

## College Football Viewer's Guide: Week 1

A statistical overview of the upcoming weekend(s) in college football

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*Week 1 Viewing Goal: Get a first look at 51 (of 130) FBS teams*

Star Ratings: All starred games are either expected to be highly competitive or have a reasonable probability of an upset. Beyond that, the criteria below are used, which combine some subjectivity with objective statistical analysis.

★ Interesting game because of matchup quality, team styles, conference races, and/or setting

★★ Important game with major conference or rankings implications

★★★ Critical game with New Year's Six implications

In the game title, AP Rankings are used until CFP Rankings become available. All times are Eastern and imply PM (or 12:00 noon) unless otherwise specified.

All other statistics or rankings utilized in the articles refer to ratings generated by McIllece Sports, whether in the College Football Atlas 2019 preview or numbers updated throughout the year, unless otherwise specified.

Letter grades are based on statistical efficiency and overall impact on the scoreboard (both positive and negative) and are applied to individual players and position groups. These are updated throughout the year but initially reflect the 2018 season. These grades are not adjusted for strength of schedule.

Team ratings, such as power rating, scoring offense, and scoring defense, are point-based ratings that are adjusted for strength of schedule. Score predictions and win/loss probabilities are initially based on projection models and gradually phase in season results.

### Saturday, August 24

The news from Coral Gables is the anointment of Jarren Williams as the starting QB over Buckeye transfer Tate Martell. The melodrama swirled around whether Martell would transfer out after missing the ensuing practice, though he has since returned with an apparent willingness to switch positions.

The real Miami headliners are on defense, where a five-man posse of A-grade players--DL Jonathan Garvin; LBs Shaq Quarterman and Michael Pinckney; and DBs Romeo Finley and Trajan Bandy--form the spine of the Hurricane team.

In the FBS college football opener, ★★ **Miami vs #8 Florida (ESPN 7:00)** treats fans to one of the (two-Saturday) opening week's most compelling games from neutral-site Orlando. The Canes will need their pedigreed defensive backbone to stymie an underappreciated Gator offense, who must reload an A-grade offensive line but returns playmaking RB Lamical Perine. QB Feleipe Franks is a solid distributor

and an active if unspectacular ball carrier, and all the primary WRs return--top target Van Jefferson must improve his consistency, while the underutilized Josh Hammond, the offense's most efficient player, needs more balls thrown his way to unlock the potential of this unit.

Meanwhile, though perhaps lacking Miami's topline star power, the Gators feature more defensive continuity and plenty talent of their own.

An undercurrent to this Sunshine State matchup is the familiarity between the coaching staffs: Manny Diaz has coached with Florida HC Dan Mullen and co-OCs John Hevesy and Billy Gonzales, so the Miami defense should be prepared for most of the looks Florida gives them.

An elite defensive matchup (Miami #13; Florida #15), the imbalance here is on the offensive side (Miami #80; Florida #8). Expect inexperienced Jarren Williams to struggle against a quality, veteran defense, and while Garvin, Quarterman and company give the Hurricanes hope (18% win probability), I favor the more complete Gators--who also boast a 99th percentile kicking game--by a pair of touchdowns.

*Prediction*

Miami 18

**#8 Florida 32**

After the marquee matchup of opening night, stay tuned for fireworks from Honolulu, as ★ **Hawai'i hosts Arizona (CBSSN 10:30)** in a high-flying clash of prolific QBs Cole McDonald and Khalil Tate, both able to beat defenses by land or by air. These teams each return a wealth of offensive experience and firepower but carry defensive baggage after a series of porous performances throughout 2018. While the Rainbow Warriors may be the trendy upset pick of the season's debut slate, the chasm between these two otherwise similarly profiled teams is the talent base: Arizona's pure recruiting-based power rating expectation is 16 points higher, lifting the Wildcats to an 84% win probability.

