

11/26/2013: Big Ten bowl projections

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(Back in August, I made [a list of preseason bowl projections](#) that not only focused on the Big Ten, but projected all 35 bowl games for the 2013-14 season. With the Iowa Hawkeyes now bowl-eligible, I figured it'd be worth re-visiting this matter and providing new projections based off what has actually taken place this season.)

More shake-up has taken place since my most recent [bowl projections back on Nov. 19](#). As a result, I've made some revisions to my projections for this week.

The following are adjustments made from then to now and other points of note:

1) Big Ten gets two BCS teams

Not only do I think the Big Ten ends up with two BCS teams, but I'm even more confident about this now than I was last week. At this time last week, I posed the question what would happen if Baylor lost to Oklahoma State and became an at-large candidate? Well, that happened. Combined that with the fact that Wisconsin recently moved up to No. 15 in the latest BCS standings, and I'm pretty confident in saying the Big Ten gets two BCS teams as long as the Badgers, along with Ohio State and Michigan State, all win their respective games this coming Saturday.

2) Officially seven bowl-eligible teams from Big Ten

Michigan State and Ohio State both not only secured their spots in next week's Big Ten Championship Game over the

weekend, but both also guaranteed the conference will only have seven bowl-eligible teams this year with Northwestern and Indiana both being handed their seventh defeats of the season. As mentioned last week, the Big Ten having two BCS teams means there are two vacancies in the league's allotment – The Heart of Dallas Bowl and the Little Caesars Bowl. Beyond the top three, there are a few changes made to this week's projections from last week.

3) The formula behind putting this all together

Right now, there are already 70 bowl-eligible teams, which means all 35 bowl games will be filled without any unusual circumstances. I now have a total of 75 teams in total being bowl-eligible, meaning five teams are going to be left home for the holidays despite reaching that six-win plateau. After having seven vacancies last week, I now have eight of them this week with the Mountain West now unlikely to fill its total allotment if Fresno State gets a BCS at-large. This week's pool has a total of 13 teams to fill those eight spots. Teams no longer in the pool from last week are Syracuse and ULM, and assuming San Jose State loses to Fresno State this week, there's where that new vacancy comes into play. I also moved UTSA and Arizona both up into bowls with conference tie-ins and Tulane and Oregon State both down into this week's pool.

– The following eight bowls have vacancies – the AdvoCare V100 Bowl (SEC tie-in), the BBVA Compass Bowl (SEC tie-in), the Little Caesars Bowl (Big Ten tie-in), the Beef O'Brady's Bowl (AAC tie-in), the Poinsettia Bowl (Army is no longer bowl-eligible), the Pinstripe Bowl (Big 12 tie-in), the Heart of Dallas Bowl (Big Ten tie-in) and the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl (MWC tie-in)

– The following 13 teams were among those considered for the eight vacancies – (8-4): Bowling Green, Notre Dame, Toledo; (7-5): Maryland, Ohio, Tulane, Western Kentucky; (6-6):

Florida Atlantic, Central Michigan, Oregon State, Washington State, Troy and Texas State.

Seeing how I had seven teams projected as finishing 7-5 or better, it was pretty easy this week to fill seven of the eight vacant spots. This left one spot for 6-6 teams and six of these teams to choose from. At 6-6, Oregon State will have lost five straight games. However, it did beat Washington State head-to-head this season (on the road and in convincing fashion, no less). This is why for now, I have the Beavers taking that spot in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl instead of the Cougars, even though Washington State would probably be more thrilled about a trip to Boise.

Washington State and San Jose State were two teams I had bowling last week, but now see staying home for the holidays. Arizona and UTSA were teams I didn't have bowling last week, but do now. I also factored in bowl pay-out when filling the eight vacant spots.

