe the Nittany Lions have won it all only twice. Although Penn State was a highly regarded independent program in the early years of our study, it found itself ranked only 51st as of 1958. Four losing seasons between 2000 and 2004 also helped hold the Nittany Lions back some. They rank 18th in the BCS era.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 51st | 1968: 31st | 1978: 11th | 1988: 9th | 1998: 9th

Did you know? Among the cities where the top 20 schools in the Prestige Rankings are located, State College receives the most annual average snowfall (46 inches).

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12. Tennessee Volunteers

Total points: 1,072

Positives: Tennessee has won two national championships, including the first title of the BCS era (1998). The Vols were the third-best program for the first 23 seasons of our study, trailing only heavyweights Oklahoma and Notre Dame. The Vols' 25 bowl wins are tied for the fourth most, trailing only Alabama, Penn State and USC. Tennessee also has 33 first-round draft picks, just one behind the rival Florida Gators for the most in the SEC since 1970.

Negatives: Tennessee has gone an entire decade without a major bowl appearance. Even though some people feel Peyton Manning (1997) or Johnny Majors (1956) should have won it, no Volunteer has ever won the Heisman. It's hard to believe, but the Vols went 15 seasons without having the best record in their conference (1970-84). Tennessee was on probation for a couple of seasons as well, costing it six points.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 3rd | 1968: 7th | 1978: 9th | 1988: 10th | 1998: 10th

Did you know? Tennessee's 47 bowl appearances is the third most of any program, trailing only Alabama (56) and Texas (48).

13. LSU Tigers

Total points: 926

Positives: LSU gets credit for three national titles, including two in the past six seasons. Only seven programs have won more overall. If you look at these standings since 1998, the Bayou Bengals move up to seventh. They've appeared in four major bowl games in the BCS era and won them all.

Negatives: The 1980s were easily LSU's weakest era, a decade when the Tigers finished 23rd. The beginning of the '90s wasn't much better as the Tigers had six straight losing seasons between 1989 and '94. From 1972 to '94, they went to 11 bowl games but won only twice. Between 1971 and 2002, they had the conference's best record only twice.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 16th | 1968: 9th | 1978: 10th | 1988: 12th | 1998: 15th

Did you know? LSU was tied with Mississippi State for the seventh best SEC program in the 1990s (21 points).

14. Georgia Bulldogs

Total points: 888

Positives: The Bulldogs won the national championship in the 1980 season, Herschel Walker's freshman year. Walker is one of two Heisman winners in Bulldogs history, joining RB Frank Sinkwich (1942). Georgia football is timeless. It was the sixth-best program in the 1960s. And recent history also has been good to Georgia, as it ranks ninth in the BCS era.

Negatives: The Bulldogs struggled in the 1970s, winning only two bowl games in that stretch. The Dawgs had a 15-year span from 1973 to '88 in which they had only one first-round pick. The Dawgs also went 19 years without having the best record in the SEC (1983 through 2001).

Through the decades: Through 1958: 21st | 1968: 16th | 1978: 15th | 1988: 11th | 1998: 14th

Did you know? Georgia has six 10-win seasons in the past seven seasons. Only Texas and USC have had more.



15. Florida Gators

Total points: 834

Positives: Florida has won two of the past three national championships (and three in the past 13 years). It is ahead of in-state rival Miami in fourth place in the BCS era. The Gators have chomped their way to 10 major bowls since 1991, winning six of them. A Gator has won the Heisman Trophy three times -- only four programs can claim more. Their 34 first-round draft picks are the fourth most of any program. They also haven't had a losing season since 1979.

Negatives: Most of Florida's success has come in the past 20 years. When using the eras before the BCS was created, Florida never finished higher than 27th in any of them. Through 1958, Florida was buried in the bottom half of the nation, behind schools such as Indiana, Vanderbilt and Rutgers. The Gators didn't win a bowl game in the '70s at all. They also have been on probation three times, costing them 22 points in our formula.

Through the decades: Through 1958: T-80th | 1968: 51st | 1978: 44th | 1988: 43rd | 1998: 20th

Did you know? Florida has six top-5 finishes in the past 25 seasons, which is tied with the rest of the SEC East combined.

Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton are researchers at ESPN.

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ESPN.com: College Football

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Tuesday, January 20, 2009

Updated: January 23, 8:05 AM ET

Prestige Rankings: Nos. 16-20

By Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton
ESPN Research

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ESPN.com will be rolling out the rankings all week. Second stop: teams 16 to 20. Take a look:



16. UCLA Bruins

Total points: 738

Positives: UCLA has been a top-20 program in the Prestige Rankings since the '50s, including being tied with Florida State for seventh place in the '80s. The Bruins won a national title in 1954. QB Gary Beban won the Heisman Trophy in 1967. Among Pac-10 schools, only USC gets credit for more conference titles than UCLA, which has 15. The Bruins also have never been on probation.

