

2018

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BETTING BIBLE

- BOWL GAME EDITION -

*The ultimate guide to
handicapping the college football bowl season.*

















































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Each college football bowl season, select teams pack their bags and head off for their postseason matchup, giving sports bettors a fresh set of intriguing non-conference competitions. While there is an aura of the unknown when it comes to bowl teams – these programs don't know much about each other – football bettors can find familiarity and value looking for teams in these certain situations.

We break down some of the important factors to figure into your bowl betting this December with our Bowl Betting Bible.

SCHEDULE

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BETTING BIBLE

Dec. 15 - Cure Bowl - Orlando, FL	 Tulane (6-6) -3.5 <i>VS</i>  UL Lafayette (7-6) O/U: 59	1:30 pm ET (CBSSN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 15 - New Mexico Bowl - Albuquerque, N.M.	 (21) Utah St. (10-2) +8 <i>VS</i>  N. Texas (9-3) O/U: 67.5	2:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 15 - Las Vegas Bowl - Las Vegas, NV	 Arizona St. (7-5) +4.5 <i>VS</i>  (21) Fresno St. (11-2) O/U: 53.5	3:30 pm ET (ABC)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 15 - Camellia Bowl - Montgomery, AL	 GA Southern (9-3) -2.5 <i>VS</i>  E. Michigan (7-2) O/U: 47.5	5:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 15 - New Orleans Bowl - New Orleans, LA	 Midd. Tennessee (8-5) +6.5 <i>VS</i>  App. St. (10-2) O/U: 50	9:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 18 - Boca Raton Bowl - Boca Raton, FL	 UAB (10-3) -2.5 <i>VS</i>  N. Illinois (8-5) O/U: 43.5	7:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 19 - Frisco Bowl - Frisco, TX	 San Diego State (7-5) +3 <i>VS</i>  Ohio (8-4) O/U: 54	8:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 20 - Gasparilla Bowl - Tampa Bay, FL	 Marshall (8-4) -2.5 <i>VS</i>  S. Florida (7-5) O/U: 55	8:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 21 - Bahamas Bowl - Nassau, Bahamas	 FIU (8-4) +5.5 <i>VS</i>  Toledo (7-5) O/U: 68.5	12:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 21 - Potato Bowl - Boise, ID	 W. Michigan (7-5) +12 <i>VS</i>  Brigham Young (6-6) O/U: 49.5	4:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 22 - Birmingham Bowl - Birmingham, AL	 Memphis (8-5) -5 <i>VS</i>  Wake Forest (6-6) O/U: 74	12:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 22 - Armed Forces Bowl - Fort Worth, TX	 (17) Houston (8-4) +3 <i>VS</i>  Army (9-2) O/U: 60	3:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 22 - Dollar General Bowl - Mobile, AL	 Buffalo (10-3) -2.5 <i>VS</i>  Troy (9-3) O/U: 51.5	7:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 22 - SoFi Hawai'i Bowl - Honolulu, HI	 Hawaii (8-5) -1 <i>VS</i>  La. Tech (7-5) O/U: 60	10:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 26 - First Responder Bowl - Dallas, TX	 (20) Boston College (7-5) +3 <i>VS</i>  (25) Boise St. (10-3) O/U: 55.5	1:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 26 - Quick Lane Bowl - Detroit, MI	 Minnesota (6-6) +5 <i>VS</i>  Georgia Tech (7-5) O/U: 60	5:15 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 26 - Cheez-It Bowl - Phoenix, AZ	 California (7-5) PK <i>VS</i>  Texas Christian (6-6) O/U: 40.5	9:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 27 - Independence Bowl - Shreveport, LA	 Temple (8-4) -3.5 <i>VS</i>  Duke (7-5) O/U: 55	1:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 27 - Pinstripe Bowl - New York, NY	 Miami (7-5) -4 <i>VS</i>  Wisconsin (7-5) O/U: 48	5:15 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 27 - Texas Bowl - Houston, TX	 Baylor (6-6) +3.5 <i>VS</i>  Vanderbilt (6-6) O/U: 55	9:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 28 - Music City Bowl - Nashville, TN	 Purdue (6-6) +3.5 <i>VS</i>  Auburn (7-5) O/U: 54.5	1:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 28 - Camping World Bowl - Orlando, FL	 (16) W. Virginia (8-3) -1.5 <i>VS</i>  (20) Syracuse (9-3) O/U: 68	5:15 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 28 - Alamo Bowl - San Antonio, TX	 (24) Iowa St. (8-4) +3.5 <i>VS</i>  (13) Washington State (10-2) O/U: 55	9:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS

