# Projected Order to Finish

## 1. Alabama Crimson Tide

Last year I went with the majority and chose Southern Cal to take the title in my preseason rankings. I may be going with the majority this season but feel much more confident in picking the team that has won three titles in the past four years. Alabama returns 13 starters and has a very favorable schedule as they avoid Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina from the East for the second year in a row. On offense the Tide return their Heisman caliber quarterback, a 1,000-yard rusher, and their four top receivers (yards). Even though the Tide lost many stars on the defense, the unit returns seven of its top ten tacklers. With these aspects in Alabama's favor, why not pick them and why not pick a SEC member to win their eighth straight title?

## 2. Ohio State Buckeyes

A year ago at this time I said Ohio State would be ranked in my 2013 preseason top five. Well, there you have it; the Buckeyes check in at number two. It was a logical assumption that Braxton Miller would excel in Meyer's offense in which he did. (2,039 pass, 15-6, 1,271 rush 13 TD) My Heisman pick, Miller, returns with a solid group of running backs and a talented receiving unit as well. The offense should be very explosive. (Duh!) The secondary shouldn't be an issue with three returning starters and being one of the top units in the country. The linebacker and defensive line groups are young but both units are filled with highly touted players and should develop nicely with great coaching. The Buckeyes face my 63rd toughest schedule and avoid Nebraska and Michigan State from the Legends division but do play Northwestern and Michigan on the road. If the Buckeyes can produce the young talent on defense, in which I think they will, they will, this time, find themselves in the national title game!

## 3. Louisville Cardinals

In Charlie Strong's first two seasons the Cardinals went 14-12. But in his third season, the Cardinals captured their first BCS appearance/win since 2006. Louisville faces my 113th toughest schedule, which is the lowest of all the AQ conference teams. Ohio may be a tough opener but once the Cardinals get past them, they face only one team on the road that had a winning record in 2012. (Cincy) Louisville returns six starters on offense including my number one quarterback Teddy Bridgewater. The Cardinals posses my number twenty-four best running back unit and top the skill positions off with my fifth ranked receiving unit. The offensive line should be fine with three returning starters. The defense returns ten with the strongest point being at linebacker. Look for the Cardinals to be back in the BCS because of their weak schedule and superior talent in the AAC.

## 4. Texas A&M Aggies

Texas A&M was thought to compete in their first season as members of the SEC but not many expected the Aggies to top eleven wins and beat the defending national champs in Tuscaloosa! Most of their success was credited to Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel as he became the first freshman to take home the award. Kevin Sumlin was SEC coach of the year in 2012 and rightly so. The offense has my top backfield in the nation and has another offensive line that has NFL talent led by tackle Jake Matthews. The defense returns five starters and four of their top ten tacklers. Texas A&M will be no secret this season in the SEC but still have enough talent and enough offensive fire-power to get back to back to back double digit win seasons for the first time since the 1993 and 1994 seasons. This team reminds me of the 2010 Auburn national championship team!

## 5. Texas Longhorns

I have called for Texas to win the Big 12 the past two seasons and the Longhorns have failed to make it higher than third in the Big 12 standings. This season I feel more confident in picking the Longhorns to get to double-digit wins and, dare I say it, win the conference. It has been no secret that Texas has underachieved over the past few seasons but this year should be different as the Longhorns are no longer "young" but now seasoned. David Ash enters his second season as the full time starter at quarterback and is joined in the backfield by my number two ranked running back units! Injuries and inconsistency was an issue on defense last season for Texas but, if healthy, the Longhorns should join TCU as the best defense in the conference. Texas should be favored in at least eleven games and should improve upon their 404 ypg given up on defense from 2012. Texas returns 19 starters, which is tied for the most in the FBS!

## 6. Stanford Cardinal

If there was any doubt that Stanford would drop off after Jim Harbaugh left for the 49ers, it is gone now. Whether it has been with Harbaugh's recruits or not, head coach David Shaw has gone an amazing 23-4 in two seasons! The Andrew Luck hangover wasn't as bad as the nation expected as the Cardinal added one to the win total from 2011 to 2012. Stanford flirted with quarterbacks throughout the 2012 season but found one in Kevin Hogan in the second half of the season. When Hogan started, the Cardinal went an astounding 5-0 defeating five straight ranked opponents with a conference title and a Rose Bowl victory. The schedule is not a cakewalk but Stanford does get Arizona State, Washington, UCLA, Oregon, and Notre Dame all at home. Is it going to be another double-digit win total for Stanford? I think so!

