

Five bold predictions for college football

By **Chris Siers**
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With just over a month until the 2022 college football season kicks off, teams are putting in the summer work, while fans' excitement, and perhaps anxiety, reaches a fever pitch, leading up to the season's start.

What storylines will dominate this season?

Will Alabama strike back at Georgia?

Will Tennessee continue its rise to prominence under Josh Heupel?

While it's still the middle of summer, there are plenty of bold takes one what will crop up this season.

Here are five bold predictions for the upcoming 2022 college football season:

Tennessee beats either Georgia or Alabama

Tennessee is in the middle of arguably the best rise from ashes in recent memory in the college landscape.

The mess Jeremy Pruitt left behind, which ultimately led to his firing and 18 Level I violations, left the Tennessee administration scrambling to find his replacement.

With Phillip Fulmer on his way out of the administrative role as well, Tennessee turned to then-UCF athletic director Danny White, who in turn brought in Josh Heupel from UCF.

The tandem from Central Florida made sense as a package deal, but it was clear given the implications under Pruitt, Tennessee was going to be hit with a mass exodus of players due to the violations and recruiting restrictions.

Needless to say, the cupboard was fairly bare when Heupel stepped foot in Knoxville.

While expectations a season ago were essentially non-existent, Heupel and his staff put forth one of the more competitive seasons by Tennessee with a ragtag roster and finished 7-6, and was one blown call away from winning the Music City Bowl against Purdue.

Not only was Tennessee knocking on the door of an eight-win season, the Vols were in a dog fight at Alabama and at one point in the fourth quarter, was within a single score of knocking off Alabama in Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Eventually, Alabama's depth wore down Tennessee and put the game well out of reach by scoring 21 unanswered points to close out the game.

Now a year into Heupel's tenure and a full year of recruiting, it's clear his system worked a season ago.

The emergence of Hendon Hooker as a bonafide star gives the Vols a real threat under center.

Last season, Hooker played in 13 games for the Vols and nearly hit the 3,000-yard barrier. He tossed 31 touchdowns and had just three interceptions, while completing 68% of his passes.

The Vols certainly have enough talent to play with the big boys in the conference and the preseason media poll has the Vols picked to finish third in the SEC East.

It's certainly a tall order for a rebuilding

Tennessee team to beat the defending national champs, or the other team that played for a national title.

But Heupel runs a warp-speed offense and that's enough to gas even the best defenses in the nation.

Now that Tennessee has a little depth on its roster, and Hooker entering his second season in the system, it shouldn't be a stretch to think the Vols can knock off either of the SEC's two top dogs.

USC makes the College Football Playoff

Lincoln Riley sent shockwaves throughout the college football landscape late last fall when he announced his departure from Oklahoma, where he averaged over 10 wins per season, where he spent five years that included four-straight Big 12 Championships and two Heisman Trophy winners in Baker Mayfield and Kyler Murray.

After putting together a win percentage of .846, Riley was lured away from Norman to the West Coast to USC.

Since then, Riley has been on an absolute tear, compiling perhaps the most talented roster via the transfer portal.

He also took with him highly-touted former Oklahoma quarterback Caleb Williams.

As a freshman, Williams eventually took over quarterback duties from Spencer Rattler, who struggled to effectively become the Sooners' leader.

Williams played in 11 games and completed 64.5% of his passes and threw just over 1,900 yards.

He was effective in the downfield game as he threw 21 touchdown passes against just four interceptions.

In addition to landing Williams, 2021 Biletnikoff winner Jordan Addison transferred from Pitt to USC.

Addison totaled 1,593 receiving yards and hauled in 17 touchdown passes.

With the depth Riley built around USC, the Trojans basically became a playoff contender overnight.

It's no secret the Pac-12 has been the weakest of the Power 5 conferences for several years.

The last playoff appearance from a Pac-12 team came in the 2016-2017 season when Washington locked up the No. 4 seed, and then was promptly booted from the playoffs by Alabama in a 24-7 domination.

Other than Oregon, the Pac-12 is essentially a cakewalk for a roster loaded with that much talent and arguably the best, "young" coach in the nation.

With a favorable schedule, with a loaded roster, USC will have a say in not just how the Pac-12 shakes out, but arguably the final College Football Playoff rankings.