Below are my projections as of Nov. 26, 2013 (the next list of bowl projections will take place Dec. 3):

BIG TEN BOWLS:

Rose Bowl – Ohio State vs. Stanford

– Last week, I replaced Stanford with Oregon. This week, Stanford returns to represent the Pac-12 in Pasadena thanks to Oregon losing at Arizona over the weekend. Even if the Cardinal have to play at Arizona State next week for the Pac-12 title, I believe Stanford wins. As for Ohio State, I have them beating Michigan State, but not moving up. If the Buckeyes do end up playing for the national championship though, I believe the Rose Bowl would opt to replace Ohio State with the Spartans as opposed to bringing back Wisconsin for the fourth consecutive year.

Orange Bowl – Wisconsin vs. Clemson

– No changes here from last week. Clemson remains the team I have replacing Florida State here, even if the Tigers lose to South Carolina this weekend. As long as Ohio State is the Big Ten's representative in the Rose Bowl, I believe Wisconsin gets the second BCS at-large. If the Buckeyes play for the national title or lose the Big Ten Championship to Michigan State, then the Badgers would drop to the Capital One Bowl. Either way, Wisconsin fans ought to start looking into traveling down to Florida this New Year's.

Capital One Bowl – Michigan State vs. South Carolina

– Again, nothing different here. If the Spartans don't reach the Rose Bowl either by beating Ohio State next week or by virtue of the Rose replacing the Buckeyes if Ohio State plays for the national title, this is where they're going to end up. As long as South Carolina wins the SEC East, the Gamecocks are who I have representing that league in this game. If Missouri beats Texas A&M on Saturday, however, then it becomes a real possibility that the Tigers end up in Orlando instead.

Outback Bowl – Nebraska vs. Texas A&M

– Assuming the Big Ten has two BCS teams, Iowa and Nebraska are playing for all the Bloomin' Onions on Friday in Lincoln. If the Cornhuskers win, it's practically a lock they play in this game. If the Hawkeyes win, it's not as much of a lock only because Nebraska has never played in the Outback Bowl, but Iowa would also have wins over all three remaining options from the Big Ten.

Typically, the Outback usually takes an SEC East team and if Missouri wins Saturday night, then this is where I would have South Carolina ending up. However, if Texas A&M beats Missouri on Saturday, the likelihood of the Outback inviting the Aggies becomes more likely, especially when you factor in Johnny Manziel. Not to mention if Nebraska is the Big Ten team, it'd still be a battle of former Big 12 teams.

Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl – Michigan vs. Texas

– There are two reasons I don't have Iowa ending up here: 1. The Hawkeyes have been to this game twice in recent memory – 2010 and 2011 when it was still called the Insight Bowl; 2. This is the final year that the Big Ten has a tie-in with this game. This is why I think it would still opt for Michigan instead, even though Iowa won head-to-head this past weekend. As for the Big 12, I now have Texas ending up in this game instead of Oklahoma, despite the fact that the Longhorns beat the Sooners head-to-head last month in Dallas.

Gator Bowl – Iowa vs. Georgia

– This is where I have the Hawkeyes, for now. As I said earlier, win at Nebraska on Friday, and I then believe Iowa has a very real shot at the Outback Bowl. But assuming this is the scenario, I now believe the Gator Bowl takes Iowa over Minnesota here since both teams would have identical Big Ten records and the Hawkeyes won head-to-head. As for the SEC, LSU played itself out of this game by beating Texas A&M last weekend, so it's basically between Georgia and Mississippi here.

A couple of things to keep in mind: First, Georgia does play at Jacksonville's EverBank Field annually when it plays Florida in what used to be known as "The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party." There are a lot of Bulldog fans down there, so they would be well-represented. That being said, Georgia also just lost its quarterback Aaron Murray for the rest of the season with a knee injury. He would've been the face of this bowl had Georgia ended up here. Without him, there's a chance the Gator Bowl opts for Ole Miss instead, assuming the Rebels win their Egg Bowl game on Thanksgiving against Mississippi State. If Ole Miss loses that game, Georgia might be a lock regardless of how it fares against Georgia Tech on Saturday without Murray. Either way, those are two games Hawkeye fans might want to keep close eyes on,

especially if Iowa is unable to beat Nebraska on Friday.