In a scheduling rarity, Hawai'i gets a second Pac-12 visitor in their second game (Sep 7 vs Oregon State), which will afford them a better chance of notching a big nonconference win.

*Prediction*

**Arizona 43**

Hawai'i 28

## **Thursday, August 29**

The season kicks off in earnest Thursday night with a rematch of ★ **Cincinnati vs UCLA (ESPN 7:00)**, showcasing a pair of top RBs: Bruin senior workhorse Joshua Kelly and superlative Bearcat junior Michael Warren.

Last year, Cincinnati HC Luke Fickell took his team west to spoil Chip Kelly's return to college football and spark an insurgent run to an 11-2 season. The roles are reversed in the 2019 opener: Cincinnati bears the burden of being a clear top-3 contender for the American Conference Championship, while the Bruins remain under the radar in Kelly's second year at the helm, picked behind Utah, USC, and even Arizona State in the Pac-12 South by many prognosticators. But second-year head coaching boosts (for good coaches) are real phenomena. UCLA is more settled and should be much improved, about equal to

Cincinnati in preseason power rating (#30 vs #27, respectively) and has a real opportunity to avenge last year's hope-crushing defeat. The difference here is homefield advantage for Cincinnati, giving the Bearcats a field goal edge.

*Prediction*

UCLA 26

**Cincinnati 29**

Howard's Rock, The Hill, Death Valley: The defending national champions and their traditions take the stage an hour after the UCLA/Cincinnati kickoff. **Georgia Tech at #1 Clemson (ACCN 8:00)** is the first of several ACC conference tilts in week one (more on the other two later). The Tigers are once again star-studded, boasting an arsenal of offensive weaponry--Heisman contender QB Trevor Lawrence, A-grade RBs Travis Etienne and Lyn-J Dixon, and A-grade WRs Tee Higgins and Justyn Ross. Defensively, reloading without missing a beat is elite DC Brent Venables's specialty, seemingly no matter the caliber of player to be replaced. Even though a historically elite front four of Christian Wilkins, Clelin Ferrell, Austin Bryant, and Dexter Lawrence is now scattered about the NFL, don't expect much drop-off in overall defensive quality (preseason #2 scoring defense after finishing #1 in 2018).

While this contest won't be competitive (98% Clemson win probability), it is an intriguing first look at the new Georgia Tech regime, a complete overhaul led by former Temple boss Geoff Collins. Paul Johnson's spread offense has been a Yellowjacket fixture for so long, it may be jarring to see Tech running a more commonplace college football system. OC Dave Patenaude and likely starting QB Lucas Johnson will be thrown into the deepest end of the pool in the first game of their transition and will struggle to mount much offense early, but the lopsided nature of the game--and Clemson's ability to strike quickly and easily, increasing the number of possessions for both teams--may allow them to sneak in some late points against Clemson's second-team defense.

*Prediction*

Georgia Tech 23

**#1 Clemson 55**

Don't forget about ★ **South Dakota State at Minnesota (9:00 FS1)**, a dangerous FCS game for my preseason Big Ten West favorite Golden Gophers. South Dakota State, #4 in the preseason FCS rankings and a championship contender, is better than many FBS teams and could threaten quite a few Power 5 squads. Minnesota is #2 nationally in offensive continuity from 2018 to 2019, and they'll need that experience to fend off an undaunted, top FCS program (26% upset chance).

Minnesota's ongoing QB competition ended prematurely, as a fall camp injury to Zach Annexstad delivered the job to Tanner Morgan, who outplayed Annexstad in 2018, particularly in the passing game. RB Mohamed Ibrahim and WR Tyler Johnson are rising Big Ten stars who should evolve into household names in the midlands. The Gopher offensive line excelled at run blocking a year ago, but they were sloppy in pass protection, an area that needs to improve. On the other side, a void in production from DB Jacob Huff and LB Blake Cashman must be replaced; SR LB Carter Coughlin, an A-grade defender, is the top returning player.

