COLLEGE FOOTBALL BETTING GUIDE

VSiN PRO



TIPS & STRATEGIES FOR BETTING COLLEGE FOOTBALL

OUR GUIDE INCLUDES

- REGIONAL TEAM COVERAGE
- HEISMAN TROPHY CONTENDERS
- TOP COLLEGE QUARTERBACKS AND MORE!

107.9 FM The Ace 1300 AM Sports Radio

photos by USA Today Network

NOBODY BELIEVED THEN.
NOBODY'S BETTING NOW.

by Matt Youmans

If the Curt Cignetti story was a Disney movie, it would be mocked as absurd and completely unrealistic. A coach who waited several years for his first big shot finally gets it with the losingest program in college football history, and Indiana goes 16-0 to win the national championship in his second season.

"Hoosiers" was a classic movie based on a true high school basketball Cinderella story in the 1950s, and Cignetti basically scripted the sequel.

"What if I told you at the end of the 2023 season that Indiana would have an undefeated national champion in two years? There's no chance anyone would have believed me," DraftKings oddsmaker Matt Grill said. "You would say there's absolutely no way in hell that could happen. It was a forgotten program. I still don't know how he did it."

Indiana lost its 2023 season finale at Purdue to finish 3-9. In their history, the Hoosiers never had a 10-win season and owned only three bowl wins. In two years in Bloomington, Cignetti has a 27-2 record. Last year, he upset Ohio State to win the Big Ten championship before blowing out Alabama in the Rose Bowl and Oregon in the Peach Bowl on the way to a victory over Miami for the national title.

"Cignetti is amazing," Grill said. "I think Indiana is going to keep it going, but pretty much no one is betting Indiana."

Ohio State, Notre Dame and Texas are attracting a majority of the affection as college football futures action heats up in Nevada and across the country. In their bid for a repeat, the Hoosiers are getting a cold shoulder from the betting public at most books. Indiana is posted at 10-1 odds as the fifth choice on the board at Circa Sports.

"Texas is currently the favorite to win the title, though it didn't open that way, and it's because we've taken sharp action on them," Circa vice president of operations Mike Palm said. "We took our sharpest limit bet on Texas at +750."

The limit bet on Longhorns was for $10,000, Palm said. Texas is the +650 favorites at Circa, followed by Ohio State (+700), Notre Dame (+725), Oregon (+730) and Georgia (+950).

"We've seen a ton of public interest in Notre Dame and Oregon — those are our two biggest realistic liabilities," Palm said.

Boomer's Sportsbook director Nick Bogdanovich said the public is "betting Notre Dame with both hands," driving the Fighting Irish from 8-1 to 6-1 odds.

Notre Dame started last season 0-2, losing games to Miami and Texas A&M by a total of four points, and finished 10-2. The Irish were controversially excluded from the 12-team College Football Playoff and are expected to stage a revenge tour behind coach Marcus Freeman and a veteran team headlined by sophomore quarterback CJ Carr.

"Notre Dame should be able to navigate this schedule to an undefeated regular season," Palm said. "Whether the Irish are good enough to beat Texas and Ohio State is a different question."

Two years ago, the Irish eliminated Indiana and Cignetti in the first round of the CFP and fell to Ohio State in the national title game. The Buckeyes are currently the +600 favorites at DraftKings, ahead of Notre Dame at +650.

"We took a lot of money on Notre Dame early when we opened 10-1," Grill said. "I've got Ohio State as my No. 1 team right now."

Grill's power ratings show Notre Dame and Indiana tied at No. 2, followed by Oregon, Georgia, Texas, Texas Tech, Miami, Texas A&M and Alabama. Grill said he's not sold on the Longhorns and quarterback Arch Manning, who was overhyped entering last season.

"I'm sure I've got a similar Top 10 to about everyone else out there," Grill said. "The potential is there with Texas. It's an embarrassment of riches. If Arch is improved and slinging it, they could be phenomenal. But Texas disappoints every year for how long now?"

Texas hosts Ohio State on Sept. 12 in one of the season's most pivotal games. Manning was a bust in the teams' season opener a year ago, when the Buckeyes won 14-7. In addition to the game at Texas, the Buckeyes will face road tests against Indiana, Iowa and USC as part of a grueling schedule.

"My top three teams are Ohio State, Oregon and Notre Dame," South Point sportsbook director Chris Andrews said. "I know we have action on those three, plus USC."

With coach Lincoln Riley under pressure entering his fifth year, the Trojans are 35-1 longshots at DraftKings. USC hosts Oregon in late September, hosts Ohio State in late October and plays at Indiana on Nov. 14.

Aside from Cignetti, the coach who's probably talked about the most in the media is Lane Kiffin, who ditched Mississippi prior to the CFP and took the LSU job. The Tigers are a 16-1 shot at Circa.

"We've seen sharp interest in LSU, and USC has been bet from 50-1 down to 30-1," Palm said.

Not everyone believes in and roots for Kiffin, of course, and his childish diva act gets annoying. The most action the Boomer's book has seen in the Yes/No playoff market, Bogdanovich said, is on LSU to miss the playoffs at -125.

Texas and Georgia are the SEC's best bets to break the Big Ten's three-year championship reign strung together by Michigan, Ohio State and Indiana. The Hoosiers must replace Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Fernando Mendoza, and the Heisman market is generating action all over the board with a surplus of marquee QBs this season. At DraftKings, Carr is the Heisman favorite at +700 and Manning is the +800 second choice.

"The expanded playoff certainly creates more futures action in Yes/No playoffs as well as to win the national championship," Palm said. "The expansion to 12 teams tripled the handle in those markets. I don't want to see more than 16 teams. I actually think 12 is a very practical number, and beyond 16 will include too many teams with no chance of winning the title."

Not long ago, before Cignetti showed up and changed everything, Indiana seemed to be a team with no shot of winning a championship.