Other than Utah and Oregon, USC should be able to easily take care of business and reach the 10-win barrier, if not more.

Given the 2022 landscape of college football, the usual cast of suspects will be in the mix for the four-team playoff, including Ohio State, Alabama, Georgia and Clemson.

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Tribune Photo by Chris Siers

Several Marshall County players wait in line for pictures during the Tigers' media day last Friday night.

Tigers ready for busy finish to summer slate

By **Chris Siers**
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In the middle of summer workouts, Marshall County head coach Thomas Osteen likes what he's seen from his team so far this summer.

Last Friday night, the Tigers participated in their annual media day and now set their sights on a handful of scrimmages as the calendar inches closer to kickoff of the 2022 high school season.

Highlighting the summer for the Tigers has been a senior class that Osteen feels will be the core that carries the Tigers through the season.

"I think No. 1 is we've got as good of leadership in our older class as we've had in a while. Our senior class has good chemistry and a lot of guys that have played for two years already. I feel like that's going to give us a great core to build our team

around.

"Our attendance has been good. We've had 81 guys be here at least once this summer, which our numbers are bigger than they've been probably since I've been here. That's always a cool thing when you've got young men in your school wanting to participate in football," he said.

With several returning players that have seen their share of snaps in the last two seasons, the focus has been a combination of both conditioning and scheme implementation during the summer work.

"We try to do a balance of it all. In some form or fashion, we're kind of doing football year-round in the different channels you can do it in.

"We do spring practice as late as possible. After spring, we're a couple weeks off and we're back at it in June. In June, we're about an hour and 15 minutes working out and conditioning,

but still do about 50 minutes of football a day," Osteen said.

"With this much experience, we're probably a little bit farther along, scheme-wise, than we've been in a few years just because of our experience."

Marshall County went 7-4 a season ago and saw a first-round Class 4A playoff exit against Hardin County.

Returning a core of talent this season, Osteen hopes the Tigers can take another step forward and build a deep postseason run.

For now, the Tigers will get in a routine of playing on Friday nights with a slew of scrimmages leading up to their August 19 kickoff against Columbia.

This Friday, the Tigers will host Fairview in a scrimmage at the school's practice field before traveling to Coffee County next Friday.

Then, on August 12, the Tigers will host Page in a jamboree as a final tune up for the season.

LOCAL SOFTBALL TEAM DOES WELL IN RECENT TOURNAMENTS



Submitted photo

The Marshall County 6U softball team recently played in a pair of tournaments, winning the TSFA World Series, which was held in Ringgold, Georgia, where they won the 6U World Series championship. They also competed in the SUGF Summer state tournament and finished runner-up. In two tournaments, the team put together a 9-3-1 overall record. Competing with the team were (front, from left) McKartie Osborne, Adalynn Henson, Finley Tietgens, Bristol Crawford, Baylann Giles, Elise Piersol; (middle, from left) Amelia Daws, Everleigh Romero, Aspen Pierceall, Blair Brewer, Leah Davis, Hannah McCormick, Lennon Veron; (back, from left) Coaches Tim Pierceall, Zack McCormick, Luke Brewer, Doug Giles, Ryan Tietens and Shane Piersol.

Titans report for camp healthy, playoff loss left in past

By **TERESA M. WALKER**
AP Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE — All that matters to the Tennessee Titans is having a healthy Derrick Henry, a driven Ryan Tannehill and one of the NFL's best defenses back essentially intact to chase a third straight AFC South title.

Earning the AFC's No. 1 seed last sea-

son despite using an NFL-record 91 players means absolutely nothing now.

"If you don't play well in this league, you're going to lose," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said Tuesday as veterans reported for training camp. "And if you play well, you have a chance to win. We all know that. We've moved on just like everyone else

has."

The Titans certainly didn't stick with the roster that ended the season with a divisional loss to Cincinnati.

Wide receivers A.J. Brown now is in Philadelphia after being traded during the first round of the NFL draft in April, while Julio Jones was a salary cap cut in March. Left guard Rodger Saffold

and cornerback Janoris Jenkins also were casualties.

The Titans hope they replaced Brown by drafting Treyton Burks at No. 18 overall. They also traded for veteran Robert Woods and signed a two-time Pro Bowl tight end in Austin Hooper for an offense that could feature

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