*Prediction*

South Dakota State 28

**Minnesota 38**

No team has more at stake Thursday night than Kyle Whittingham's Utes. The top preseason College Football Playoff contender from the Pac-12 has to first survive Week 1 before being included in the conversation. As the other games wind down, ★ ★ **#14 Utah at BYU (ESPN 10:15)** kicks off the nightcap and likely the most consequential matchup of the evening.

BYU doesn't project as a great team, and they've had their share of struggles since Bronco Mendenhall headed east, but they're a battle-tested bunch who are no strangers to close games and tough competition, they're playing at home, and the Cougars have an ace in the hole: SO QB Zach Wilson, who replaced departed Tanner Mangum midway into 2018 and shone in his half-season opportunity. Remarkably, Wilson's 59% efficiency mark was actually higher than heralded fellow 2018 freshmen QBs and 2019 Heisman short-listers Trevor Lawrence (57%) and Nebraska's Adrian Martinez (51%). On top of the great potential at QB, BYU may have the best player on the field in LB Isaiah Kaufusi--although Utah RB Zack Moss has a legitimate claim to that honor, as well.

Despite shining a spotlight on BYU's topline players, I still like Utah as a fairly strong favorite (75% win chance) due to overall talent and defensive pedigree, but this game is unlikely to be a walkover; Utah should be prepared for a four-quarter fight, especially in the unpredictable wilds of Week 1.

*Prediction*

**#14 Utah 31**

BYU 21

### **Friday, August 30**

On Friday night, the kickoffs are staggered but the slate is crowded, and the remote control is bound to get a workout navigating the landscape.

It begins easily enough: catch the first hour of **Rice at Army (CBSSN 6:00)** before more competitive games kick off later. After a stunning 2018 campaign (11-2, including an admirable overtime loss at Oklahoma), Army is one of America's darling teams, and there is plenty to like about the Black Knights in 2019, starting with A+ QB Kelvin Hopkins Jr., equally efficient in both the run and pass game. As is typical for service academies, Army has a fair amount of production to replace on both sides of the ball, but against a very weak 13-game schedule (outside a trip to the Big House), the road is paved for the Knights to notch 10+ regular season wins again (78% chance).

Unless they defy the analytics, Rice figures to be one of the worst teams in the FBS, #128 out 130 in my preseason power ratings. They don't have much of a shot in this one (3%) and have the worst projected win-loss record in the country (1-11). The Black Knights will methodically grind out the Owls in this mismatch.

*Prediction*

Rice 13

**Army 39**

More compelling action begins an hour later, as ★ **South Florida hosts #19 Wisconsin (ESPN 7:00)** in a testy trip for the Badgers. A two-TD favorite, Wisconsin, featuring record-setting phenom RB Jonathan

Taylor, may not seem to be at much risk against a USF team that struggled mightily and was worse than its 7-6 record indicated in 2018. Despite surfacing doubts about Charlie Strong, the staff at South Florida has a pretty good track record (although several new faces rate as unknowns), and 17th-ranked offensive continuity gives the home team some hope for a material improvement in 2019. The weak link could very well be the Bull defense, breaking in some new faces against a run game that will stress every chink in the armor. But Wisconsin has defensive questions of its own: namely, replacing all three top linebackers from 2018--T.J. Edwards, Ryan Connelly, and Andrew Van Ginkel--who also rated as their three most impactful playmakers. Additionally, the Badgers suffered through miserable QB play in 2018, which is another cause for concern when traveling a long way to play a game opponent.

Wisconsin is the superior team top to bottom, but they're not impervious to a Week 1 stunner. The best news for the Badgers would be Jonathan Taylor hitting a couple homeruns early to snuff out USF's belief that they can pull off the major upset. If instead USF can load the box, limit Taylor in the first half, and force Wisconsin to consistently take to the air--where they could possibly pull down a game-changing interception or two--they've got a puncher's chance [19%].