QUANTIFYING COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S BIGGEST ADVANTAGE: HOME-FIELD ADVANTAGE

by Adam Burke

The college football landscape is changing literally and figuratively this season, as the Pac-12 is back with eight teams, the Mountain West looks a lot different, and a team from California will play in the MAC. Home-field advantage is probably more dynamic than ever, in the sense that it depends on a variety of factors. Having one simple baseline probably isn't enough, but having something is better than nothing and that has been my approach over the last several seasons.

Playing at home is never really going to be a bad thing, so there is still an inherent "advantage", even though its value will always be subjective. Weather, rest, travel, and all of the usual factors come into play, but there are others. A night game in Death Valley (either one) is going to carry more weight than a noon kickoff against a Group of Six school. A school where the basketball program outpaces the football program could see home-field lessened once November rolls around and students are more invested in hoops. How invested are the alums and adults in that particular program nowadays? It's very hard to pin down these qualitative factors.

But, at least if we have some kind of value in mind, we can adjust accordingly, whether we actually attempt to quantify all of those variables or just keep them in mind when handicapping the game. To find that baseline, I've decided to take a three-year sample of home records, as that would seem to capture the team's current state and also create a sample size large enough to minimize some noise. With over 100 different head coaches and thousands of transfers in FBS over the last three seasons, even three years may be tricky, but it seems like a happy medium.

Based on the straight up (SU) and against the spread (ATS) home win percentages for these teams, I've created a series of buckets. The standard home-field advantage I've settled on is two points. For teams that sit between 40% and 59.99% at home, their home-field advantage is two points. For teams above or below those thresholds, the HFA varies.

For this season, there are 24 teams with my max HFA of 3.5 points for having a SU + ATS Win% of 70% or higher. There are 16 teams with 3 points of HFA for a SU + ATS Win% of 65-69.99%. There are 24 teams with 2.5 points of HFA for 60-64.99%.

On the flip side, there are eight teams with 1.5 points of HFA for 35.01-39.99% and eight teams with 1 point of HFA for 35% or lower. Again, I want to stress that I consider these numbers to be starting points for creating point spreads on games. All of those factors and variables mentioned above should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The home records are courtesy of Steve Makinen and his extensive database, so my thanks go out to our VSiN Analytics Guru.

Here are those teams for the 2026 season.

With the HFA numbers established for all 138 FBS teams, those are then put together with my college football power ratings to produce a game spread. If my power ratings have Ohio State 14 points better than USC and the game is in Columbus, that would make my line on the game Buckeyes -17.5 with their 3.5 points of home-field advantage.

This season, I expect to have some deviations on a week-to-week basis in conference play, since we have Sacramento State in the MAC, Northern Illinois in the Mountain West, and Texas State in the Pac-12, just as some examples of conference realignment and how those teams will be visiting new venues, playing at elevation, or having long travel with some odd kickoff times. Similarly, teams that go to them will be doing something different.

As I continue to say, home-field advantage is an "inexact science", but a true case of 'something is better than nothing' and at least there is some sort of criteria that teams meet in order to have the values that they do.

3.5 POINTS (SU + ATS HOME WIN% OF 70% OR HIGHER)

Alabama	North Dakota State
Boise State	Notre Dame
BYU	Ohio
Georgia Southern	Ohio State
Indiana	Oregon
Iowa	SMU
Jacksonville State	Texas
James Madison	Texas Tech
Marshall	Toledo
Miami (OH)	UTSA
Mississippi	Washington
Missouri	Western Michigan

3 POINTS (65-69.99%)

Arizona	LSU
Ball State	Miami (FL)
Central Michigan	Oklahoma
Connecticut	South Florida
Delaware	USC
Georgia Tech	Utah State
Hawaii	Washington State
Kansas State	Western Kentucky

2.5 POINTS (60-64.99%)

Arkansas State	Minnesota
Colorado	Navy
Duke	North Carolina State
Eastern Michigan	North Texas
Florida State	Penn State
Georgia	Pitt
Illinois	TCU
Iowa State	Tennessee
Kennesaw State	Tulane
Liberty	UNLV
Memphis	Utah
Michigan	Vanderbilt

Note: Any team between 40-59.99% has a standard HFA of 2 points.

1.5 POINTS (35.01-39.99%)

Arkansas	Middle Tennessee
Baylor	Northern Illinois
Florida Atlantic	Stanford
Michigan State	UCLA

1 POINT (35% OR LOWER)

Charlotte	Nevada
Georgia State	Purdue
Kent State	Tulsa
Massachusetts	UTEP

VALUE IN THE HEISMAN RACE

by Zach Cohen

The recent history of the Heisman Trophy suggests it's become a quarterback's award. Travis Hunter, a rare two-way superstar, broke the mold in 2024, but he's the exception — only five non-quarterbacks have won since 2000. That trend has only intensified since college football's NIL era officially kicked off in July 2021. Since NIL money started flowing openly, four of the last five winners have been quarterbacks.

There's a newer wrinkle worth watching, though: three of the last four winners have been hired guns. Caleb Williams, Jayden Daniels, and Fernando Mendoza all won after transferring in from other power programs, and that's a pattern to keep in mind entering the 2026 season.

One more thing to file away: the preseason betting favorite rarely actually wins. Depending on the book, CJ Carr and Arch Manning currently top the oddsboard. Both enter the new season with outrageous hype, and it's warranted given what we saw from them last season. Still, if either one ends up hoisting the trophy, it'll mark the first time since 2014 that the preseason favorite has won.

Considering all of that, let's get into some picks to win the Heisman Trophy in 2026. Here are four of my favorites, but I'll also mention that I'm closely monitoring Alabama's quarterback competition between Keelon Russell and Austin Mack.