## 7. Oregon Ducks

The hardest prediction I had to make this offseason was choosing the top team in the Pac-12. I went back and forth between Oregon and Stanford until I finally came up with my winner. Oregon will have to do without Chip Kelly, who went an amazing 46-7 in his years at Oregon! Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich takes over with pretty much no change in the offensive and defensive schemes. The high-powered offense will be led by sophomore quarterback Marcus Mariota, who was amongst the elites last season. Super athletic De'Anthony Thomas returns and key offensive linemen return as well. The defense returns seven including preseason All-American cornerback Ifo Ekpre-Olomu. Oregon avoids Arizona State and Southern Cal from the South and gets UCLA at home. Even with the loss of Kelly, the Ducks are a legitimate national title contender!

## 8. Oklahoma State Cowboys

It's strange for me to pick a team to finish in the top ten without having a starting quarterback selected going into fall practice. But Oklahoma State is surrounded with talented units all around the board and selecting a quarterback this fall is not a bad problem to have. Clint Chelf and JW Walsh both saw significant time in 2012 along with Wes Lunt who now is attending Illinois. State outgained their opponents nine out of thirteen times last season including three 600-yard games! It's no easy task to play defense in the Big 12 but the Cowboys will have to improve on defense to be at the top of the Big 12 standings in December. The Pokes are one of my "Top Shock Teams" in 2013!

## 9. Georgia Bulldogs

In 2010, I picked Georgia to finish first in the East and received many questions. Georgia finished first in the East division by winning seven games in the conference with their only loss coming against South Carolina. Georgia went back to the title game in 2012 in which they were roughly five seconds away from taking a trip to Miami for the national championship. (Sorry, fans. It has to be said.) Aaron Murray turns down the NFL, again, to finish out his football career and the "Gurshall" package is back and ranks first in my top running back units! The offensive line is solid with all five starters returning. This should be one of the best offenses Georgia has ever put out! The Bulldogs have to replace eight total starters on defense but have plenty of talent to go around but experience will, of course, be the issue. Georgia doesn't have to play Alabama or Texas A&M from the West and gets LSU at home. The Bulldogs open up in Death Valley versus Clemson, in which will be an early test for the young defense. Georgia may struggle early in their first two games versus Clemson and South Carolina, but if I have learned anything about Georgia over the past few seasons, they always finish strong!

## 10. Clemson Tigers

Clemson won the ACC title in 2011 and this season have their best chance to get back to that status. The offense will be fine even without running back Andre Ellington and leading receiver DeAndre Hopkins. Tajh Boyd has thrown for back-to-back 3,000-yard seasons and threw for 36 touchdowns in 2012! Boyd, along with freshman sensation Sammy Watkins, will put together one of the top offenses in the country. The defense should improve from last year's numbers with six returning starters. Clemson will face an early test with Georgia then have six weeks to prepare for Florida State. Clemson faces my 67th toughest schedule and many of my rating formulas have Clemson finishing unbeaten in conference play. Clemson is one of my sleepers for the national title, if they count as a sleeper.



Amari Cooper

Alabama



Ryan Shazier

Ohio State



Josh Huff

Oregon



JW Walsh

Oklahoma State



Jordan Jenkins

Georgia

## 11. South Carolina Gamecocks
Steve Spurrier has led the Gamecocks to back-to-back 11-win seasons, which is the best in school history! Quarterback Connor Shaw returns along with the number one draft selection of the 2014 NFL Draft Jadeveon Clowney. It's going to be difficult to match last season's win total, but never say never!

## 12. LSU Tigers
LSU has my third toughest schedule in the SEC. Even though the schedule is harsh and a heap of players departed, the Tigers still have a chance to have a double-digit win season. Mettenberger needs to perform well for success.

