

Phil's Weekly Notes

August 8, 2008

FIVE REASONS WHY GEORGIA WILL NOT GO UNBEATEN THIS YEAR

Last year I had Georgia rated higher in my preseason rankings than any other major publication out there and a couple of the 18 sources documented by Stasses.com did not even have them ranked in the preseason as they had just 8 returning starters. I had them tied for first in the SEC East while they were the consensus pick for third in the division behind Florida (preseason favorite) and Tennessee. This year Georgia has 17 returning starters and is a stronger team than the team that finished #2 in the country last year! I can see why the coaches voted them #1 in the country. Here are 5 reasons why Georgia will not finish unbeaten this year and ALL FIVE have to do with schedule.

REASON #1 September 13th AT SOUTH CAROLINA – Yes, I know that South Carolina was not in a bowl game last year finishing at 6-6. Why is this a tough game? For starters the Gamecocks not only beat Georgia last year they beat them in Athens (between the Hedges) 16-12. South Carolina has 17 starters back and gets the Bulldogs in Columbia. When the two teams met last year SC had a solid defense but after playing Georgia they lost DE Nathan Peppers in week 3 to injury for the year and then in week 4 lost their star defensive player LB Jasper Brinkley for the season. This year they have 10 starters returning on D plus get back those 2 and DE Jordan Lindsay who missed all of last year and he has 15 career starts. It is like having 13 starters returning on defense. Steve Spurrier's team was 6-1 and #6 in the country at one point last year and had some tough losses like vs Tennessee when they had a 31-16 FD edge and 501-317 yard edge but lost in OT. Georgia will have to play it's A+ game to survive this SEC opener.

REASON #2 September 20th AT ARIZONA STATE – In the last 20 years [CLICK HERE](#) Georgia has played just 17 games vs ranked teams the week after facing a ranked team and have won just 4 of those SU (12 losses, 1 tie). They have played 5 back to back road games vs ranked teams and have won just one of those second road trips. They will fly back home on Saturday night and begin preparations. They then have a long flight to the desert to Tempe Arizona on Friday night to play Arizona St on Saturday. Georgia is in an SEC sandwich with a big game at home vs Alabama on deck. They are making an unusual trip to the west coast with none of the current players having played outside of SEC country on any road trip including the bowls. They will be a little spent and catch Arizona St in their A+++ game. The Sun Devils were in their first year with Dennis Erickson last year and did well getting to the Holiday Bowl. This year the players know his systems better and he knows the players better so they should be stronger with 13 returning starters including their top rusher, top 2 receivers and QB Rudy Carpenter all back. The Sun Devil defense has my #15 rated Defensive Line, #25 set of LB's and #29 set of DB's in the county. They also have the emotional edge as they will be sky high for the #1 team in the country and the kids have been pointing to THIS game since the start of August. Arizona State's other foes in September are Northern Arizona, Stanford and UNLV and they can go all out for this one as they have a BYE on deck while Georgia has a key conference game vs Alabama!

REASON #3 October 25th AT LSU – LSU is the defending national champs and they get this one at home in Death Valley. None of the Bulldogs current players have played here and in their last trip in 2003 they came in higher ranked (#7 vs #11) and lost 17-10. LSU is one of the most talented teams in the country this year once again. They have my #5 rated offensive line and #1 rated defensive line in the country. My ONLY question mark on the team is not TALENT at QB but EXPERIENCE. Their young QB (either Lee or Hatch) will have already played AT Auburn, AT Florida and AT South Carolina prior to this game. ANY QB that starts on the road at those 3 hostile setting is no longer an inexperienced QB and this game is at home for LSU.

REASON #4 November 1st vs Florida in Jacksonville – The team that comes off a bye has won almost every time in this series and last year Georgia held that advantage. Georgia was not only fresh off a bye but Florida came in banged up, playing their 2nd straight ranked foe on the road (just faced #8 Kentucky in Lexington the week prior) including QB Tebow who was far less than 100% and not really able to take hits. Tebow had nearly 1,000 yards rushing last year but had just MINUS 15 yards vs the Dogs. If you take Tebow's running ability away from the Gator offense you are dealing with about 60% of the offense. The FD's were even at 19 but Georgia won by 12. Florida had won 8 of 9 meetings with the Bulldogs prior to that defeat. This time Florida is off a bye 2 weeks prior and a home game vs Kentucky while Georgia is off their Titanic tilt vs LSU and playing their 4th straight week (2nd straight on the road) with all 3 weeks prior being vs SEC teams.

REASON #5 November 15th AT Auburn – Auburn is my pick to win the SEC West this year. They are 47-10 at home this decade. Not many teams have winning records vs Top Ten opponents. In the last 5 years Auburn has taken on the #2, #6, #8, #5, #8 and #7 teams at home in SEC action. That is 6 Top 8 SEC teams at home. A record of 3-3 in these such games would be impressive as only twice was Auburn higher ranked than their top 10 foe. Auburn is a PERFECT 6-0 vs these top 10 teams!!! The last time they faced a #1 team at home was in 2001 and as a 24 pt dog they upset #1 Florida! Now Georgia has dominated this matchup the last two years outgaining Auburn by 275 and 201 yards and have won 3 of their last 5 games here. Back to Auburn's favor is the fact this is basically Georgias FOURTH STRAIGHT SEC AWAY GAME while Auburn was able to rest players last week vs Tennessee Martin and they will be MUCH fresher. Tony Franklin's offense (he is the new Off Coor at Auburn) piled up 488 yards last year on the road vs Georgia (Franklin was at Troy last year).

Keep in mind that not even mentioned in the 5 reasons above are home games vs Alabama and Tennessee and a road trip to Kentucky! I do not think ANY team in the country could go thru a schedule like this unbeaten and doubt that any squad the last few years could go thru this tough a schedule with the circumstances making it even more advantageous for Georgias opponents.

