

Now I know why I don't do predictions during the regular season- and why it's a good thing I don't bet on college football. Yours Truly



doesn't exactly have Nostradamus looking to his laurels after the first two weeks of bowl games. My prediction record currently rests at a dismal 13-15 with some glaring gaffes. Picking Michigan State to beat Alabama wasn't exactly my finest hour. But I have had a better bowl season than the Big Ten, so I've got that going for me.

Now seven games remain in the college football season, with the capper being the matchup between Auburn and Oregon in the BCS Championship. One game remains for Ohio State as well; the Sugar Bowl against the Arkansas Razorbacks.

It's one last chance at a victory for fourteen teams, one last chance at a crystal football for two teams, and one last chance at predictive redemption for Yours Truly. Exactly half of the twenty-eight bowl games played thus far have ended in margins of sixteen points or more. It's been a season of blowouts. Hopefully we'll see some competitive football in this final week, a Buckeye victory... and some decent picks for the resident Swami.

### **Monday, January 3**

***Orange Bowl (Miami Gardens, FL, 8:30 PM): Stanford (11-1) vs. Virginia Tech (11-2)***

Other games are getting more publicity, but this is one of the more intriguing matchups of the entire bowl season- explosive Stanford, with Heisman runner-up quarterback Andrew Luck and red-hot coach Jim Harbaugh versus resourceful Virginia Tech, which after a horrific start won its last eleven behind multi-talented quarterback Tyrod Taylor. It's a game between ciphers.

## 2010-11 Bowl Preview, Part III

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

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Stanford feasted mostly on nobodies and Virginia Tech lost to nobody in James Madison. It's hard to really gauge the quality of these teams based on schedule. Stanford definitely passes the eye test... but you have to wonder how focused they can be with their quarterback and head coach both on the way out, maybe.

*Whack Predict-O:* Virginia Tech 37, Stanford 31

*Fun Fact:* Stanford has never participated in a BCS/big-time bowl aside from the Rose.

**Tuesday, January 4**

***Sugar Bowl (New Orleans, LA, 8:30 PM): Ohio State (10-2) vs. Arkansas (10-2)***

Well, the good news is that ["Tat-gate"](#) is off the front pages leading up to the Sugar Bowl. The bad news is what has replaced it: an appalling New Year's Day for the Big Ten Conference. All five conference members to play on Saturday lost, and for the most part it was in abject fashion. Especially humiliating were the losses by [Michigan](#) and [Michigan State](#) by a combined score of 101-21 to Mississippi State and Alabama. Wisconsin's [Rose Bowl defeat at the hands of TCU](#) didn't burnish the conference's reputation either.

Once again, as it seems to be every year, it's up to Ohio State to salvage whatever pride the Big Ten has left. But really, when it comes to the Buckeyes, conference pride doesn't really matter. If Ohio State goes 12-0 they'll play for the BCS Championship no matter what. If they go 10-2 or 11-1 they'll get a BCS invite no matter what. Ohio State is bigger than the Big Ten. And "conference pride" is for glory-whoring SEC fans.

So what matters on Tuesday? It isn't Big Ten versus God's Conference. What matters is what always matters. The Buckeyes must convert on third downs and stop the Razorbacks from doing the same. Terrelle Pryor must make good decisions and be accurate. The Buckeyes must turn their scoring opportunities into touchdowns, not field goals, and they must win the turnover

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battle. It's that simple. It always is.

I don't think "Tat-gate" will have a negative effect on the way Ohio State plays. If anything, the controversy will sharpen their focus, give them that bunker mentality. Arkansas is a fine team. Ryan Mallett passed for 3,592 yards and thirty touchdowns while Knile Davis came on strong with five 100 yard-plus games in the second half of the season. The Razorbacks finished eighth in the nation in total offense; fourth in passing. But defensively they aren't the type of dominant unit the Buckeyes have faced in previous dealings with SEC opponents. Ohio State lost in the trenches to Florida in 2007 and to LSU in 2008. The Buckeyes should fare better this time around.

Ohio State can win this game. I think they will win. And if they do, who cares about the Big Ten's bowl record? Ohio State's will be 1-0, and that's what is important.

*Whack Predict-O:* Ohio State 27, Arkansas 23

*Fun Fact:* Arkansas is the only former member of the Southwest Conference whom Ohio State has never played. The Buckeyes are 23-4-2 against the other eight ex-SWC schools.

**Thursday, January 6**

***GoDaddy.com Bowl (Mobile, AL, 8:00 PM): O.G. Miami (9-4) vs. Middle Tennessee (6-6)***

It's what every college football fan has waited for with bated breath. It's the third installment in the MAC-Sun Belt Bowl Challenge, the contest to decide the second-worst conference in college football. The Sun Belt has already locked up the honor with victories over the MAC in the New Orleans and Motor City Bowl, Troy and Florida International doing the honors at the expense of Ohio and Toledo. Now the O.G. Miami will look to salvage conference and Buckeye State honor as the surprising Redskins tangle with underachieving Middle Tennessee, crippled by Dwight Dasher's early-season suspension.