Texas Bowl – Minnesota vs. Texas Tech

– Minnesota will likely be 8-4 and have better records than both Iowa and Michigan. Except the Golden Gophers lost to both teams earlier in the season and both are going to travel better than Minnesota to any bowl game. So yeah, this would be a rematch of last year's game, back when it was called the Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas. If the Red Raiders lose at Texas on Thanksgiving, they're practically a lock to return to this game from the Big 12 side of things. This might ultimately boil down to how much influence Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany has on where Big Ten teams end up this bowl season. At least this is something Minnesota fans might want to hope happens now.

THE OTHER BCS BOWLS:

BCS National Championship Game – Alabama vs. Florida State

– Still no changes here and this is pretty self-explanatory.

Sugar Bowl – Auburn vs. UCF

– Even if Auburn loses to Alabama on Saturday, they're probably going to be the second-highest rated SEC team in the BCS standings. Add in Texas A&M losing to LSU over the weekend and I believe it's a safe bet the Tigers are the team picked to replace the Crimson Tide in this game. I still have UCF winning the AAC and with it being between the Golden Knights and either Fresno State or Northern Illinois, I still believe UCF gets chosen here. The only potential wrinkle would be if South Carolina plays in and wins the SEC title game next week because those teams already played each other season (actually, that's UCF's lone defeat).

Fiesta Bowl – Oklahoma State vs. Fresno State

– I projected this last week and I'm not changing it, even

though Northern Illinois just jumped Fresno State in the most recent BCS Standings. My thinking is Fresno State is going to end up ahead in the computers again next week after it plays San Jose State and Northern Illinois plays a 1-10 Western Michigan squad. One thing to keep in mind – if Northern Illinois does remain ahead in the final BCS standings, then the MWC will fill its entire allotment once again and one less MAC team would have to worry about being in an at-large pool for any remaining vacancies. As for Oklahoma State, I expect the Cowboys to win Bedlam next week, thus winning the Big 12.

ALL OF THE REST:

New Mexico Bowl – Arizona vs. Colorado State

**Previously had Oregon State representing the Pac-12*

Las Vegas Bowl – Utah State vs. UCLA

**Previously had Boise State vs. USC*

Idaho Potato Bowl – Buffalo vs. Oregon State*

**Previously had UNLV representing the MWC*

New Orleans Bowl – UTSA vs. UL-Lafayette

**Previously had Tulane representing C-USA*

Beef O'Brady's Bowl – North Texas vs. Western Kentucky*

**Previously had Middle Tennessee representing C-USA*

Hawaii Bowl – East Carolina vs. UNLV

**Previously had San Jose State representing the MWC*

Little Caesars Bowl – Ball State vs. Maryland*

(I'll reiterate this point from last week once again: The ACC is now able to fill its entire allotment, even with two BCS teams, and will have at least one team (two if Syracuse beats

Boston College on Saturday) left over. Maryland is leaving for the Big Ten next year and the divorce remains messy. So again, the Terrapins might be more deserving of one of the ACC bowls than either North Carolina or Pitt, but I have a hard time not seeing the ACC deliver the Terrapins a final parting shot, if you will. As long as Maryland beats N.C. State on Saturday, it should end up somewhere with a 7-5 record.)