Negatives: UCLA has just one major bowl berth in the BCS era (since 1998) and hasn't won a major bowl game since the 1988 season (Cotton Bowl versus Arkansas). The Bruins also have suffered three losing seasons since 2003. The BCS era has been downright average for the Bruins, as they sit in 34th in that span. They haven't been lower than 20th in any other decade.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 18th | 1968: 17th | 1978: 16th | 1988: 13th | 1998: 13th

Did you know? The Bruins have four wins over top-ranked teams in the AP poll, which is more than programs like Michigan, Alabama and Nebraska can boast. Only six programs have enjoyed more.

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17. Washington Huskies

Total points: 634

Positives: The '80s were a welcome time in Seattle. UW ushered in a new decade with a Sun Bowl win over Texas on Dec. 22, 1979. The Huskies went to a bowl game in eight straight seasons, reaching the 10-win mark three times. The best season in this stretch could have been 1984, when they became the first Pac-10 school to win the Orange Bowl and finished second to BYU in the final polls. That good run stretched into the '90s, when the Huskies won part of the national title in 1991.

Negatives: After the 1991 season, when it split the national championship with Miami, Washington has seen its football program slowly fall from the Pac-10's elite. In the BCS era, its Prestige Ranking is behind those of such schools as Toledo and Colorado State. The Huskies have suffered five straight losing seasons and received a hand-slapping from the NCAA in 2004 for violations during the Rick Neuheisel era.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 55th | 1968: 29th | 1978: 29th | 1988: 22nd | 1998: 16th

Did you know? Washington has had more consensus All-Americans (18) than rivals Washington State (five), Oregon State (five) and Oregon (two) combined.

18. Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Total points: 610

Positives: The past-10-season span is the first decade Georgia Tech has moved up our Prestige Rankings since the '50s, the golden era of Yellow Jacket football. Between the 1951 and 1955 seasons, the program went 48-6-3 with five wins in the biggest bowls around (three in the Sugar, one in the Cotton and one in the Orange).

Negatives: The Yellow Jackets haven't had a major bowl win since the 1955-56 season, when they won the 1956 Sugar Bowl at the tail end of the aforementioned five-year dream run under coach Bobby Dodd.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 4th | 1968: 8th | 1978: 12th | 1988: 15th | 1998: 19th

Did you know? Georgia Tech is the highest-rated team in the Prestige Rankings to never be ranked No. 1 in an AP poll.

19. Arkansas Razorbacks

Total points: 604

Positives: Arkansas would be college football's 10th-best program if you combined just the '50s and '60s. The Razorbacks appeared in eight major bowl games in those two decades, one more than they have in the 53 other years in the AP poll era combined.

Negatives: Since joining the SEC in 1992, Arkansas has not won an outright conference title. In 2006, it shared an SEC-best mark of 7-1 with Florida but missed out on a lucrative BCS berth after a 38-28 loss to the Gators in the SEC title game.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 47th | 1968: 18th | 1978: 14th | 1988: 14th | 1998: 18th

Did you know? Between 1968 and 1989, Arkansas didn't suffer a single losing season. That non-losing-season streak is longer than any in the history of SEC rival LSU.

20. Texas A&M Aggies

Total points: 584

Positives: The Aggies have been consistently solid over the years, but their best decade clearly was the '80s. Texas A&M had two 10-win seasons and won three of its five bowl games in that decade, matching its bowl wins total from 1950 to 1979.

Negatives: A&M ranks only eighth in the Big 12 in the BCS era. The Aggies' only major bowl appearance in the past 15 years was a loss (1999 Sugar Bowl versus Ohio State), and they haven't finished in the final AP top 5 since 1956.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 15th | 1968: 21st | 1978: 21st | 1988: 20th | 1998: 17th

Did you know? The only other top-20 schools in our Prestige Rankings with only one bowl win in the BCS era are Notre Dame and Washington.

Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton are researchers at ESPN.

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Sunday, January 18, 2009

Updated: January 23, 7:51 AM ET

Prestige Rankings: Nos. 21-119

By Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton
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21. Auburn Tigers

Total points: 579

Positives: Auburn won the national title in 1957, and some feel it was denied another when it won the Sugar Bowl to cap its perfect season in 2004. In all, the Tigers have enjoyed seven top-5 finishes in the AP poll, as well as one of the most exciting Heisman winners ever (Bo Jackson in 1985).

Negatives: The Tigers had five different years of probation, which cost them 39 points.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 31st | 1968: T-34th | 1978: 28th | 1988: 21st | 1998: 21st

Did you know? Auburn has only one major bowl appearance in the past 20 seasons (the 2005 Sugar Bowl vs. Virginia Tech), but it still ranks ahead of rival Alabama in the BCS era.

