

# TOP OFFENSIVE UNIT RANKINGS

BACKFIELDS	RECEIVERS	OFFENSIVE LINES
<p>(1) <b>OREGON</b> No shocker to see Oregon here once again. Led by quarterback Marcus Mariota, Oregon is loaded in the backfield. Mariota, a Heisman candidate, is accompanied by a couple of dynamic runners. Byron Marshall and Thomas Tyner combined for 1,749 yards and 23 touchdowns in 2013 and should be even better this season. Highly touted Royce Freeman may get some touches too.</p> <p>(2) <b>AUBURN</b> Even with the departure of All-American running back Tre Mason, Auburn still holds one of the best backfields in the nation. Quarterback Nick Marshall will only improve in the passing game and will continue to be a threat on the move. Seniors Cameron Artis-Payne and Corey Grant will get the bulk of the carries, but Peyton Barber was the talk of spring and could make a big splash.</p> <p>(3) <b>FLORIDA STATE</b> Heisman winner Jameis Winston returns with high expectations with a heap of talent surrounding him in the backfield. Devonta Freeman may be a bigger loss than expected, but former defensive back Karlos Williams might just be the most talented and gifted back in the country. This group is also protected by a fabulous offensive line.</p> <p>(4) <b>BAYLOR</b> Bryce Petty was nothing short of excellent last season for the Bears throwing for 4,200 yards with an awesome 32-3 ratio. Lache Seastrunk departs (Sixth Round-186-Redskins) along with Glasco Martin. Even with the departures the backfield is still solid. Shock Linwood is in the mold of becoming the next All-Big 12 runner and teams up with fellow sophomore Devin Chafin.</p>	<p>(1) <b>BAYLOR</b> The Bears have compiled three straight seasons of top five offenses and a lot of credit is due to the consistent play of the pass catchers. Antwan Goodley highlights the group after a solid 2013 (71 catches 1,339 yards 13 TD). Levi Norwood and Corey Coleman line up opposite of Goodley solidifying the group as the top in the nation. Petty will have plenty of opportunities to improve upon his surprising 62% completion percentage in 2013.</p> <p>(2) <b>MARYLAND</b> You may think I am crazy ranking the Terps here but there is definitely some promise here. The big question, though, is can they stay healthy? Stefon Diggs is the all-purpose king but fell victim to an ACL tear last season limiting his potential to only seven games. Former All-MWC receiver Deon Long has had a fine career but also only played seven due to injury. If the two can stay healthy, along with junior Levern Jacobs, quarterback CJ Brown will fire away!</p> <p>(3) <b>GEORGIA</b> Like Maryland, this Georgia unit battled injuries in 2013 with Malcolm Mitchell blowing an ACL in the first game versus Clemson and Michael Bennett tweaking his knee versus Tennessee limiting his play. Senior Chris Conley led the team in receptions (45) in 2013 and returns this season.</p> <p>(4) <b>LOUISVILLE</b> DeVante Parker decided to stay in school even with Teddy Bridgewater moving on early to the NFL. Parker was Bridgewater's favorite target in 2013 completing the season with 55 catches for 885 yards and 12 touchdowns. Speedster Eli Rogers returns along with the athletic Gerald Christian (Florida transfer) at tight end.</p>	<p>(1) <b>FLORIDA STATE</b> The 2014 version of the Seminole offensive line consists of five senior starters with three preseason All-Americans. Left tackle Cameron Erving headlines the unit as a potential first round pick with left guard Tre' Jackson. This group has combined for 113 career starts.</p> <p>(2) <b>AUBURN</b> The offensive line gets overlooked to the naked eye in Gus Malzahn's offense. The play starts upfront and the Tigers consisted of one of the best units in 2013 and return four of five starters. First round pick Greg Robinson will be missed but not as much as expected as the talented Shon Coleman steps in. Guard Alex Kozan received Freshman All-America honors in 2013 and preseason All-American Reese Dismukes anchors the line at center.</p> <p>(3) <b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b> The 2013 Gamecock offensive line helped pave way for 2,580 rushing yards averaging just under 200 yards per game (6<sup>th</sup> in SEC). This unit is more seasoned and returns three out of four starters. AJ Cann is a preseason All-American at guard and Corey Robinson and Brandon Shell are two potential All-SEC tackles. 2014 should be another big year for running back Mike Davis behind this offensive line.</p> <p>(4) <b>TEXAS A+M</b> The trend will continue in 2014, as the Aggies will show out another top-notch line highlighted by potential first rounders. Tackle Cedric Ogbuehi would have been a first rounder this season but returns along with guard Jarvis Harrison. This line is better than years' past due to the amount of depth across the line.</p>