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*Whack Predict-O:* Miami 28, Middle Tennessee 18

*Fun Fact:* Middle Tennessee and the O.G. Miami have never met. The Blue Raiders are 2-0 against Miami of Florida, although their last victory over the 'Canes came in 1932.

### Friday, January 7

***Cotton Bowl (Arlington, TX, 8:00 PM): Louisiana State (10-2) vs. Texas A&M (9-3)***

It's a shame this game is being played nearly a week after New Year's Day, the appropriate end-date of the college football season. Because this is a pretty good old-school New Year's game- SWC veteran Texas A&M against traditional Southern power LSU. Were in not for the spot on the calendar and Jerry World location this could be a classic Cotton Bowl meeting. It's also a perfect jumping-off point for the Aggies, who enjoyed their best regular season in Mike Sherman's three-year tenure in College Station. With Texas having suffered a disastrous season, A&M has a chance to make a very loud statement both nationally and within the Lone Star State with a win over the Tigers.

*Whack Predict-O:* Texas A&M 24, Louisiana State 20

*Fun Fact:* A&M hasn't won the Cotton Bowl [since 1988](#) when they defeated Tim Brown and Notre Dame, 35-10. The Aggies have lost five straight in the Cotton since that game.

### Saturday, January 8

***Compass Bowl (Birmingham, AL, 12:00 PM): Pittsburgh (7-5) vs. Kentucky (6-6)***

It isn't been a good postseason for Pitt thus far. Head coach Dave Wannstadt was kicked

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upstairs following a disappointing regular season, his replacement, ex-O.G. Miami boss Mike Haywood, was [quickly scuttled](#) after being arrested for felony battery, and after all that the Panthers have to get up for a game in crumbling Legion Field against an uninspiring opponent in Kentucky. The Wildcats have their own problems, with 3,000-yard senior quarterback Mike Hartline suspended for the bowl game. But Kentucky still has Randall Cobb, who finished second in the nation in all-purpose yardage, and that should be enough to dispatch the wobbly Panthers.

*Whack Predict-O:* Kentucky 30, Pittsburgh 17

*Fun Fact:* This is Kentucky's first bowl appearance outside the state of Tennessee since Tim Couch and Co. lost to Penn State in the [1999 Outback Bowl](#). Since that game he 'Cats have appeared in four Music City Bowls and one Liberty Bowl.



**Sunday, January 9**

***Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl (San Francisco, CA, 9:00 PM): Nevada (12-1) vs. Boston College (7-5)***

If big-time college football had a Tournament, Nevada would be this season's sexy mid-major dark-horse. The Pack rang up impressive wins over Cal and Boise State on the way to their best record since moving up to I-A in 1992, finished third in the nation in rushing with a pair of 1,000-yard ball-carriers and boast one of the nation's most dynamic tandems in senior quarterback Colin Kaepernick and senior tailback Vai Tauga. Kaepernick is the only quarterback

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in Division I history to throw for 2,000 yards and run for 1,000 three straight seasons; Taua has rushed for over 1,300 yards three straight seasons. Boston College makes its second straight trip to Pac Bell Park after losing to USC in this game last season. The Eagles were inspired defensively in winning their last five games, and the linebacker tandem of Luke Kuechly and Mark Herzlich is outstanding. But Nevada has already beaten better teams than this.

*Whack Predict-O:* Nevada 26, Boston College 17

*Fun Fact:* Two of Nevada's four consecutive bowl defeats have come to ACC opponents. The Pack lost to Miami of Florida in the 2006 MPC Computers Bowl and to Maryland in the 2008 Humanitarian Bowl (same game; different name.)

**Monday, January 10**

***BCS National Championship Game (Glendale, AZ, 8:30 PM): Auburn (12-0) vs. Oregon (12-0)***

Once in a while the BCS works, giving us a matchup of the two teams clearly most deserving of playing for the National Championship. It worked in 2003, it worked in 2006 and it works this season, with the only remaining big-time unbeaten meeting in the desert for the crystal football. (Apologies to TCU, which is unbeaten and damned good itself, but the Frogs don't have the resume of either of these participants.)

And a tasty matchup it is. We've got the Heisman Trophy winner on one side and the nation's best offense on the other. We've got Auburn, which slugged its way through God's Conference without a blemish, and Oregon, which roared virtually unchallenged through its schedule. Two teams that have never met, meeting for a National Championship Auburn hasn't won since 1957 and which Oregon has never won. If not for the whole [unpleasantness](#) going on with Cam Newton in general and the Auburn program in particular, this would be a match made in football heaven.

Are these *really* the two best teams in the country? Not sure. I have serious doubts about

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Oregon's defense, particularly away from the cozy confines of Autzen Stadium. Auburn looked extremely vulnerable at times this season, especially on defense. But these are the two most deserving, and that will have to do in this system under which college football labors. And which team will win? Well, the SEC has won four consecutive BCS Championship Games. My record isn't great so far, but when in doubt, I'll go with God's Conference.

*Whack Predict-O:* Auburn 48, Oregon 31

*Fun Fact:* The only major-college school in the Pacific Northwest to win a National Championship is the University of Washington. The Huskies split the mythical title with Miami of Florida in 1991.