*Prediction*

**#19 Wisconsin 35**

South Florida 22

At halftime, take in a few series of a competitive G5/P5 matchup, **Utah State at Wake Forest (ACCN 8:00)**. Though they have almost an entirely new supporting cast, Aggie QB Jordan Love and RB Gerold Bright are star Mountain West players who are good enough to threaten the Deacons on their home turf. Wake QB Jamie Newman was handed the reins after a fall camp competition, and he'll have his work cut out for him against a Utah State defense that returns A-grade players at all three levels. In a tight game, special teams can determine the result, and here Utah State has the edge, between excellent placekicker Dominik Eberle and top-notch returners Jordan Nathan and Savon Scarver.

Despite a lot of arrows pointing at Utah State, the overall talent level and home-field advantage of the ACC club pulls me in their direction, but this game could swing either way.

*Prediction*

Utah State 30

**Wake Forest 37**

After the Wisconsin game ends, check in on another risky Big Ten foray into G5 country (**Purdue at Nevada, CBSSN 9:30**). HC Jeff Brohm spurned Louisville's advances, sophomore sensation WR Rondale Moore is among college football's most explosive players, and now Purdue is positioned as one of six legitimate contenders in the high-parity Big Ten West. But...the overall offensive continuity is dead last in the nation. Moore and top-flight TE Brycen Hopkins will be receiving passes from QB Elijah Sindelar this season in a new-look offense. The experienced defense may need to steady the ship as Sindelar and company work out kinks in non-conference play.

Meanwhile, Jay Norvell's Wolfpack is coming off a successful 8-5 campaign that featured a surprisingly strong defense, which brings back just enough players to cause Purdue's retooled offense some problems. Daniel Brown was the most impactful defender a year ago and returns as the senior leader of the secondary, while SO DT Dom Peterson is a rising MWC star and will challenge Purdue's interior run

game. If the Wolfpack's defense holds serve, that will ease the pressure on redshirt freshman QB Carson Strong in his starting debut.

*Prediction*

**Purdue 33**

Nevada 21

The balancing act becomes tricky as the evening progresses and two more compelling games work themselves into the mix--if you can record one of the games to watch Saturday morning, now is a good time to leverage that modern-day luxury.

The annual Rocky Mountain rivalry game in neutral-site Denver (**Colorado vs Colorado State, ESPN 10:00**) is usually a fun and competitive spectacle, despite last year's lopsided result (45-13 Buffaloes). One of the nation's best WRs, Colorado's Laviska Shenault Jr., will light up the evening, catching passes from one of the nation's most experienced QBs, SR Steven Montez. On defense, LB Nate Landman and DL Mustafa Johnson will make life difficult for Colorado State's young offense.

Expect points aplenty further northwest, as Mike Gundy's Oklahoma State travels up to Corvallis (★ **Oklahoma State at Oregon State, FS1 10:30**). Oregon State is rightfully picked last in the Pac-12 North because of their woeful 2018 defensive campaign, but don't let that fool you into thinking this is a cakewalk, as HC Jonathan Smith has a much more experienced roster in his second year at the helm. QB Jake Luton continues as the starter, and he has both a solid RB corps behind him and surprisingly potent WR targets at his disposal, including one of the best players you maybe never heard of: JR WR Isaiah Hodgins, whose per-play efficiency rate is one of the best in the nation at his position.

*Predictions*

**Colorado 35**

Colorado State 21

**Oklahoma State 47**

Oregon State 34

### **Saturday, August 31**

Mismatches dominate the noon timeslot, so take the opportunity to scout out a trio of the Big Ten's top talent and offensive awards candidates.

Sophomore star Adrian Martinez leads the optimistic Cornhuskers (**South Alabama at #24 Nebraska, ESPN 12:00**), bubbling with the nation's enthusiasm despite back-to-back 4-8 seasons. Martinez is a true dual-threat QB and one of the country's most consequential players, as his overall 2018 scoreboard impact (26.6 points per game) was one of the highest nationally and second in the Big Ten to Indiana's seemingly forgotten QB Peyton Ramsey.