DARIAN MENSAH
MIAMI (12-1)

Nobody's raiding the portal quite like Mario Cristobal. With the help of offensive guru Shannon Dawson, Miami has landed Cam Ward, Carson Beck, and now Mensah in the portal era. The Hurricanes helped Ward become the No. 1 pick in the 2025 NFL Draft, as he was undeniable after throwing for 4,313 yards with 39 touchdowns and only seven picks in his final college season. Beck didn't go in the first round of the 2026 NFL Draft, but he was picked in the third after throwing for 3,813 yards and 30 touchdowns. Now it's Mensah's turn to go to work in this quarterback-friendly system.

Mensah arguably arrives in Coral Gables as a more polished player than Ward and Beck were at the same stage. Last season, despite being surrounded by underwhelming talent, Mensah threw for 3,973 yards with 34 touchdowns and only six interceptions. He also posted a PFF passer grade of 85.0. Mensah is extremely dangerous throwing to every part of the field, makes big-time throws in the face of pressure, and has played in some massive games. He's the total package.

Mensah now gets to play for one of the biggest brands in football, and he'll be surrounded by weapons. Malachi Toney was one of the best players in college football last season, Cooper Barkate was Mensah's top receiver at Duke, and Miami has high hopes for 6-foot-4 sophomore Joshua Moore. Mensah will also be working behind a better offensive line than he had in either of his previous two college seasons.

There's a real chance Mensah puts up ridiculous numbers for a Hurricanes team that should win double-digit games and reach the College Football Playoff. That makes him the best of the chalkier options when you're looking at the Heisman Trophy odds.

JOHN MATEER
OKLAHOMA (25-1)

It's a little surprising to see Mateer available at 25-1 odds. Early last season, Mateer looked like he was on his way to winning the Heisman Trophy. Through four games, he was putting up absurd numbers as both a thrower and a runner. But a broken thumb on his throwing hand changed everything. Mateer came back and threw three interceptions against Texas on October 11, and it felt like he was never the same quarterback afterward.

Mateer enters the 2026 season at full strength. That means he should hit the ground running, even with Oklahoma playing a difficult schedule. Mateer is back in Ben Arbuckle's offense, which he's mastered at this point. He also has an excellent group of pass-catching options and should be operating behind an improved offensive line.

Rushing upside has always mattered when it comes to this award, and that gives Mateer something other candidates don't have. Two years ago, Mateer rushed for 826 yards and 15 touchdowns for Washington State. He might not have that in him in the SEC, but his legs will still be a major factor for the Sooners.

With so many showcase games on the schedule — at Michigan, at Georgia, vs. Texas, vs. Ole Miss, vs. Texas A&M — Mateer has a real chance to rack up Heisman moments. Oklahoma just needs the slightest bit of team success to put him back in the conversation.

MARCEL REED
TEXAS A&M (30-1)

Reed didn't receive any votes for this award last season, but he wasn't far off from having a seat at the table. Reed threw for 3,169 yards with 25 touchdowns, rushed for 493 yards and six scores, and was the drink-stirrer for one of the best teams in college football. With another year of experience, things are likely to ramp up a little.

Texas A&M will have a new offensive coordinator in Holmon Wiggins, but he was the wide receivers coach and co-offensive coordinator last season. That means this offense shouldn't change too much, and it's one Reed is fully comfortable with. The Aggies don't ask too much of him as a passer, but he's capable of making most throws. There's also room for improvisation, and that's where Reed's elite rushing ability shows up.

Reed is going to have a very good wide receiver group this season, with Mario Craver, a first-team All-SEC performer last year, leading the pack. He's also going to have a large offensive line blocking for him. Reed just needs to cut down on his interceptions, as the 12 he threw in 2025 were unacceptable. Reed also happened to throw eight of those in his final five games, meaning he made his biggest mistakes in the biggest games.

With one more year of seasoning, and improved decision-making, Reed should make a real run at the Heisman. At the very least, a healthy Reed should make a strong early case, presenting opportunities to monetize a ticket later on. If Texas A&M can pick up a road win over LSU on September 26, there's a good chance the Aggies will be 7-0 heading into a road game against Alabama on October 24.

DREW MESTEMAKER
OKLAHOMA STATE (75-1)

Mestemaker led all of FBS in passing yards last year, throwing for 4,379 yards, 34 touchdowns, and nine interceptions in a masterful freshman season. He then decided to follow head coach Eric Morris from North Texas to Oklahoma State, where he'll be playing alongside several of his former teammates.

Mestemaker will have to adjust to a significant jump in competition, facing strong Big 12 defenses after seeing nothing but soft AAC units. Still, Mestemaker should be able to handle it. He's a future first-round pick playing behind a better offensive line, he has serious talent at the skill positions, and he knows this offense like the back of his hand.

It's just hard to imagine this being anything but a massive season for Mestemaker, but grabbing him means hoping for some team success at Oklahoma State. That's the main concern here. The Cowboys are going to be excellent offensively, but will the defense be able to get off the field? The lineup on the defensive side of the ball features only four players with starting experience, so new defensive coordinator Skyler Cassity will be banking on a bunch of unknown commodities.

Making the College Football Playoff isn't a requirement for Heisman contention, but Mestemaker probably needs to win eight or so games to really win voters over. That might be unlikely in Year 1, but he's worth a flier at 75-1.

THE YEAR OF THE QUARTERBACK

by Paul Stone

A year ago, Fernando Mendoza did not top any preseason lists that ranked the elite quarterbacks in college football, and that turned out to be a big miss by many analysts. Mendoza managed to outplay several other overhyped quarterbacks en route to winning the Heisman Trophy, leading Indiana to the national championship and becoming the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft.

The importance of the quarterback to a team's success is obvious, but scouting the position accurately is not always easy.

