

The top 20: Sooner or later, OU is #1

By BOB YOUNG
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Autumn — the leaves change, the weather gets colder, and Oklahoma is picked to finish in the Top Ten in college football. This season is no different, as Oklahoma, along with most of the other traditional powers, is picked to carry on its winning ways.

(The following is a composite Top Twenty chosen by averaging the preseason polls of the AP, the UPI, Sports Illustrated, Inside Sports and Street and Smith's.

Florida and SMU were not included in the UPI poll because they are on NCAA probation. To get their rankings, their averages in the other polls were used to give a theoretical UPI ranking.)

1. OKLAHOMA: The days when the Sooners would win by jamming a wishbone down its opponents' throats are nearly passed. But the team returns nine starters from last year's second-rated defense and Spencer Tillman returns to the halfback spot after being injured most of last year.

2. AUBURN: Speaking of wishbones, don't expect one from Auburn this year. Coach Pat Dye has overhauled the offense and come up with an intricate I-formation to showcase his Heisman-quality back, Bo Jackson.

3. SOUTHERN METHODIST: Although the program was hit with more sanctions than Nicaragua this summer, the Mustangs should still have an excellent year. The tailback tandem of Reggie Dupard and Jeff Atkins combined with quarterback Don King and a veteran defense should get the Ponies all that the NCAA will let them have.

4. USC: While USC historically gets praise because of its tailbacks, it gets wins because of its offensive line. This season will be no exception as All-America linemen Jeff Bregel and James FitzPatrick will be blocking for any one of five talented backs.

5. FLORIDA: Sure, the Gators have one more year of probation to sit through — but they have three more years of quarterback Kerwin Bell, who finished last year with the best efficiency rating ever for a freshman in the NCAA.

6. WASHINGTON: The losses from last season's 11-1 squad are devastating — but luckily for Huskies' fans — so are the returnees, not the least of which is coach Don James, who hasn't won less than eight games in a year since coming to Seattle seven years ago.

7. IOWA: With quarterback Chuck Long's completion percentage of 66.1, Ronnie Harmon

averaging over 100 yards a game and Larry Station getting over 12 tackles per Saturday, the Hawkeyes may be headed for a trip to Pasadena.

8. OHIO STATE: Keith Byars ran for 1,655 yards last year and caught and returned kicks for another 626 yards. He's lost (to injury) for the first three games, but the Buckeyes are strong without him.

9. BRIGHAM YOUNG: LaVell Edward's team is the most exciting thing to happen to Utah since . . . umm . . . ah . . . for a long time anyway. The combination of Robbie Bosco's arm and Glen Kozlowski's hands should keep that tradition intact.

10. NEBRASKA: Only four returning starters? Yup. But there are

enough talented players in Lincoln this season to keep the 'Huskies in the top twenty.

11. MARYLAND: There are only a few things standing between the Terps and a national championship. Things like Penn State, Boston College, West Virginia, Michigan, Miami and the ACC.

12. ILLINOIS: Just the facts? OK, quarterback Jack Trudeau will probably break all of Tony Eason's career records, the team returns about 35 of its top 44 and the Illini ARE eligible to return to the Rose Bowl if they win the Big Ten.

13. NOTRE DAME: This is the last year of Gerry Faust's five-year contract, and it better be a good one. If injuries to key players infest South Bend like they have the past

few seasons, Faust better make plans to head for friendlier confines.

14. ARKANSAS: If coach Ken Hatfield can get his players to swallow his flexbone offense, the Razorbacks will be able to chew up and spit out most of the SWC's defenses.

15. UCLA: The Bruins should score every time they are within their own 25 this season — placekicker phenom John Lee will see to that.

16. FLORIDA STATE: If the Seminoles can find a runner to take advantage of a talented offensive line, there will be a lot of points scored in Tallahassee this year.

17. LOUISIANA STATE: If the Tigers can find some offensive

linemen to take care of a talented backfield, there will be a lot of points scored in Baton Rouge this year.

18. GEORGIA: Vince Dooley should have tried for senator — it would have been an easier campaign than the one that confronts him in Athens.

19. OKLAHOMA STATE: Talent-wise, it's hard to find a better group than the Cowboys. Depth-wise, you might as well look at some Corningware.

20. PENN STATE: Last season's 6-5 record was the second-worst in coach Joe Paterno's tenure with the Lions. But with an experienced and talented defense and tailback D. J. Dozier, Paterno should be back in form in '85.

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