One of the highest-profile transfer QBs of the off-season, sophomore Justin Fields takes over the reins of the perennially explosive Buckeye offense (**Florida Atlantic at #5 Ohio State, FOX 12:00**). Besides the aforementioned Purdue, Ohio State lost more experience than any other offense in the nation, but

expectations are always sky-high in Columbus. The real key for Fields's success may be the play of the rebuilt offensive line, which was superb a year ago but lost four starters.

*[Programming note: Martinez and Fields face off on September 28th in Lincoln.]*

Being a running back in a conference that includes Jonathan Taylor is a thankless gig, but don't overlook Illini RB Reggie Corbin (**Akron at Illinois, BTN 12:00**), the league's most efficient back--yes, including Taylor--after averaging an eye-popping 8.5 YPC in 2018. Most of the quality run blockers in front of Corbin are back in 2019. While Lovie Smith's Illini aren't expected to jump into the race for the Big Ten West, their run game with Corbin could make them a tough out for a few of the contenders.

After seeing some highlight reel plays across Big Ten country, head southeast for the second half of **Ole Miss at Memphis (ABC 12:00)**, a game that probably already has plenty of points on the scoreboard. Memphis is the more accomplished side and deserves to be favored at home versus a bottom-rung SEC opponent. Outstanding RB Darrell Henderson is off to the NFL, but Memphis brings back numerous offensive weapons and has experience and should be improved on defense. Ole Miss only returns 32% of its offensive experience from 2018 (#126 in the nation) but did make an intriguing hire by bringing in Rich Rodriguez as offensive coordinator. To spring the upset (29% chance), the Rebels will have to win a shootout.

#### *Predictions*

South Alabama 17  
**#24 Nebraska 49**

Florida Atlantic 17  
**#5 Ohio State 45**

Akron 20  
**Illinois 39**

Ole Miss 31  
**Memphis 40**

In the afternoon slot, check out the first quarter of Mack Brown's return to college football in the Carolina border-state rivalry (**South Carolina vs North Carolina, ESPN 3:30**). A good season for the Tar Heels would be to finish anywhere but last in the topsy-turvy ACC Coastal. Will Muschamp's Gamecocks have higher hopes but face heavy headwinds in the SEC East, and the schedule is a bear: South Carolina draws #2 Alabama and #12 Texas A&M from the West, and after slogging through an SEC season, they are rewarded with a trip to #1 Clemson on November 30th. I rate Muschamp's outfit as #20 in my preseason power ratings, but I still believe they could struggle to make a bowl game because of that gauntlet (52% chance of winning 6+ games in the regular season).

The top games of the afternoon kick off thirty minutes later. ★ **Virginia Tech at Boston College (ACCN 4:00)** marks an important hurdle in the Hokies' redemption quest after sputtering to a 6-7 finish last season. Despite the lackluster 2018 showing, Justin Fuente's club is very much in the mix to represent the pendulating Coastal in the ACC Championship Game (18% chance), but a loss to the Eagles would be a tremendous blow to their chances, dropping their expected record from 8-4 to 6-6. The good news is that the defense returns largely intact and will be better in legendary DC Bud Foster's swan song. I don't

have numbers to stick onto the Foster retirement effect, but I would imagine those defenders would be inspired and hungrier than ever to send him off on the right note, especially after disappointing in 2018.

Expect ★ ★ **Northwestern at #25 Stanford (FOX, 4:00)** to be a throwback battle of attrition between teams built around good defense. The pace here won't be as fast as many other games, and points will be at a premium. Excellent Stanford QB K.J. Costello will face Northwestern's #10 preseason defense with four new guardians up front, which could lead to plenty of disruption in the Cardinal's stay-on-schedule style. Wildcat defensive lineman Joe Gaziano is one of the nation's best and should have a banner day against that inexperienced front. But Northwestern's offense, especially in a tough road environment, doesn't inspire much confidence, replacing a bevy of players (#122 in offensive continuity) from a unit that was below P5 average last year.