## 13. Florida State Seminoles
The talent is all there. The success of Florida State's season may ride on redshirt freshman quarterback Jameis Winston. The defense only returns four but has superior talent compared to the other ACC schools. Sleeper for national title!

## 14. Notre Dame Fighting Irish
If Everett Golson decided to stay in South Bend the Irish would probably be in my top five. Notre Dame faces a harsh schedule again, but is very capable of doing what they did last season again.

## 15. Florida Gators
Florida finally leveled up to the SEC competition and put their potential into action and ended up with 11 wins and a BCS berth in 2012. Another year like that could be very probable but they have road games versus Miami, LSU, and S. Carolina.

## 16. Michigan Wolverines
Michigan has a wicked schedule, which could keep them out of the Big Ten title game. Even with the tough schedule that includes road games at Penn State, Michigan State, Northwestern, and Iowa, I choose them to win the Legends.

## 17. Nebraska Cornhuskers
As you can see, I think it will be a close race for the Legends division title. Nebraska has had five straight seasons with exactly four losses. Nebraska has a decent schedule but the defense was not up to par in 2012 and needs help!

## 18. Northern Illinois Huskies
N. Illinois was the first MAC team to play in a BCS game and will most likely be the last. The Huskies return Heisman caliber quarterback Jordan Lynch and play the 114th toughest schedule in 2013!

## 19. Fresno State Bulldogs
It's hard to choose a team other than Boise State to win the MWC but Fresno State is too powerful to keep out of first and the top twenty. Sixteen starters return along with flashy quarterback Derek Carr.

## 20. UCLA Bruins
UCLA was riding high with a 9-2 record but then lost their last five games. Dual-threat quarterback Brett Hundley returns with sack master Anthony Barr. UCLA has one of the toughest road schedules in the country!

## 21. Oklahoma Sooners
It's odd to see Oklahoma this low. This season Oklahoma has my toughest schedule in the country and only has eleven total returning starters. Even with the brutal schedule, Oklahoma will still contend for the Big 12 crown.

## 22. Boise State Broncos
As long as I have been following college football I don't think I have ever picked Boise to finish second in either conference. This season Boise faces Washington, Fresno State, Utah State, BYU, Colorado State, and San Diego State all on the road. Ouch! They had the same schedule in 2011 and went 12-1.

## 23. Miami Hurricanes
Miami managed to grab seven wins last season when I thought they would only get five. Miami has 18 returning starters along with gunslinger Stephen Morris and freshman sensation Duke Johnson. Miami will be one of the most improved teams in 2013!

## 24. Wisconsin Badgers
Bret Bielema didn't leave Wisconsin with a bad note as the Badgers return 14 starters with eight on offense. Wisconsin dodges Nebraska, Michigan, and Michigan State from the Legends! Is it possible to for the Badgers to play in four consecutive Rose Bowls?

## 25. Southern Cal Trojans
Southern Cal has the chance to surprise many this season after underachieving last season. (7-6) The Trojans return 15 starters and have nice depth but inexperience at quarterback. Road games include Arizona State, Oregon State, and Notre Dame.

## 26. North Carolina Tar Heels
Carolina was favored in every game last season but Louisville. The Heels managed to win eight but couldn't play in any postseason festivities. The Heels return 13 starters and Bryn Renner is one of the most efficient passers in the country.

## 27. Tulsa Golden Hurricane
Tulsa continues to produce solid coaches and solid offenses. This season the Canes are going for their fifth double-digit win season in seven years! I predict they get there with a key game versus Marshall at home.

## 28. Michigan State Spartans
Sparty was 3-5 last season in the Big Ten and those five losses were by a combined a 13 points! Michigan State returns seven starters from a defense that ranked fourth in total defense in 2012! Michigan State should be a surprise team.

## 29. Ohio Bobcats
With the school passing leader, Tyler Tettleton, returning and running back Beau Blankenship, the Bobcats have a great shot at getting to the MAC title for the third time in four seasons.

## 30. Virginia Tech Hokies
Virginia Tech had to win the last two games to become bowl eligible in 2012. If Logan Thomas improves and the defense becomes consistently good, Tech could get back to double-digit wins in 2013.