<p>(5) <b>BYU</b> Taysom Hill draws oohs and aahs with his amazing running ability but can also spin it through the air. Hill is the nation's leading returning rusher amongst quarterbacks. I enjoy watching teams run the zone-read to perfection and Hill and running back Jamaal Williams are textbook. Williams ran the ball well in 2013 with 1,233 yards.</p> <p>(6) <b>MICHIGAN STATE</b> Sparty has finally found a consistent passer. Connor Cook has developed nicely and played well in the second half of the season versus big time opponents. Jeremy Langford played just fine in 2013 rushing for 1,422 yards with 18 touchdowns.</p> <p>(7) <b>ARIZONA STATE</b> Taylor Kelly is the best quarterback nobody has heard of. He won't blow you away with stats but will get you the W and is crazy efficient. DJ Foster provided nice depth last season under Marion Grice but will now carry the load as the starter in a very competitive Pac-12 South.</p> <p>(8) <b>USC</b> The Trojans are slowly creeping back up into Pac-12 contention and it starts and ends with quarterback Cody Kessler. Kessler was much improved as the season continued leading the team to win six of their last seven. A much-improved quarterback with runners like Javorius Allen (785 yards - 14 TDs) and Tre Madden (703 yards - 3 TDs) gives USC one of the top backfields in the Pac-12.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OTHERS</u></p> <p>(9) <b>PENN STATE</b> (10) <b>OHIO STATE</b> (11) <b>ALABAMA</b> (12) <b>GEORGIA</b> (13) <b>BOWLING GREEN</b> (14) <b>TEXAS</b></p>	<p>(5) <b>ARIZONA</b> The Arizona receiver unit took a big hit in 2013 when Austin Hill went down with an ACL in the preseason benching him for the whole season. Hill was a 2012 Blitnekoft semi-finalist after totaling for 1,364 yards with 11 touchdowns. Hill is joined by a duo of transfers Davonte' Neal (Notre Dame) and Cayleb Jones (Texas) and also a duo of sophomores in Nate Phillips and Samajie Grant.</p> <p>(6) <b>OHIO STATE</b> The Buckeyes bring phenomenal speed and big-play potential to the unit with Devin Smith on the brink of a 1,000 yard 2014 and a Percy Harvin like Dontre Wilson. Don't forget about tight end Jeff Heuerman asserting himself into the mix as a potential red-zone target for Heisman contender Braxton Miller.</p> <p>(7) <b>ALABAMA</b> The new Alabama quarterback has a solid group of receivers to work with in his first year as the starter. All-American Amari Cooper returns after a so-so 2013 that consisted of many nagging injuries. Rising star DeAndrew White and the electric Christian Jones also return with talented sophomore OJ Howard at tight end. Chris Black had a good spring and looks to be the next tide breakout receiver.</p> <p>(8) <b>FLORIDA STATE</b> Jameis Winston had an easy adjustment to college football with a great receiving group in 2013. Kelvin Benjamin and Kenny Shaw depart this season but leading receiver Rashad Greene returns with tight end Nick O'Leary.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OTHERS</u></p> <p>(9) <b>AUBURN</b> (10) <b>TEXAS A+M</b> (11) <b>USC</b> (12) <b>OLE MISS</b> (13) <b>KANSAS STATE</b> (14) <b>NORTHWESTERN</b></p>	<p>(5) <b>LSU</b> LSU has an NFL stud in left tackle La'el Collins and supported by a cast of three other returning starters. Trai Turner will be missed but there is still plenty of talent to go around. The rushing game was huge last season and left guard Vadal Alexander is one of the more promising run blockers in all of football. Center Elliot Porter and right tackle Jerald Hawkins also return.</p> <p>(6) <b>OREGON</b> The speedsters get the buzz in Eugene but the Ducks have some gems at tackle in 2014. Two-year starters Tyler Johnstone and Jake Fisher bookend a great Oregon line. Hroniss Grasu makes this unit go at center and is the unanimous number one center for the 2015 NFL Draft. I expect big rushing numbers for Oregon due to this great run blocking offensive line.</p> <p>(7) <b>OKLAHOMA</b> Experienced tackles Darryl Williams and Tyrus Thompson are proven players with big talent. Seniors Adam Sheard and Dionte Savage are still improving along with highly touted center Ty Darlington. Oklahoma has had better lines in the past but this unit could be one of the better lines in the country with continuing improvement.</p> <p>(8) <b>MICHIGAN STATE</b> Jack Allen and Jack Conklin are two of the better linemen in the country. Senior guard Travis Jackson is good too. This line gives Sparty a big shot at another Big Ten title blocking for Connor Cook and Jeremy Langford.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OTHERS</u></p> <p>(9) <b>STANFORD</b> (10) <b>WISCONSIN</b> (11) <b>MIAMI</b> (12) <b>BAYLOR</b> (13) <b>KANSAS STATE</b> (14) <b>OHIO STATE</b></p>



# TOP DEFENSIVE UNIT RANKINGS

## DEFENSIVE LINES

(1) **OHIO STATE** This is one of the better defensive lines I have ever rated in the preseason. The Buckeyes' line has four possible All-Americans and all four are ranked in the top ten at their respected positions (#1 DE Noah Spence, #10 DE Joey Bosa, #2 DT Michael Bennett, and #10 DT Adolphus Washington). This unit is better than any unit Urban Meyer ever had at Florida and could be the solution for Ohio State taking the next step and winning a Big Ten title...finally.

