

8/27/2010: Big Ten preseason bowl projections (premium)

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Now that I have provided you with season previews for all 11 Big Ten teams, it's time to give you my last bit of preseason material: Bowl projections.

After giving a lot of thought to how I see the 2010 season playing out in the Big Ten, I believe you are going to see a total of eight teams make bowl games this season. I also believe that given how top-heavy the conference is, there will be two Big Ten teams that qualify for BCS bowl games. This means that I do not believe the Big Ten fills its allotment of eight bowls.

Those eight teams are Ohio State (who I think wins the Big Ten), Iowa, Wisconsin, Penn State, Michigan State, Northwestern, Purdue, and Indiana. I think Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota will all be on the cusp, but fall just short of six wins in 2010.

Here is how I see it all shaking out:

1. Ohio State – BCS National Championship Game

Not only do I believe the Buckeyes are the best team in the Big Ten, but I believe they might also be the best team in the country. I have Ohio State going into this game ranked No. 1 nationally, and believe it will face Oklahoma, who I think wins the Big 12 and jumps an undefeated Boise State in the BCS standings.

2. Iowa – Orange Bowl

Now before you all ask me how this is possible, let me explain. The reason I think this is possible is because of a new rule with the BCS this year that I think will go into effect and anger many of you who bleed Black & Gold.

Under BCS guidelines, the Rose Bowl is required to take any non-automatic qualifier (i.e. Boise State) if it loses a Big Ten or Pac-10 champion to the BCS National Championship Game, and said non-AQ finishes in the top 12 of the BCS. By this token, a team like Boise State or TCU is going to be forced into the Rose Bowl to replace Ohio State if either team or any team like them is in the BCS top 12.

I think the Fiesta Bowl would strongly consider Iowa, but will likely settle on a team such as Nebraska if it loses the Big 12 Championship to Oklahoma. Once the Rose and Fiesta replace Ohio State and Oklahoma in my predictions, the Sugar Bowl gets the next at-large choice to play whoever wins the SEC. I see the Sugar Bowl taking someone else here, which leaves the Orange Bowl to pick an opponent for whoever wins the ACC. We know how much the Orange Bowl loves the Hawkeyes. I see Iowa heading back to Miami, this time to play Virginia Tech.

3. Wisconsin – Capital One Bowl

I know the Badgers are tired of going to Orlando, but the Capital One Bowl has always been one to choose its participants based on standings. Seeing how Wisconsin should be the best team available here, it won't pass up on the Badgers.

4. Penn State – Outback Bowl

The Nittany Lions are going to have two things going for them here:

1. I think they go 9-3 overall, and 6-2 in the Big Ten.
2. The JoePa factor.

Given these two factors, I don't see the Outback Bowl passing up on Penn State.

5. Michigan State – Gator Bowl

The Gator Bowl is new to the Big Ten line-up this year. By the time it picks, I think Michigan State will be the best candidate available for this game.

6. Northwestern – Insight Bowl

I have the Wildcats finishing sixth, and what I feel is going to be of major benefit here is that Arizona is full of people from the Chicagoland area, an area Northwestern is using a lot of resources to market itself in. I think a solid year for the Wildcats benefits that goal, and the end result will be a trip to the desert, where I'm sure a lot of alumni will travel to watch them play.

7. Purdue – Texas Bowl

Might be the first of two trips the Boilermaker faithful make to Houston this year, with the other coming in early April.

8. Indiana – Dallas Football Classic

Originally, when I was thinking Michigan could reach 6-6, this was the game I had the Wolverines in. Now, the Hoosiers are the only option left here for a trip to Dallas for this inaugural bowl game.

9. Michigan – no bowl

10. Illinois – no bowl

11. Minnesota – no bowl

We'll update this again in October when the Big Ten opens up the conference portion of its 2010 season.