In 2024, a record six quarterbacks were selected in the first round of the draft, including the first three overall picks. Now, after back-to-back down years at the position, some analysts believe the 2027 draft could challenge the first-round record.

Time will tell, but this has the potential to be "The Year of the Quarterback" in college football. While names like Manning, Chambliss and Carr are certain to garner their share of headlines during the upcoming season, the depth of this year's class is what sets it apart.

Without further ado, this is how I rank the top quarterbacks entering this season.

2. TRINIDAD CHAMBLISS, OLE MISS

Was there a better single-game performance in 2025 than the masterpiece turned in by Chambliss in the Rebels' 39-34 CFP quarterfinal win over Georgia? Eluding would-be Dawg defenders play after play, the Ferris State transfer threw for 362 yards against one of the nation's stingiest stop units. Currently listed at 15-1 to win the Heisman, one could argue Chambliss is the best betting option on the board.

3. CJ CARR, NOTRE DAME

Manning and Chambliss share top billing, but it would be no surprise if Carr hoisted the hardware in Manhattan come the second Saturday in December. Draft analyst Todd McShay hailed Carr as the MVP at the recent Manning Passing Academy, proclaiming "it wasn't even close." The Irish are legitimate national championship contenders, so Carr's possibilities for individual and team accolades seem endless.

4. DANTE MOORE, OREGON

After struggling as a true freshman at UCLA and then sitting behind Dillon Gabriel at Oregon as a sophomore, the Detroit native showed why he was one of the top recruits in the Class of 2023, leading the Ducks to the CFP semifinals last season. Moore was projected by some as a potential top-five selection in this past April's draft, but he opted to return to school.

5. GUNNER STOCKTON, GEORGIA

Despite an NIL deal reportedly north of $1 million, Stockton drives a hand-me-down 1984 Ford F-150 pickup gifted by his grandfather with over 300,000 miles. Like his truck, he's an old-school throwback who may not throw the prettiest ball yet competes with grit and comes through in clutch moments.

1. ARCH MANNING, TEXAS

Perhaps the most polarizing figure in all of college sports, Manning began the 2025 season as the Heisman favorite, but he sputtered in September and quickly fell from grace. From October on, however, the nephew of two former Super Bowl MVPs showcased his talents, throwing for 2,012 yards in the season's final eight games, while accounting for 21 touchdowns against just three turnovers during that span. Expect to see the Longhorns utilize Manning more in the running game after his 155-yard rushing outburst against Michigan in the Citrus Bowl.

6. JULIAN SAYIN, OHIO STATE

With college football's top pass catcher, Jeremiah Smith, and an embarrassment of other riches at his disposal, Sayin is a solid bet to post Heisman-worthy numbers in his second season as the Buckeyes' starter. Games against Texas, Indiana, USC, Oregon and Michigan certainly provide the platform to attract the voters' attention. At a double-digit price (12-1 at Circa), Sayin may be worth a look in the Heisman market.

7. JOHN MATEER, OKLAHOMA

Opinions are mixed on Mateer, who was hindered by a bum thumb on his throwing hand throughout much of the 2025 campaign. Supporters say he's among the nation's elite at his position, while detractors want more evidence against top-shelf opposition. The tough Texan is a true dual threat, having rushed for 847 yards and 15 TDs in 2024 at Washington State.

8. LANORRIS SELLERS, SOUTH CAROLINA

Gamecock quarterbacks have been sacked more than 40 times in each of the past three seasons. With more experience up front, the dynamic Sellers could shine with additional time to operate. At 6-3 and 245 pounders, Sellers is a load to bring down as evidenced by his 674 rushing yards in 2024. For those dreaming of a bigger Heisman payout, Sellers is currently 50-1 at the Westgate SuperBook.

9. SAM LEAVITT, LSU

After guiding Arizona State to the first-ever 12-team CFP in 2024, Leavitt's production dipped last season, primarily because of a foot injury which shortened his season by five games. The dual-threat Leavitt might not have a Cam Skattebo in his arsenal, but the Tigers' receivers may be among the nation's finest after scoring big in the portal.

10. DARIAN MENSAH, MIAMI

Coming out of St. Joseph High School in Santa Maria, Calif., Mensah was a largely-ignored two-star prospect who ultimately ended up with just two offers: Tulane and Idaho State. After spending one season each at Tulane and Duke, Mensah (56 career passing TDs) steps into the South Beach spotlight as he attempts to guide the Hurricanes back to the playoff.

11. BEAR BACHMEIER, BYU

As a true freshman, Bachmeier threw for 3,000 yards or more, rushed for 500 or more, accounted for at least 25 TDs, and had 10 or fewer turnovers, becoming only the 19th power conference quarterback to accomplish that feat in the past 20 years. With a full offseason to sharpen his skills, Bachmeier is an intriguing Heisman long shot at 80/1 at Westgate.

12. MARCEL REED, TEXAS A&M

At his best, Reed can beat opponents with his arm (more than 5,000 yards passing across the past two seasons) and legs (more than 1,000 yards rushing during the same term). At his worst, the Nashville product has turned the ball over 21 times in 21 career starts - including a total of five in back-to-back losses to Texas and Miami to end the 2025 season.

13. JAYDEN MAIAVA, USC

The Honolulu native began his career at UNLV, but a stellar freshman season there in 2023 (almost 3,100 yards passing) caught the eye of Lincoln Riley and others. Maiava has a big arm, but needs to protect the football (26 interceptions in three seasons) and perform better on the road. If he does those things and new receivers emerge, he could be a dark horse contender for national honors.

14. BYRUM BROWN, AUBURN

The 6-foot-3, 232-pound dual-threat Brown had better rushing (1,008 yards) and passing (3,158 yards) numbers at South Florida last season than Mateer did at Washington State in 2024. If Brown remains healthy, the Tigers could throw a wrench in someone's playoff plans.

