

# 8/26/2011: Big Ten preseason bowl projections (premium)

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Now that I have provided you with season previews for all 12 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 2011 season playing out in the Big Ten, I believe you are going to see a total of nine teams (assuming Ohio State doesn't receive a postseason ban) make bowl games this season. I've also gone back and forth on this, but believe this is a year we'll continue to see two teams go to BCS games. I do believe Notre Dame gets a Fiesta Bowl bid, but I see it taking the Big 12's spot as opposed to the at-large spot, meaning I see the Sugar Bowl being in play for whoever loses the Big Ten Championship Game.

Those nine teams are Nebraska (who I think wins the Big Ten), Wisconsin, Ohio State (barring a postseason ban), Michigan State, Penn State, Iowa, Michigan, Illinois, and Northwestern. I think Indiana, Minnesota and Purdue will all fall just short of six wins in 2011.

*(The three BCS games I don't have a Big Ten team playing in I see shaking out as follows: BCS National Championship – Oklahoma vs. Alabama, Fiesta – Notre Dame vs. Boise State, Orange – Florida State vs. West Virginia.)*

Here is how I see it all shaking out:

## **Rose Bowl – Nebraska vs. Oregon**

I see the Cornhuskers and Badgers splitting two meetings, with

Wisconsin taking the Oct. 1 game at Camp Randall Stadium, and Nebraska winning the one that matters in Indianapolis on Dec. 3. Here, I have the Cornhuskers playing Oregon, who I have winning the Pac-12.

### **Sugar Bowl – Wisconsin vs. LSU**

Initially, I had doubts that the Big Ten gets two teams into the BCS, but the more I think about it, the more I feel a team like Wisconsin would draw more intrigue playing in the Sugar Bowl as opposed to an Oklahoma State or Stanford, so that's why I have the Badgers going here and playing an LSU team that secures this bid with Alabama playing in the national championship.

### **Capital One Bowl – Ohio State vs. South Carolina**

Again, I'm assuming that Ohio State doesn't get banned from postseason play. With that in mind, I think the Buckeyes just miss out on winning the Leaders Division and get the invite to Orlando to face an SEC opponent. I'm thinking Ohio State draws South Carolina here, who I see winning the SEC East.

### **Outback Bowl – Michigan State vs. Mississippi State**

I realize the Spartans have one of the toughest schedules in the conference, but I think enough talent is in place that Michigan State is going to return to a decent bowl here. My prediction for SEC opponent here is Mississippi State.

### **Insight Bowl – Penn State vs. Texas**

Here me out here: If it turns out to be Joe Paterno's final season (which none of us knows), this sets up a chance for him to coach a bowl game in the same stadium his finest hour as Penn State's head coach took place nearly 25 years to the date. Even if Penn State goes 7-5 again, I believe this bowl is in play for the Nittany Lions given the potential circumstances. That, and I think a bowl game between Penn

State and Texas would draw big ratings.

### **Gator Bowl – Iowa vs. Georgia**

This might not be the most intriguing game to Iowa fans, but with the Insight picking first, I could see them being reluctant to pick Iowa again. I do think as long as the Hawkeyes win seven games, this one's going to be in play, and I do believe Iowa would get the nod over a Michigan team that just played in this game a year ago. I also think the team I see the Hawkeyes playing in Jacksonville here is Georgia.

### **Texas Bowl – Michigan vs. Texas Tech**

This wouldn't be a bad bowl for Michigan to end up in during Year One under Brady Hoke. The opponent I see the Wolverines drawing here from the Big Ten is Texas Tech, which I think would make this a very winnable game for Michigan.

### **TicketCity Bowl – Illinois vs. Tulsa**

I think the Fighting Illini return to a bowl and end up here in Dallas playing on Jan. 2 against a C-USA opponent, which I see being Tulsa.

### **Little Caesars Bowl – Northwestern vs. Northern Illinois**

Northwestern's a team I could see winning eight games this season, but travel will be an issue, so any team that goes 7-5 is going to be in discussion to leap over the Wildcats. Interestingly, I have Northwestern playing in-state foe Northern Illinois, who hails from the MAC.

### **Indiana – no bowl**

### **Minnesota – no bowl**

### **Purdue – no bowl**

We'll update this again in October when the Big Ten opens up the conference portion of its 2011 season.