



Situational handicapping is one of the best ways to make money as a bettor. You don't even have to be overly familiar with the teams or the way that they matchup to make an educated guess in these instances. How many times do you realize that you have a busy day tomorrow, so you spend tonight just relaxing and sitting on the couch? Or, what if you have to travel to the opposite coast for work next weekend, so you spend that weekend having a cookout in the backyard as an excuse to drink beer and not do anything?

There are situations in football that are similar to this. Travel is a big deal when it comes to certain football games. Think about some of the factors that come into play. East coast teams traveling to the West coast to play games that kick off at 4:05 p.m. according to their body. West coast teams heading to East Coast cities and playing what essentially amounts to a 9 or 10 a.m. game. Dome teams having to go play in harsh conditions in a cold weather city. Teams from moisture-heavy climates, whose bodies are used to breathing in the heavy air, having to go to play in cities like Denver, Provo (Brigham Young U.), and Cheyenne (Wyoming).

During the season, football players become creatures of habit. They eat around the same time, they wake up around the same time, they hit the weight room around the same time and they're used to doing their game preparations at the same time. This isn't entirely true of the college game because there are more start times than in the NFL, but players abide by rigid schedules. Those schedules are thrown off by time change differences.

There are three classic "spots" that bettors look for during football season – the "letdown spot" and the "sandwich spot". These happen in both the NFL and the college game and can be highly profitable. More often than not, games that fall into these criteria are circled by bettors as games that they know they want to play. Sometimes, their power ratings and team values don't even matter because it is such a difficult spot for one of the teams.

The “letdown spot” is an instance where a team gets a big win, plays all-out, but loses a heartbreaker, or goes from playing a top notch team to playing a second, or even third, tier opponent. Athletes have to train their minds to have a short-term memory and forget about the previous game and immediately start focusing on the next game. As we all know, human nature doesn't really work that way. Think about your last vacation. I bet you think about your last vacation more than your next one that hasn't happened yet. It's so easy to get nostalgic about good things that happen to us.

The “sandwich spot” is an instance where a team plays two big opponents, whether they are good teams, a rivalry game, or just games that mean a lot to them, surrounding a game of less importance. These spots occur more often in college football, mostly because of the conference schedule, and having only one shot at a team in your conference. Also, the way that the standings and polls are done. But, they do still occur in the NFL.

The “look-ahead” spot is self-explanatory. In the first paragraph, I mentioned about traveling for business next weekend, so this weekend is spent relaxing with friends, family, and beer. When we see tough tests or a busy schedule on the horizon, our first instinct is to take a step back and just enjoy things in the days leading up to what we're looking ahead to. In football, these spots occur when a big game is on the horizon, whether it be a rivalry game or a game that may decide the fate of your season.

The reason that these spots are appealing to bettors is that it's near impossible to expect a consistent effort from every team each week. Sometimes, a team will just look sluggish and disinterested. As a bettor, you hate to be backing a team on a week where they look like they don't care and put together a poor effort that costs you a wager. Isolating letdown spots, sandwich spots, and look-ahead spots can prevent you from backing a team on a bad week. They don't always go according to plan, but it's a calculated gamble based on the knowledge of human nature.

The season is a grind. All college teams will play between 12-14 games. The NFL, obviously, plays 16 games over 17 weeks. The effort just won't be there week in and week out. But, finding spots like these will benefit you when betting on games. Here are some spots for this week, and some spots to keep in mind for future weeks.

Florida State (-28) v. Wake Forest – Florida State is desperate for some real competition. They've played Murray State and Savannah State in the first two weeks. Wake Forest,

meanwhile, is coming off a big win over ACC-rival North Carolina. So, Wake Forest has been tested already. Consider that Wake Forest has beaten Florida State in four of the last seven matchups, including 2011 and 2009, games that still resonate with the seniors on Florida State's team.

However, as great of a spot as it seems for Florida State, they host Clemson next weekend. Before the season, pundits were projecting the Florida State/Clemson matchup as the game that would decide who represents the ACC's Atlantic Division in the conference championship game. Florida State lost a tough game to Clemson last season on the road and has revenge on their minds this season.

So, as a bettor, you have a couple questions to ask yourself:

1. Will you get a maximum effort from Florida State with Clemson on the schedule next weekend?

2. How will Wake Forest respond after getting a big victory over their in-state rival, in a game that they had to fight and claw to win?

In this instance, you have two conflicting situational spots. At that point, it's up to you to decide which one means more to you or just do more homework and research on the game.

Wisconsin (-14) v. Utah State – Wisconsin embarrassed themselves and the Big Ten conference by losing at Oregon State last week. Utah State beat Utah to snap a string of 12 consecutive losses to their in-state rival. Both teams had some travel, as Wisconsin came home from Oregon, Utah State travels to Madison, to play in a Big Ten stadium for the first time in a long time. The theory would say that Utah State is in a letdown spot. They just won an emotional game over a rival that they haven't beaten in over a decade and now they have to travel to a Big Ten opponent, when conference play starts next week for them.

The stumbling block in this game is how terrible Wisconsin has looked in the first two weeks, otherwise this would be an instant play.

Baltimore (+1) @ Philadelphia

Baltimore is in both a letdown and a sandwich spot this week. For starters, they played an AFC North foe last weekend and crushed Cincinnati on Monday night. Now, they have a short prep week to go to Philadelphia and take on an Eagles team that is better than what they showed against the Browns. Next week, the Eagles head to New England to take on the Patriots in a possible AFC Championship game preview.

Philadelphia is a team that should not be overlooked. The bad spot for Baltimore, to me, is already built into the line. Baltimore should be favored in this game, even with going on the road. They're the better team, but they're in a bad spot with a short week and a big game next week.

Finding spots like these can be really profitable for you if you find them and bet them accordingly.

Good luck and pick winners.