(2) **CLEMSON** You may think this unit is just ranked second solely due to the spectacular season defensive end Vic Beasley produced in 2013 with 13 tackles and 23 tackles for loss. True, Beasley does carry a big load but this unit is seasoned all around.

(3) **TCU** If defensive end Devonte Fields, who sat out most of 2013 with injury, can return to his 2012 form, this TCU defensive line will be nasty up front. Fields was almost unstoppable in 2012 being named the Big 12 defensive player of the year. My 2013 Big 12 rising star, Chucky Hunter, will start his fourth season and is a major force at tackle. This unit will determine outcomes in games for the Horned Frogs.

(4) **MICHIGAN STATE** This ranking will be a little higher than other publications, but I like the Sparty defensive line. Shilique Calhoun's marvelous athleticism and versatility makes him one of the top ends in the country. Marcus Rush will play second fiddle, but he has his own unique set of pass rushing skills. Damon Knox is just fine at nose tackle.

(5) **TEXAS** The Longhorns have had solid solo playmakers in recent years, but have yet to mesh as a unit. New defensive line coach Chris Rumph will have some potential draft picks to work with. Cedric Reed returns after a 10 sack 13.5 tackles for loss 2013 and is one of the most explosive players in the nation. Malcolm Brown is an elite tackle and Desmond Jackson is a great compliment.

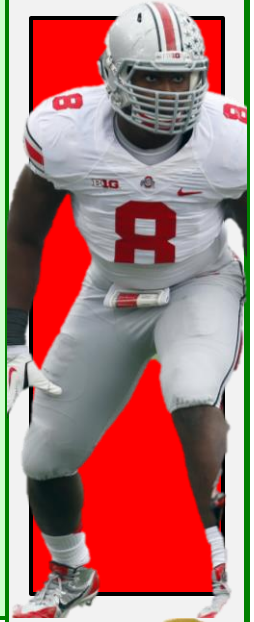
(6) **OKLAHOMA** A quick, fast, and deep unit is a coach's dream and that's what Mike Stoops has in his defense in 2014. Charles Tapper is one of the quickest guys off the edge and he tag teams with fellow end Chuka Ndulue. Jordan Phillips is your ideal 6'5 339 nose tackle and will be just fine. Whether playing end or outside linebacker Eric Striker and Geneo Grissom are forces off the edge.

(7) **USC** A bright spot for the 2013 Trojans was their defensive line. The versatile Leonard Williams is best lineman in college football. Antwan Woods returns and is joined by Texas Tech transfer Delvon Simmons.

(8) **AUBURN** Auburn finally has a defensive unit with depth and elite SEC talent. End Carl Lawson and tackle Montravious Adams are future All-SEC players after convincing 2013 freshman seasons (5.5 sacks & 8.5 tackles for loss-combined). Senior tackle Gabe Wright is poised for a productive 2014 after ending the season on a high note.

### OTHERS

(9) ALABAMA (10) FLORIDA STATE (11) BAYLOR (12) UCLA (13) FLORIDA (14) IOWA



## LINEBACKERS

(1) **GEORGIA** The 2013 Bulldog team had to replace two first round draft choices (Jones & Ogletree); this season is different. Georgia is one of the few teams in the country that returns every starting linebacker from 2013. Ramik Wilson was the SEC's leading tackler in 2013 and is a preseason All-American. The unit also returns All-SEC second team Jordan Jenkins and third team Amarlo Herrera.

(2) **UCLA** The Bruins will have to replace first round draft pick Anthony Barr (Vikings) and sixth round draft pick Jordan Zumwalt (Steelers). The two had a combined 157 tackles. The unit still returns some promise with Pac-12 offensive and defensive freshman of the year Myles Jack and inside linebacker Eric Kendricks. Highly touted sophomore Isaack Savaiinaea showed future potential last season.

(3) **STANFORD** I will have Stanford ranked higher than most preseason publications but this unit still has solid returners. Rising star Kevin Anderson had a phenomenal Rose Bowl and returns with Stanford's leading returning tackler AJ Tarpley. Tarpley was third All-Pac 12 in 2013. Whether playing end or rush linebacker, (Trent Murphy in 2013) James Vaughters is the leading returner in sacks (4) and second in quarterback hurries (3) and should thrive in 2014.