*Predictions*

**South Carolina 40**

North Carolina 29

**Virginia Tech 34**

Boston College 27

Northwestern 14

**#25 Stanford 21**

★ ★ **Boise State vs Florida State (ESPN 7:00)** in Jacksonville kicks off primetime, and though neither team is ranked in the preseason poll, the implications here are significant: the Broncos are, as usual, one of the G5 favorites to make the New Year's Six bowl games, and a signature win essentially on the road would stand as an important resume builder for the CFP committee's consideration in November. Besides the obvious importance to Boise State, Florida State has respect on the line after a 2018 collapse in Willie Taggart's first season. The underachievement last year was staggering: FSU's Power Rating expectation based on recruiting was 19.8; instead, they limped to a 5-7 record and -1.9 Power Rating, nearly 22 points below their talent level. The Taggart hire itself is on trial in this game, and if the Seminoles fail to show material gains--even a competitive, close-fought loss would be a sign of improvement--the seat will get very warm in Tallahassee.

While I'm not personally high on Willie Taggart as the head coach, he made some savvy additions to the coaching staff this season that may save him: OC Kendal Briles and OL coach Randy Clements (who knows the Briles system), both A+ coaches in my grading system at their respective positions. For Taggart to save himself, he needs to fully hand over the keys to the offense to Briles. Whether he is able to do so will determine how far the Seminoles can go in 2019.

*Prediction*

Boise State 25

**Florida State 31**

A pair of interesting conference tilts, one with serious divisional ramifications, are likely to be overshadowed by the Boise/FSU matchup and the game of the night (coming up next) being played concurrently. But when commercial and halftime breaks allow, keep abreast of **#3 Georgia at Vanderbilt (SECN 7:30)** and ★ **Virginia at Pittsburgh (ACCN 7:30)**.

The Dawgs are deservedly favored to win the East and present the only true existential threat to Alabama's long-term dominance of the SEC; the Commodores are favored to finish in last place; and even though Georgia will probably pull away before it's all said and done, there is an off chance (16%) that Vandy, playing at home, could shock the CFB world on a weekend when few of the 2019 powers are endangered.

In case of the likelier result (Georgia pulling away), opt instead to check in on a game critical to the ACC Coastal race. The Cavaliers are the trendier pick, returning more experience from a year ago, a season that saw them finally start to realize their potential under HC Bronco Mendenhall (two of their losses came in OT). Pitt beat Virginia last year in Charlottesville and hobbled along to the ACC Championship Game, where Clemson dealt them an ugly defeat. The defense figured to improve this year, but a devastating fall camp injury to star lineman Rashad Weaver may have crippled those hopes. On paper, most everything favors Virginia, but a closer look at long-term trends knocks them down a bit, as regression to the mean effects weigh them down in my predictive models. Mendenhall may defy those effects and continue his upward climb, which would be in line with most expectations, but I'll go against the grain on this one and side with the home underdog. Whichever team emerges has an early leg up on the field for the divisional crown.

#### *Predictions*

**#3 Georgia 40**

Vanderbilt 26

Virginia 22

**Pittsburgh 27**

The only matchup of AP-ranked teams of Week 1 is the game of the week, ★★ ★ **#11 Oregon vs #16 Auburn (ABC 7:30)** in Arlington, Texas, and its victor will emerge as a serious contender for the College Football Playoff.

The case for Oregon: an all-conference caliber QB (Justin Herbert) behind an excellent offensive line; the second-year head coaching effect; a defense that returns talent and experience at all three levels. A win vs Auburn ratchets up their record expectation from 8-4 to 10-2, which from a predictive sense (it's hard to predict too many 11- or 12-win teams early in the season) thrusts them squarely into the playoff picture.