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T-22. Clemson Tigers

Total points: 486

Positives: Clemson won national title in 1981, and since the NFL Common Draft began in 1970, it has 18 first-round draft picks (which ranks third among current ACC schools behind Miami and Florida State).

Negatives: Clemson hasn't made a major bowl appearance since winning that national title. Notorious for stumbling against inferior teams recently, the Tigers haven't won a conference title since 1991.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 25th | 1968: 27th | 1978: 31st | 1988: 23rd | 1998: T-23rd

Did you know? Clemson hasn't had a losing season since 1998.



T-22. Colorado Buffaloes

Total points: 486

Positives: The Buffaloes were a powerhouse in the '90s, when they kicked off the decade with a national title in 1990 and later had a Heisman winner in Rashaan Salaam (1994).

Negatives: Colorado has suffered through five losing seasons this decade, with only a single bowl win (the 2004 Houston Bowl vs. UTEP). Colorado has also suffered through five penalties from the NCAA (costing it 25 points, including nine this decade).

Through the decades: Through 1958: 39th | 1968: 43rd | 1978: 36th | 1988: 44th | 1998: 22nd

Did you know? Colorado has has 30 consensus All-Americans (14th-most), more than Florida and Georgia.

24. Ole Miss Rebels



Total points: 477

Positives: The Rebels have 20 bowl wins (12th-most since 1936). The glory days in Oxford were a half-century ago, as the program was ranked fifth-best in the nation in the '50s and '60s. The Rebels enjoyed four straight top-5 finishes at one point (1959-62).

Negatives: Ole Miss hasn't had a major bowl appearance since the 1969 season. The NCAA also put it on probation three separate times, costing it 21 points in our tabulations. Plus, Rebels fans should just block out the '80s, when they accrued minus-5 points (77th in the nation).

Through the decades: Through 1958: 23rd | 1968: 10th | 1978: 13th | 1988: 16th | 1998: 24th

Did you know? Only 11 programs have won more bowl games in the BCS era than Ole Miss (5).



25. BYU Cougars

Total points: 476

Positives: Slowly climbing the Prestige Rankings for the better part of the century, the Cougars have never been placed on NCAA probation. Slow and steady have been key attributes for a program with just three losing seasons since 1974.

Negatives: BYU has never had a "major" bowl win by our standards. When the Cougars won the national title in 1984, it came after a Holiday Bowl win.

Through the decades: Through 1958: 87th | 1968: T-87th | 1978: 66th | 1988: 30th | 1998: 27th

Did you know? You might think that BYU has piled up points in a non-BCS conference in recent years, but the Cougars racked up 204 of their 476 points in the 1980s. That's more than programs like USC, Alabama and Ohio State.

We're counting down the top 25, but check out where the rest of the FBS schools ranked and their point totals:

26. Michigan State: 454

27. Pittsburgh: 444
28. Arizona State: 408
29. Syracuse: 407
30. Iowa: 368

- T-31. Maryland: 352
- T-31. TCU: 352
33. Minnesota: 341
34. Wisconsin: 317
35. West Virginia: 315
36. Missouri: 314
37. Virginia Tech: 303
38. Duke: 297
39. Army: 284
40. Boston College: 280

41. North Carolina: 277
42. Texas Tech: 267
43. Utah: 264
44. California: 260
45. Stanford: 242
46. Navy: 239
47. Houston: 229
48. Miami (Ohio): 220
49. Illinois: 219
50. Purdue: 210

51. Wyoming: 188
52. Toledo: 184
53. Oregon: 177
54. Boise State: 172
55. Fresno State: 169
56. Oregon State: 160
57. Air Force: 154
58. North Carolina State: 152
59. Louisville: 146
60. Arizona: 144

61. SMU: 138
62. Rice: 137
63. Baylor: 129
64. Tulsa: 123
65. Oklahoma State: 115
66. Virginia: 101
67. Southern Miss: 99
68. Bowling Green: 94