15. CJ BAILEY, NORTH CAROLINA STATE

At 6-foot-6 with a quick release and big arm, Bailey has certainly attracted the attention of NFL scouts. With 22 starts under his belt in just two years on campus - if he can refine his mechanics and sharpen his accuracy - it's not out of the question that he could ultimately play his way into the first round of the draft.

OREGON DUCKS



Since Dan Lanning took over the Oregon program in 2022, the Ducks have gone 48-8. They have made the College Football Playoff in both years and ran through the Big Ten in their first season in the conference back in 2024. The one thing that they have not done is win a National Championship as they have been blown out by the last two National Champions (Ohio State two years ago in the Rose Bowl and Indiana last year in the Peach Bowl).

This year Oregon starts out as a bit of a victim of its own success as both offensive coordinator Will Stein (Kentucky) and Tosh Lupoi (Cal) depart for head coaching jobs. Drew Mehringer (co-OC/tight ends coach) and Chris Hampton (co-DC/defensive backs coach) are promoted from within. For all the coaching staff changes, Oregon returns 66% of its net production per ESPN's Bill Connelly. There is no bigger return than junior quarterback Dante Moore, who turned down the NFL Draft. In addition, eight starters are back on defense which is called by Lanning, so it should once again be an elite group.

WIN TOTAL SELECTION

Over 10.5
There is never much margin for error in taking a win total over 10.5 wins especially with tough trips to both USC and Ohio State, and a lot has to go right to clear this number like the offensive line being able to gel together and the young skill position players being ready to step into starting roles after being productive backups. Nonetheless, Oregon may just have the most talented roster in college football, and they have a lot to prove after being humiliated to end their season each of the last two years. This may just be a "show no mercy" season for the Ducks where they have their best shot at a National Championship.

2025 Record: 13-2 SU & 9-6 ATS, 8-7 O-U
Head Coach: Dan Lanning - 5th season

2026 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent/Projected Line	Opponent Power Rating
9/5	BOISE ST (-22)	50.5
9/12	AT OKLAHOMA ST (-20.9)	46.5
9/18	PORTLAND ST (-69)	3.5
9/26	AT USC (-5.6)	60.0
10/10	UCLA (-24.1)	48.0
10/17	NEBRASKA (-21.8)	50.5
10/24	AT ILLINOIS (-15.1)	51.0
10/31	NORTHWESTERN (-26.9)	45.5
11/7	AT OHIO ST (+5.4)	71.0
11/14	MICHIGAN (-12.6)	59.0
11/20	AT MICHIGAN ST (-25.7)	42.5
11/28	WASHINGTON (-16.4)	56.5

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **47.28** *#28 toughest of 138*

FIELD RATINGS **3.9 / 0.9** *(HOME/ROAD)*

RETURNING STARTERS

TOTAL	OFFENSE	DEFENSE
15	6*	9

** = Returning QB*

STEVE MAKINEN POWER RATING **68.5** *CONFERENCE: #2 of 18*
NATIONAL: #2 of 138

THREE BURNING QUESTIONS FOR THE 2026 SEASON

Can Dante Moore get it done when it matters most?

Moore is justifiably one of the favorites for the Heisman Trophy having thrown for 3,565 yards and 30 TDs in his first year as a starter in 2025. He also has an embarrassment of riches for weapons around him, including Jordon Davison and Dierre Hill Jr., who combined for 1,323 yards on the ground as freshmen backups. Sophomore receivers Dakorien Moore and Jeremiah McClellan should be ready to step up into starting roles, plus Evan Stewart returns after missing last season with a knee injury. Moore will put up monster numbers again, but it remains to be seen if he can do it on the biggest stage. In the two games vs. Indiana last year, he was sacked nine times and had four turnovers including the pick-six on the opening snap of the Peach Bowl.

Can the offensive line hold up in the postseason?

Rimington Trophy finalist Iapani Laloulu anchors the line at center for the third straight season and Dave Iuli returns at right guard. The Ducks will need to replace three starters, but this offensive line is the only group to be a finalist for the Joe Moore Award each of the last three years which begs the question of why it has so much difficulty holding up in the big games? When you combine the season-ending playoff losses of the last two years, the Oregon offense has had 11 three-and-outs, given up 11 sacks, and allowed 21 TFLs. To get to that elusive National Championship Game, this group needs to be better when it matters most.

Will the defensive line be able to create more negative plays?

Oregon may have the best defensive line in the country with the returns of defensive tackles Bear Alexander and A'Mauri Washington along with edge rusher Matayo Uiagalelei and linebacker Teitum Tuioti. These four have combined for 45.5 sacks the last two seasons. Even with these gaudy sack numbers, Oregon still finds difficulty getting off the field at times and ranked just 52nd nationally in third-down stops. Defensive tackle transfers D'Antre Robinson (North Carolina) and Jerome Simmons (Louisiana-Monroe) should help matters though as depth pieces in stopping the run.

ODDS TO WIN...

+800 CFP CHAMPIONSHIP

-320 MAKE THE PLAYOFF

+260 BIG TEN

2025 STATISTICS

OFFENSIVE STATISTICS	#	RANK
POINTS PER GAME	35.4	13
YARDS PER POINT	12.7	18
PLAYS PER GAME	67.4	83
TIME OF POSSESSION	30:51	38
3RD DOWN CONV. %	45.2%	24
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	448.4	12
YARDS PER PLAY	6.7	6
RUSH ATTEMPTS PER GAME	36.6	51
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	194.7	22
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	5.3	13
PASS ATTEMPTS PER GAME	29.4	87
COMPLETION %	71.4%	2
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	253.6	35
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	8.6	13
TURNOVERS	1.1	36
DEFENSIVE STATISTICS	**#**	**RANK**
POINTS PER GAME	18.2	11
YARDS PER POINT	15.1	49
3RD DOWN CONV. %	38.8%	61
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	275.8	5
YARDS PER PLAY	4.3	5
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	120.7	26
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	3.5	19
COMPLETION %	51.7%	3
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	155.1	2
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	5.5	4
SACKS	1.9	68
TURNOVERS	1.5	39