Why Oregon should be worried: the coaching staff gets a D+ grade in my ranking system. I like some of the defensive assistants, but Cristobal/Arroyo is a combo that, despite their lengthy histories, still has much to prove. While coaching grades are more useful as long-term indicators program health than for individual game predictions, it's concerning that the coaching matchup is fairly one-sided.

The case for Auburn: the coaching staff is better top to bottom, earning an A grade; despite a few personnel losses, the Tigers boast my #3 preseason scoring defense, trailing only Michigan State and Clemson; true freshman QB Bo Nix was an elite recruit (99th percentile); Auburn owns a decided special teams advantage, critical in close games. A win here keeps hope alive that they can compete in the rugged landscape of the SEC West.

Why Auburn should be worried: Bo Nix may be an elite recruit, but he is still only a true freshman, facing a veteran defense. Just because some true freshmen QBs have had success in recent years doesn't mean

Nix will follow suit. Turnovers change games, and if he throws a pick or two in his collegiate debut, the Ducks are in business. If Auburn does drop this one, its spell trouble against the likes of Alabama, LSU, etc.

On paper, I think the AP rankings of these teams should be reversed. I favor the Tigers to start 1-0 and take a big step forward, while the Pac-12 suffers a reputational setback.

*Prediction*

#11 Oregon 24

**#16 Auburn 34**

If you've got gas left in the tank--and why shouldn't you, it's only Week 1!--wind down with the West Coast nightcap: **Fresno State at USC (ESPN 10:30)**. A year ago, Fresno was the far superior team (#22 Power Ranking vs #61 for USC), but the 2019 iterations of these clubs are quite different. Sensational Bulldog QB Marcus McMariyon is gone, USC clearly has a talent base far above Fresno's, and the preseason power rankings have flipped (Fresno #68, USC #18). That doesn't mean the Trojans should take this visitor lightly, especially coming off an anemic 5-7 campaign, but in the end, the superior athletes should prevail.

*Prediction*

Fresno State 14

**USC 29**

### **Sunday, September 1**

The beauty of Labor Day Weekend for restive college football fans is the addition of games on Sunday and Monday nights. On Sunday, we might top one hundred: **Houston at #4 Oklahoma (ABC 7:30)** figures to light up the scoreboard in a way no other opening week game can match, and it might not be over until almost midnight. Depending on your taste, that might not be such a good thing--I'm a fan of defenses that can make a few stops, myself--but if nothing else, it promises to be a wild ride. The storylines are at QB: Alabama transfer Jalen Hurts inherits college football's preeminent Heisman position, while Houston's D'Eriq King, with both his arm and his feet, will make the Sooner faithful uneasy about their defensive situation yet again.

*Prediction*

Houston 40

**#4 Oklahoma 65**

### **Monday, September 2**

Okay, we're ten pages in. And actual college football games are starting (the FCS ones), so I'll get right to the point on this final vignette (**#9 Notre Dame at Louisville, ESPN 8:00**). Louisville will be a better team in 2019 almost by definition, so disastrous was last year's 2-10 season. The more important story for the Cardinals' program isn't about how they fare against the Irish or if they make it back to a bowl game or any of that. No, it's this: After swinging and missing on Jeff Brohm, the coach everyone thought they would hire, Louisville's contingency plan was a grand slam. Scott Satterfield from App State is an

excellent coach, and he brought an A+ graded staff with him. That blurb from the Auburn/Oregon writeup--about coaching grades being more indicative of long-term health--applies here. If Satterfield and most of his staff stay together, the future is bright for Louisville.

Against Notre Dame in 2019? It probably won't happen, but they have enough roster talent and should be rejuvenated enough by the change in coaching to make it interesting if the Irish play a sloppy football game (19% upset chance).

Prediction

**#8 Notre Dame 36**

Louisville 23