T-69. Kentucky: 86

T-69. Kansas: 86

T-71. San Diego State: 80

T-71. Nevada: 80

73. Hawaii: 75

74. San Jose State: 72

75. Colorado State: 69

76. Kansas State: 66

T-77. Washington State: 65

T-77. Central Michigan: 65

79. Marshall: 62

80. Northwestern: 60

81. Mississippi State: 59

82. Cincinnati: 58

83. South Carolina: 55

84. Ball State: 48

85. Troy: 40

86. East Carolina: 26

87. South Florida: 22

T-88. North Texas: 20

T-88. Florida Atlantic: 20

90. Connecticut: 17

91. UCF: 16

92. Louisiana Tech: 13

T-93. Ohio: 11

T-93. Tulane: 11

T-95. Utah State: 9

T-95. Middle Tennessee: 9

T-95. Wake Forest: 9

98. Western Michigan: 7

99. Northern Illinois: 6

100. UNLV: 1

101. Rutgers: minus-6

102. Indiana: minus-8

103. Buffalo: minus-11

104. New Mexico: minus-14

T-105. UAB: minus-15

T-105. Florida International: minus-15

107. Arkansas State: minus-17

108. Akron: minus-21

109. UL Lafayette: minus-23

110. Memphis: minus-24

- 111. UTEP: minus-26
- 112. UL Monroe: minus-27
- 113. Eastern Michigan: minus-36
- 114. Iowa State: minus-53
- 115. Temple: minus-56
- 116. Kent State: minus-59
- 117. New Mexico State: minus-60
- 118. Idaho: minus-64
- 119. Vanderbilt: minus-73

Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton are researchers at ESPN.

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Thursday, January 15, 2009

Updated: January 23, 6:24 PM ET

Explaining the Prestige Rankings

By Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton
ESPN Research

Who is No. 1? That debate rages weekly during each college football season, and often long after the season is over and the trophies have been handed out. The debate is as much a part of the annual ritual as the touchdowns, fight songs and bowl games.

If you think that process can spark a debate, try ranking each FBS team's all-time position in college football history.

But the ESPN Research Department devised a plan to settle the argument. Its system lets the numbers do the talking.

ESPN's Prestige Rankings are a numerical method of ranking the best FBS college football programs since the 1936 season. Point values were assigned for certain successes (win a national title, earn 25 points) and failures (get your program banned from the postseason, lose two points). The research department ran all the numbers through the computer to come up with the No. 1 program (and Nos. 2 to 119) of the past 73 seasons.

Why start with the 1936 season?

The AP poll was introduced that season, making it the first time the longest-standing news organization in the United States began ranking teams and crowning a national champion. Starting in 1937, the NCAA began recognizing "major college programs" (now known as the FBS). To accrue points, a program had to be recognized as one of these major programs by the NCAA. Those years are listed on pages 426 and 427 of this year's NCAA Football Record Book.

Explanation of the scoring system

A national title earns the biggest point value, but berths in major bowls, Heisman winners, bowl wins, conference record and top-5 finishes in the AP poll all were big point-getters, too. Conversely, postseason bans, probation and television bans are assigned negative point values. Here's a complete breakdown of the scoring system:

National title: 25 points

The full 25 points were awarded to any team that won one of the two major poll titles (AP, UPI or coaches) that season. No season had more than two title winners.

Berth in one of the major bowls: 10

Major bowls were defined as every Rose, Orange and Sugar bowl since '36; every Cotton Bowl from 1940 to '94 (i.e., from when it started taking the SWC champ until the Cotton was booted from the Bowl Alliance); and every Fiesta Bowl since the '86 season when the historic No. 1 Miami-vs.-No. 2 Penn State game changed the sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id=383...

landscape of college football.

Major bowl win: 10

Best win/loss record in conference regular season: 10

These points were awarded to every team that had at least a share of the best overall record in a major football conference, regardless of divisional alignment. Independent schools were awarded the bonus if they were ranked ahead of at least three of the big six conference champions in a final regular-season poll that season.

Final AP top-5 finish: 10

All final poll points were awarded for the final poll put out by the AP that season.

Heisman winner: 8

Final AP top 6-10 finish: 6

Conference title championship-game bonus: 5

This bonus was given to a school only if it hadn't already gotten credit for having the best record in its conference's regular season.

Final AP top 11-25 finish: 4

Bowl appearance: 3

This was awarded for any NCAA-sanctioned bowl, and would be added to the previously mentioned major bowl points.

Bowl win: 3

10-win season: 2

Week as AP No. 1: 2

Win over AP No. 1: 1

Each consensus All-American: 1

First-round NFL draft pick (since '70): 1

Losing season: minus-2

There were lots of variables for when a school was handed penalties by the NCAA for infractions. Those penalties were graded as such:

Each year of television ban: minus-1

Each year of postseason ban: minus-2

Each year of overall probation: minus-1

Each year of financial-aid penalty: minus-1

Each year of recruiting penalties: minus-1

Each penalty of "show cause action:" minus-2

Now you know how the numbers were crunched. So when do you get to see the results? Here's the schedule:

[Monday: 21-119](#)

[Tuesday: 16-20](#)

[Wednesday: 11-15](#)

[Thursday: 6-10](#)

[Friday: 1-5](#)

Chris Fallica, Nick Loucks and Harold Shelton are researchers at ESPN.

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