## 31. TCU Horned Frogs
TCU did a fine job last season in their first year as a member of the Big 12. TCU managed to get seven wins without a proven quarterback and key running backs. The defense will be solid and the offense will be on point.

## 32. Oregon State Beavers
For a while Oregon State was lying in the top ten with a possible BCS bowl bid in their future. They could be in that same position this midseason but face a tough five game stretch to end the season.

## 33. Arizona State Sun Devils
The Devils have a solid backfield and a decent defense. Arizona State gets Southern Cal at home along with Oregon State and Arizona. Arizona State draws Wisconsin and Notre Dame out of conference!

## 34. Rutgers Scarlet Knights
I may be ranking Rutgers higher than most with the Knights only returning ten starters but the Knights were only about a quarter away from playing in a BCS bowl game last year. Seven to eight wins seems to be probable in 2013.

## 35. Cincinnati Bearcats
If Butch Jones returned this season, the Bearcats would crack my top 25. Tommy Tuberville takes over a good team that won ten games last season. Cincinnati is the biggest threat to Louisville in the AAC.

## 36. Arizona Wildcats
Arizona is the only team in the country to return all eleven starters on defense! Last season the Cats pulled some upsets against Southern Cal and Oklahoma State and finished 8-5. Look for the same results this season.

## 37. San Jose State Spartans
One of the biggest turnarounds last season was San Jose State as the Spartans went 5-7 in 2011 then last season went 11-2 finishing second in the WAC. Quarterback David Fales returns and could be a top draft choice in 2014.

## 38. Vanderbilt Commodores
Vandy returned 19 starters in 2012 with quarterback Jordan Rodgers and managed nine wins and a top 25 ranking. This season they return 13 and have a new quarterback. A bowl game is now expected for Vanderbilt.

## 39. Penn State Nittany Lions
Not many saw Penn State winning eight games in 2012. New quarterback Christian Hackenberg is a future star and could lead the Lions to another eight-win season. It wouldn't surprise me this time around!

## 40. Baylor Bears
Baylor continues to produce offensive playmakers and seems to always pull an upset to get themselves on the map. This season Bryce Petty takes over at quarterback and Heisman caliber running back Lache Seastrunk returns as well.

## 41. Maryland Terrapins
It was a harsh 2012 season for Maryland as they pretty much had to have quarterback tryouts throughout the season. CJ Brown is the expected starter and has a great target in Stefon Diggs. The defense should be fine but Maryland better win or Edsall may start feeling the heat, if he hasn't already.

## 42. Mississippi Rebels
In Hugh Freeze's first season, the Rebels almost knocked off LSU and Texas A&M. Ole Miss has the most experience returning in the SEC and has a solid 2013 recruiting class. Nine wins could be a stretch but not out of the question.
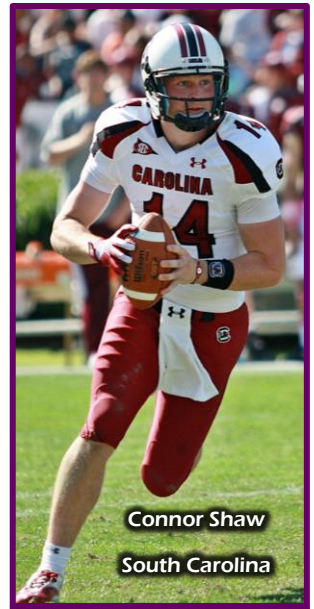
## 43. BYU Cougars
BYU and Notre Dame may be independents but don't shy away from playing tough opponents. This season BYU faces my 21st toughest schedule with road games at Virginia, Utah State, Houston, Wisconsin, Notre Dame, and Nevada.

## 44. Kansas State Wildcats
I don't care if they only have ten returning starters. You know who their coach is and you know what he can do. They have my 42nd toughest schedule.

## 45. Auburn Tigers
Two years after the Tigers were on top of college football they fell to 3-9. Auburn returns 15 starters in 2013 with a solid group of running backs and offensive and defensive linemen. The Tigers "should" be one of the most improved teams in 2013.

**Check out my blog for any changes in my rankings up to the start of the season!**


Connor Shaw
South Carolina


Quinshad Davis
North Carolina


Melvin Gordon
Wisconsin