(4) **OKLAHOMA** This unit has potential to be the best unit once the season comes to a close. Frank Shannon (92 tackles) and Eric Striker (6.5 sacks) were both on the All-Big 12 second team in 2013. Dominique Alexander may be the best out of the bunch after a strong rookie season. Geneo Grissom moves from end to outside linebacker.

(5) **CLEMSON** The group is less experienced than usual but there is some hidden talent amongst the group. Stephone Anthony returns and was the leading tackler in 2013 (131 total tackles). I marked Tony Steward as my number one linebacker coming out of high school in 2011. Steward has yet to reach his maximum potential but the talent is all there. Travis Blanks move from strong safety to outside linebacker in which he will battle with rising star sophomore Ben Boulware.

(6) **MISSISSIPPI** Denzel Nkemdiche had a fine 2012 but hit some bumps in 2013 missing three games with a knee injury. True freshman Tony Conner played well in 2013 and was selected to the second team All-America freshman team. Serderius Bryant returns for his final season after a solid 2013 season.

(7) **TEXAS** This unit has been banged up over the years and we have yet to see what this unit can do when fully healthy. Steve Edmund has the most starts from 2013 (10). Jordan Hicks missed the majority of last season (Achilles) but posted 41 tackles in four games before his season ended.

(8) **SOUTH CAROLINA** It's strange to see the Gamecocks so high this preseason when last preseason were struggling to get enough linebackers together. Sharrod Golightly leads this unit with 47 tackles in 2013. The unit returns its top five tacklers from 2013.

### OTHERS

(9) ALABAMA (10) MICHIGAN (11) LOUISVILLE (12) USC (13) WEST VIRGINIA (14) FLORIDA STATE



## DEFENSIVE BACKS

(1) **FLORIDA STATE** Florida State will continue to have strength in the secondary with three returning starters. PJ Williams (CB) is the leading returner in passes broken up with seven and also returns as the leader in interceptions with three. Ronald Darby is the definition of a shutdown corner and that's why you will not see many gaudy stats from him. This unit is loaded with four and five star recruits and will be the strength of a very talented Florida State defense.

(2) **VIRGINIA TECH** In 2013, this group was highlighted by first round draft choice Kyle Fuller (Bears) and sixth round draft choice Antone Exum (Vikings). The two were a little beat up last season opening the doors for some young talent. Kendall Fuller, brother of Kyle, has all the ball skills and cover skills to be a high draft choice. Senior safety Kyshoen Jarrett has valuable experience with 26 career starts. Brandon Facyson (CB) was first team freshman All-America in 2013. This team virtually returns every starter from a year ago.

(3) **USC** The Trojans seem to always be loaded on defense and the secondary is my highest ranked unit for the Trojans in 2014. The Trojans ranked second in the league last season in passing yards given up only trailing Oregon. Freshman All-America Su'a Cravens played well in his first season (13 starts 52 tackles 4 picks). Kevon Seymour anchors a strong CB group. This unit added two five star studs.

(4) **LSU** Even with a shaky group last season the defensive backs played well. The youth gets older and we should see much improvement. The Jalens headline another strong secondary for LSU.

(5) **TCU** Jason Verrett was my favorite corner in this year's draft because of his abilities to make plays and play bigger than his 5'9 180+ frame. Senior Kevin White reminds me of Verrett being a bit undersized but you can't tell. White returns (eight pass breakups) along with safeties Chris Hackett and Sam Carter. All have All-Big 12 potential.

(6) **UCF** This 2014 UCF unit may bring back the most experience than any other team in football. UCF returns the whole two-deep with the projected starting four having 78 career starts (Mostly due to Clayton Geathers). Jacoby Glenn was first team All-AAC in 2013 as a freshman and safety Brandon Alexander joined the second team. This will be one of the more improved units in the nation from a numbers perspective.

(7) **MICHIGAN STATE** Even with the losses of All-American Darqueze Dennard and Isaiah Lewis, the unit is still one of the bests in the Big Ten. Kurtis Drummond has a great year as a first full-time starter in 2013 and Trae Waynes was great starting all 14. The unit will have some rebuilding to do but don't underestimate even with the losses.

(8) **TEXAS** With LSU aside, the Longhorns could claim to be "DB-U." The unit has sent so much talent to the next level it's mind blowing. The 2014 version consists of corner Quandre Diggs, who could have been a top corner in the 2014 Draft, and Duke Thomas who led the Horns with three interceptions in 2013.

### OTHERS

(9) UCLA (10) ALABAMA (11) NOTRE DAME (12) MICHIGAN (13) KANSAS STATE (14) PENN STATE