Poinsettia Bowl – Ohio* vs. San Diego State

*Previously had Washington State filling the Army vacancy and Utah State representing the MWC

Military Bowl – Middle Tennessee vs. Pittsburgh

*Previously had Rice representing C-USA

Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl – BYU vs. Washington

*BYU is locked into this bowl game

Pinstripe Bowl – Houston vs. Notre Dame*

*Previously had Cincinnati representing the AAC

Belk Bowl – Cincinnati vs. Georgia Tech

*Previously had Houston representing the AAC

Russell Athletic Bowl – Miami (Fla.) vs. Louisville

Armed Forces Bowl – Boise State vs. Navy

*Previously had San Diego State representing the MWC; Navy is locked into this bowl game

Music City Bowl – Mississippi vs. Boston College

Alamo Bowl – Oregon vs. Oklahoma

*Previously had Stanford vs. Texas

Holiday Bowl – USC vs. Kansas State

**Previously had Arizona State representing the Pac-12*

AdvoCare V100 Bowl – North Carolina vs. Tulane*

**Previously had Ohio filling the SEC vacancy*

Sun Bowl – Virginia Tech vs. Arizona State

**Previously had UCLA representing the Pac-12*

Liberty Bowl – Marshall vs. Vanderbilt

Chick-Fil-A Bowl – Duke vs. Missouri

**Previously had Georgia representing the SEC*

Heart of Dallas Bowl – Rice vs. Bowling Green*

**Previously had North Texas representing C-USA*

Cotton Bowl – Baylor vs. LSU

**Previously had Texas A&M representing the SEC*

BBVA Compass Bowl – Toledo* vs. Rutgers

GoDaddy Bowl – Arkansas State vs. Northern Illinois

WHAT I'M KEEPING AN EYE ON FOR NEXT WEEK'S PROJECTIONS:

– **Big Ten games:** Iowa at Nebraska, Ohio State at Michigan, Minnesota at Michigan State and Penn State at Wisconsin

– **Games involving potential bowl opponents for Iowa:** Outback – Arkansas at LSU, Texas A&M at Missouri, Clemson at South Carolina; Buffalo Wild Wings – Texas Tech at Texas; Gator – Ole Miss at Mississippi State, Georgia at Georgia Tech; Texas – Texas Tech at Texas, Kansas State at Kansas

– **Teams that can become bowl-eligible this week:** SMU, Central Michigan, Troy, Florida Atlantic, San Jose State, Rutgers,

Colorado State, Wyoming, Syracuse, ULM

- SMU at Houston: SMU win makes Mustangs bowl-eligible and would eliminate current AAC vacancy in Beef O'Brady's Bowl.
- Texas State at Troy: Texas State win removes Troy from pool of at-large teams and at 7-5, the Bobcats would get more serious consideration for a bowl.
- Fresno State at San Jose State: Fresno State win keeps the Bulldogs in position to play in the Fiesta Bowl and would make San Jose State ineligible. San Jose State win makes the Spartans eligible and not only opens the door for Northern Illinois to return to a BCS bowl, but it would guarantee the MWC with more bowl-eligible teams than available allotments since that Famous Idaho Potato Bowl vacancy would get filled.
- Duke at North Carolina: Duke wins the ACC Coastal Division outright and would play Florida State in the ACC Championship Game, so as long as the Blue Devils win Saturday, they'll remain an option for the Chick-Fil-A Bowl. If the Tar Heels win however, there will be at least three teams and as many as five teams who tie for first place in the Coastal, which would create a little chaos in projecting ACC teams for bowls.
- Wyoming at Utah State: If Utah State wins, it will play Fresno State in the MWC Championship Game. If Wyoming wins, the Cowboys become bowl-eligible at 6-6 and the MWC would either fill out its allotment if Fresno State remains a BCS team or have two teams left over for the at-large pool.
- Alabama at Auburn: If everything stands pat among the Big Ten's top three teams this week, the Iron Bowl might play an enormous factor in which two Big Ten teams reach BCS bowls. Wisconsin fans will probably want Alabama to win because the Badgers' ticket to the Orange Bowl is Ohio State winning the Big Ten, but having to settle for the Rose Bowl. Michigan State fans will probably want Auburn to win because the Buckeyes (assuming they beat Michigan on Saturday) would

then move up to the BCS National Championship Game and the Spartans might then find themselves in a position next week where they end up in the Rose Bowl regardless of how they fare against Ohio State.