OREGON STATE
BEAVERS



2025 Record: 2-10 SU & 3-9 ATS, 5-7 O-U
Head Coach: JaMarcus Shephard - 1st season

Jonathan Smith had it rolling at Oregon State, posting 10 wins in 2022 and eight in 2023, but it seemed inevitable that he would leave for a big payday and he got it from Michigan State. Smith and the Beavers were better off together, as he was fired after two years in East Lansing and the Beavers went 7-17 the past two years. Trent Bray was dumped as coach after starting 0-7 last year and Oregon State finished 2-10. It's time for a new era. JaMarcus Shephard takes over what will be one of the worst teams in the conference, and maybe the worst.

WIN TOTAL SELECTION

Under 3.5
It's tempting to forecast Oregon State as a surprise team, with Murphy's potential at quarterback and MacIntyre's ability to build the defense. The new coaching staff will put the Beavers in position to win more games and they could get to four or five wins. However, there are way too many holes in the depth chart to be too optimistic, and games against Houston and Texas Tech to open the season will put the Beavers in a hole in early September. This decision on this win total will depend on some other mystery teams on the Pac-12 schedule. Is Oregon State good enough to beat Colorado State, Texas State, Utah State and Washington State? This is not a best bet by any means, so the lean is 3.5 Under +150 with Circa Sports offering a nice Under price on the 12-game line.

2026 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent/Projected Line	Opponent Power Rating
9/5	AT HOUSTON (+23.2)	53.0
9/12	TEXAS TECH (+26)	61.5
9/19	MONTANA (+1.2)	36.5
9/26	AT UTEP (-7.3)	22.5
10/3	AT COLORADO ST (+2.5)	32.5
10/10	SAN DIEGO ST (+7.6)	43.0
10/17	WASHINGTON ST (+2.7)	38.0
10/31	AT FRESNO ST (+13.9)	42.5
11/7	TEXAS ST UNIV (+1.8)	37.5
11/14	AT BOISE ST (+23)	50.5
11/21	UTAH ST (+0.20)	36.5
11/28	AT WASHINGTON ST (+10)	38.0

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **40.73** *#70 toughest of 138*

FIELD RATINGS **3.5 / -0.6** *(HOME/ROAD)*

RETURNING STARTERS

TOTAL	OFFENSE	DEFENSE
10	5*	5

** = Returning QB*

THREE BURNING QUESTIONS FOR THE 2026 SEASON

Will a new coaching staff improve a vagabond QB?

Maalik Murphy was highly touted out of high school in the Los Angeles area and opted to leave home, picking Texas instead of UCLA. In two years with the Longhorns, he redshirted the first year and did not play because of injury and he appeared in seven games his second year while going 2-0 as a starter. Murphy transferred to Duke in 2024 and posted a 9-3 record as a starter while passing for 2,933 yards and 26 touchdowns. His play has not been that impressive to watch, however, and he declined last season with a bad Oregon State team. Murphy went 1-7 as the starter, passing for 1,805 yards and nine touchdowns with eight interceptions. Cornell Hatcher returns as the featured running back and Shephard brought receiver Aeryn Hampton as a transfer from Alabama. Murphy is not much of a running threat and turns the ball over too much, but he's got a better coaching staff and supporting cast now, so expect to see significant improvement.

Is Shephard the right man for the job?

JaMarcus Shephard was hired away from Alabama, where he was offensive coordinator, and he's got some history in the Pac-12. Shephard was on Kalen DeBoer's coaching staff at Washington when the Huskies won the conference title. Shephard hired Mitch Dahlen as the Beavers' offensive coordinator, and Dahlen was part of the Alabama and Washington staffs that developed star quarterbacks. The coaching staff appears to be a major upgrade, and a big part of that will be defensive coordinator Mike MacIntyre, who has had success at a variety of stops, including head coaching jobs at San Jose State, Colorado and Florida International. Don't expect Shephard to replicate what Jonathan Smith did at Oregon State in terms of wins, but the Beavers should be more competitive during a rebuilding year.

Is the defense the key to Oregon State overachieving?
MacIntyre inherits some returning talent and has made some transfer additions, so there are signs the Beavers will be much better on defense after surrendering 29.4 PPG. Oregon State held Washington State to seven points in a late-season upset and showed improvement. The linebacker group will be a strength, led by senior Aiden Sullivan and former USC transfer Raesjon Davis. Sullivan is the team's top returning tackler and should be one of the league's best defensive players. Duquesne is not known for producing dominant defensive ends, yet that's where Ish Findlayter comes from, and he's bringing high expectations as a top transfer. The front seven looks solid for MacIntyre.

ODDS TO WIN...

2000-1 CFP CHAMPIONSHIP

300-1 MAKE THE PLAYOFF

30-1 PAC-12

2025 STATISTICS

OFFENSIVE STATISTICS	#	RANK
POINTS PER GAME	15.7	129
YARDS PER POINT	21.2	133
PLAYS PER GAME	72.5	27
TIME OF POSSESSION	32:32	11
3RD DOWN CONV. %	36.0%	96
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	333.9	102
YARDS PER PLAY	4.6	123
RUSH ATTEMPTS PER GAME	33.3	91
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	101.9	123
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	3.1	128
PASS ATTEMPTS PER GAME	37.1	16
COMPLETION %	59.6%	89
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	232	62
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	6.3	114
TURNOVERS	1.6	105
DEFENSIVE STATISTICS	**#**	**RANK**
POINTS PER GAME	30.9	102
YARDS PER POINT	12.4	122
3RD DOWN CONV. %	31.6%	10
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	382.1	67
YARDS PER PLAY	6	110
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	159.1	73
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	4.6	92
COMPLETION %	58.2%	24
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	223	63
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	8	111
SACKS	1.4	112
TURNOVERS	0.8	116

WASHINGTON
HUSKIES

Jedd Fisch and the Huskies improved from 6-7 to 9-4 in his second season and the Huskies looked primed and ready perhaps to challenge the top of the Big Ten with 65% of its production back. Then, days after signing a $4 million NIL deal to return to Washington, quarterback Demond Williams Jr. announced he was entering the transfer portal and was reportedly about to sign for more money with LSU. Fortunately for all parties, this did not end up in court and Williams returned to Seattle.

Three of the four losses last season came against top-25 teams. Washington has gotten itself to the upper level of the Big Ten in just its third year in the conference, but it is now time for them to take the next step and knock off some of the league's elite. Having Williams back is certainly a necessary step for that to happen.

WIN TOTAL SELECTION

Over 7.5
Washington opens with a full September slate at home so they should start 4-0 before the trip to USC. Perhaps that gets its confidence rolling into the season and the Huskies can finally knock off a good team. The Huskies only averaged 9.3 points per game and 4.3 yards per play against Ohio State, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Oregon, who were the four best defenses they faced. Simply put, Williams also must be better against the better teams.

2025 Record: 9-4 SU & 7-6 ATS, 6-7 O-U
Head Coach: Jedd Fisch - 3rd season

2026 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent/Projected Line	Opponent Power Rating
9/6	WASHINGTON ST (-22.2)	38.0
9/12	UTAH ST (-24.7)	36.5
9/19	E WASHINGTON (-45.8)	15.5
9/26	MINNESOTA (-12.1)	49.0
10/3	AT USC (+7.8)	60.0
10/9	IOWA (-4.2)	55.5
10/16	AT PURDUE (-15.5)	39.0
10/31	AT NEBRASKA (-3.2)	50.5
11/7	PENN ST (-2.6)	57.0
11/14	AT MICHIGAN ST (-12.3)	42.5
11/21	INDIANA (+5.8)	66.0
11/28	AT OREGON (+16.4)	68.5

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **47.12** *#29 toughest of 138*

FIELD RATINGS **3.9 / -0.5** *(HOME/ROAD)*

RETURNING STARTERS

TOTAL	OFFENSE	DEFENSE
14	8*	6

** = Returning QB*

THREE BURNING QUESTIONS FOR THE 2026 SEASON

Is Demond Williams Jr. all-in?

NIL and transfer portal are the way of the world in college football today. However, this got perilously close to Williams leaving and lawyers were about to get involved. Williams got some bad advice from his representatives and perhaps all of that is behind him. Can everyone let bygones be bygones? If so, Williams is one of the more dynamic quarterbacks in the conference. He led the Huskies last season to top-five marks in both scoring offense (No. 4, 34.1 PPG) and total offense (No. 5, 409.9 YPG), but this time around he must do it without his best players from last season including wide receiver Denzel Boston and running back Jonah Coleman. Receiver Dezmen Roebuck (42-560-7) and tight end Decker DeGraaf (32-360-2) are back and four-star receivers Jordan Clay, Mason James, and Trez Davis are part of Washington's highest-rated recruiting class in school history.

Who emerges at running back?

Jonah Coleman is off to the NFL and his heir apparent Adam Mohammed transferred to Cal. They added seniors Jayden Limar (Oregon) and Trey Cooley (Troy) out of the portal, but both missed the spring with injuries and Jordan Washington (27-233-1) was also injured in spring ball, so redshirt freshman Quaid Carr and true freshman Brian Bonner got most of the reps. Whoever emerges in the backfield should have a very good offensive line to run behind as four starters return including the Hatchett brothers – center Landen and right guard Geirean – plus five-star freshman Kodi Greene should start at left tackle.

Can the Huskies beat anyone good?

Washington has shown the ability to beat the teams that they are supposed to beat, but this is a program still looking for a signature victory to get the Husky faithful to fully believe in Fisch. The Huskies are just 2-7 in Big Ten road games under Fisch with the two victories coming last year at Maryland and at UCLA. This year there are tests at USC, at Oregon, and at Nebraska and hosting Indiana in the home finale. Much will depend on Williams, who had just 645 yards with three touchdowns and six interceptions in Washington's four defeats.

ODDS TO WIN...

120-1 CFP CHAMPIONSHIP

+400 MAKE THE PLAYOFF

25-1 BIG TEN

2025 STATISTICS

OFFENSIVE STATISTICS	#	RANK
POINTS PER GAME	31.1	24
YARDS PER POINT	12.6	17
PLAYS PER GAME	65.8	105
TIME OF POSSESSION	29:06	93
3RD DOWN CONV. %	47.2%	14
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	392.8	55
YARDS PER PLAY	6	27
RUSH ATTEMPTS PER GAME	34.7	74
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	153.3	63
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	4.4	51
PASS ATTEMPTS PER GAME	28.3	101
COMPLETION %	69.4%	6
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	239.5	53
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	8.5	15
TURNOVERS	1.2	46
DEFENSIVE STATISTICS	**#**	**RANK**
POINTS PER GAME	19.4	14
YARDS PER POINT	16.4	23
3RD DOWN CONV. %	38.6%	59
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	319.2	21
YARDS PER PLAY	4.7	18
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	102.3	12
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	3.3	15
COMPLETION %	60.6%	51
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	216.9	54
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	6.2	15
SACKS	1.8	82
TURNOVERS	1.5	39

WASHINGTON STATE
COUGARS



In 2022, a quarterback from Incarnate Word, an FCS program in San Antonio, transferred to Washington State. Cam Ward had put up huge passing numbers in two years at a lower level and proceeded to develop into the real deal in two seasons with the Cougars. He eventually was the first overall pick of the 2025 NFL Draft by the Tennessee Titans. That recent history lesson is relevant because Washington State is now bringing in another FCS quarterback to revive its offense. Caden Pinnick arrives from UC Davis and his play will go a long way in determining how successful new coach Kirby Moore will be in his first season in Pullman.

WIN TOTAL SELECTION

Under 4.5

Back-to-back road games against Washington and Kansas State to open the season will likely leave the Cougars 0-2 before they get a breather against Duquesne. Next up will be home games against Arizona and Fresno State, which could be the Pac-12's second-best team. While it's not impossible to find five potential wins on the schedule, it's highly unlikely. With a new team, new coaching staff and difficult schedule, Washington State is probably headed for 4-8 or worse, and the Circa Sports win total of 4.5 Under +130 is the play. The Cougars will face Oregon State twice, including the 12th flex game in late November, and figure to get a split. The offense has the potential to be entertaining with Pinnick pulling the trigger, but the defense appears to be nowhere near as strong as it was last year and that's a real problem.

2025 Record: 7-6 SU & 9-4 ATS, 4-9 O-U
Head Coach: Kirby Moore - 1st season

2026 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent/Projected Line	Opponent Power Rating
9/6	AT WASHINGTON (+22.2)	56.5
9/12	AT KANSAS ST (+16.6)	51.0
9/19	DUQUESNE (-29.9)	12.0
9/26	ARIZONA (+11.6)	52.5
10/3	FRESNO ST (+0.8)	42.5
10/9	AT UTAH ST (+2.2)	36.5
10/17	AT OREGON ST (-2.7)	32.0
10/24	BOISE ST (+9)	50.5
10/31	AT SAN DIEGO ST (+7.4)	43.0
11/14	COLORADO ST (-9.2)	32.5
11/21	AT TEXAS ST UNIV (+2)	37.5
11/28	OREGON ST (-10)	32.0

SCHEDULE STRENGTH **39.67** *#72 toughest of 138*

FIELD RATINGS **3.4 / 0.2** *(HOME/ROAD)*

RETURNING STARTERS

TOTAL	OFFENSE	DEFENSE
8	5	3

THREE BURNING QUESTIONS FOR THE 2026 SEASON

Will the Cougars' new coach bring Moore or less?

As offensive coordinator at Missouri the past three years, Kirby Moore designed dynamic offenses around dual-threat quarterbacks. He is Washington State's third coach in three years, following Jake Dickert (2024) and Jimmy Rogers (2025). Dickert moved on to Wake Forest, and Rogers took the Iowa State job while also taking several players with him. The Cougars went a combined 15-11 the past two years and still have talent in the program, but Moore had to hit the transfer portal to replenish the roster and found a promising dual-threat quarterback to help the transition. It's doubtful Washington State will achieve a third straight winning season while rebuilding, so expect less from Moore's first season.

Is the sky the limit for Caden Pinnick?

At UC Davis, Pinnick was voted Big Sky Freshman of the Year after passing for 3,206 yards and 32 touchdowns while also rushing for 437 yards. The 6-footer completed 70% of his passes and his running ability excites Moore, who outrecruited Colorado to get the quarterback he coveted. Pinnick led UC Davis to nine wins and a spot in the FCS playoffs. The Cougars' top receiver, senior speedster Tony Freeman, returns along with leading rusher Kirby Vorhees. Freeman had 54 receptions and Vorhees, who transferred from South Dakota State prior to last season, had 576 yards and five touchdowns. The offense brings back a few experienced players, including senior tackle Ashton Tripp, and welcomes Florida transfer receiver Tank Hawkins. The offense will be the obvious strength of the team with Moore designing the plays and Pinnick, Vorhees and Freeman doing a majority of the playmaking.

Will a defense with no returning starters be a disaster?

Blowout losses to North Texas and Washington aside, Washington State was mostly outstanding on defense a year ago while allowing 20.2 PPG to rank 27th in the nation. New coordinator Trent Bray, the former head coach at Oregon State, will need to work miracles to make the Cougars competitive on the defensive side. Senior end Linus Zunk transferred from Vanderbilt and senior corner Jalil Tucker transferred from Oregon as Bray combed the portal to find pieces to the puzzle. Senior linebacker Keith Brown, a former Oregon transfer who missed last season with an arm injury, will be another key player. Bray was a good hire, but this defense has a long way to go, and the Cougars could get into many high-scoring games.

ODDS TO WIN...

800-1 CFP CHAMPIONSHIP

50-1 MAKE THE PLAYOFF

+800 PAC-12

2025 STATISTICS

OFFENSIVE STATISTICS	#	RANK
POINTS PER GAME	23.3	89
YARDS PER POINT	15	82
PLAYS PER GAME	67.8	76
TIME OF POSSESSION	33:01	9
3RD DOWN CONV. %	39.0%	70
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	350.1	89
YARDS PER PLAY	5.2	86
RUSH ATTEMPTS PER GAME	34.8	72
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	139.5	82
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	4	91
PASS ATTEMPTS PER GAME	31.3	65
COMPLETION %	63.3%	51
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	210.6	90
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	6.7	90
TURNOVERS	1.7	111
DEFENSIVE STATISTICS	**#**	**RANK**
POINTS PER GAME	21.1	30
YARDS PER POINT	14.5	65
3RD DOWN CONV. %	34.0%	21
TOTAL YARDS PER GAME	306.3	13
YARDS PER PLAY	4.9	28
RUSH YARDS PER GAME	120.1	25
YARDS PER RUSH ATTEMPT	3.8	34
COMPLETION %	63.9%	89
PASSING YARDS PER GAME	186.2	18
YARDS PER PASS ATTEMPT	6.7	43
SACKS	2.6	23
TURNOVERS	0.8	121


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