Dec. 29 - Peach Bowl - Atlanta, GA	 (7) Michigan (10-2) -7.5 VS  (10) Florida (9-3) O/U: 50.5	12:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 29 - Belk Bowl - Charlotte, NC	 South Carolina (7-5) -4 VS  (22) Virginia (7-5) O/U: 54.5	12:30 pm ET (ABC)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 29 - Arizona Bowl - Tucson, AZ	 Arkansas St. (8-4) -1.5 VS  Nevada (7-5) O/U: 60.5	1:15 pm ET (CBSSN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 29 - Cotton Bowl - Arlington, TX	 (3) Notre Dame (8-4) +11 VS  (2) Clemson (7-5) O/U: 55	4:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 29 - Orange Bowl - Miami, FL	 (1) Alabama (13-0) -14 VS  (4) Oklahoma (12-1) O/U: 80.5	8:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 31 - Military Bowl - Annapolis, MD	 (24) Cincinnati (10-2) -5 VS  Virginia Tech (6-6) O/U: 53.5	12:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 31 - Sun Bowl - El Paso, TX	 (24) Pittsburgh (7-6) -5 VS  Stanford (8-4) O/U: 53.5	2:00 pm ET (CBS)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 31 - Redbox Bowl - Santa Clara, CA	 Michigan St. (7-5) +3 VS  Oregon (8-4) O/U: 48	3:00 pm ET (FOX)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 31 - Liberty Bowl - Memphis, TN	 (23) Missouri (8-4) -8 VS  Oklahoma St. (6-6) O/U: 74	3:45 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 31 - Holiday Bowl - San Diego, CA	 (22) Northwestern (8-5) +7 VS  (17) Utah (9-4) O/U: 46	7:00 pm ET (FS1)	LIVE ODDS
Dec. 31 - Gator Bowl - Jacksonville, FL	 (19) Texas A&M (8-4) -6 VS  NC State (9-3) O/U: 58.5	7:30 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Jan. 1 - Outback Bowl - Tampa Bay, FL	 (18) Mississippi St. (8-4) -7 VS  Iowa (8-4) O/U: 44	12:00 pm ET (ESPN2)	LIVE ODDS
Jan. 1 - Fiesta Bowl - Glendale, AZ	 (8) Central Florida (12-0) +7.5 VS  (11) Louisiana St. (9-3) O/U: 55.5	1:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Jan. 1 - Citrus Bowl - Orlando, FL	 (14) Kentucky (9-3) +6.5 VS  (12) Penn St. (9-3) O/U: 47.5	1:00 pm ET (ABC)	LIVE ODDS
Jan. 1 - Rose Bowl - Pasadena, CA	 (9) Washington (10-3) +6.5 VS  (6) Ohio St. (12-1) O/U: 58	5:00 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Jan. 1 - Sugar Bowl - New Orleans, LA	 (15) Texas (9-4) +11.5 VS  (5) Georgia (11-2) O/U: 58	8:45 pm ET (ESPN)	LIVE ODDS
Jan. 7 - National Championship - Santa Clara, CA	TBA - VS TBA -	8:00 pm ET (ESPN)	

One of the biggest differences between wagering on college and professional sports is the impact of the coaching. In the college ranks, these coaches are the molders of young men and build a program from the bottom up, having a bigger influence on how the game is played. Oddsmakers factor coaching into the lines in college sports more than any other option.

That's why it's such a big deal when coaches are swapped out just before bowl season. Whether it be a coach taking a new job, announcing retirement and looking to get one last big win, or a team holding on to a coach that everyone thought would leave for a bigger payday, bettors can find added value when handicapping the turnover on the sidelines.

"Teams and players often rally behind a new coach or departing coach, while other times players and teams are disappointed and provide a weak effort," says Covers Expert Steve Merrill.

The biggest coaching change — by far — for bowl season is Urban Meyer announcing his retirement from Ohio State. Meyer will coach his final game for the Buckeyes at the Rose Bowl and will leave the team in the hands of offensive coordinator Ryan Day next season. The betting market seems to think that the Buckeyes will rally to send Meyer off with one final bowl win over Washington as the market **ticked up to Buckeyes minus-6** from the opening line of minus-5.5 within a day of the announcement. It could also be worth noting that, for all of his accomplishments, Meyer has never won a Rose Bowl, so there could be a little extra motivation there.

Georgia Tech is in a similar situation with the retirement of coach Paul Johnson, who leaves the Yellow Jackets after 11 seasons at the helm but will coach at the Quick Lane Bowl in a farewell game. Johnson announced his retirement on Nov. 28, before bowl lines opened, but the market seems to think that the Yellow Jackets will also be motivated to send their coach off with a win as the line has moved from **Georgia Tech -3.5 to -4 over Minnesota**.

Replacing Johnson at Georgia Tech is Geoff Collins, who leaves Temple to return to the school that gave him his first college coaching job when he was a graduate assistant from 1999-2001. Collins leaves the Owls immediately and assistant Ed Foley will coach the team in the Walk-On's Independence Bowl on Dec. 27 against Duke. Temple **opened as a 3-point chalk** over the Blue Devils and the coaching announcement did not move the line.

Appalachian State is also without most of its coaching staff as Scott Satterfield and his top-two assistants have left for Louisville. Mark Ivey, the assistant head coach and defensive line coach, has been named interim coach and will lead the team into the New Orleans Bowl on Dec. 15. App State opened as a 7-point favorite and has seen the line **drop half a point since**.

It's not always coaches leaving a program that affects team motivation and morale for bowl games. Sometimes having a coach extended — or not leave for a more lucrative position — can have a similar effect. This bowl season, we see this situation with UAB and Purdue.

The Blazers extended coach Bill Clark, which is amazing news for the team after he was rumored for positions at Power Five schools. Clark and the UAB program have been an amazing story. After having their program shut down in 2015 and 2016, the Blazers rebounded with an 8-5 season last year (and a loss at the Bahamas Bowl) then went 10-3 this season which included a Conference USA championship game win over Middle Tennessee. UAB now makes the trip to Florida for its bowl game where it takes on Northern Illinois in the Cheribundi Boca Raton Bowl. Keeping Clark is a huge win for the Blazers program, but the early betting market doesn't see it as a factor for this game as UAB opened at -2.5 but **quickly moved down to -1.5**.

Purdue should also be thinking it got a huge win when coach Jeff Brohm decided to stick around instead of leaving for his alma mater Louisville. Brohm has records of 6-6 (2018) and 7-6 (2017) but that's a huge improvement for a Boilermakers program that had just nine combined wins in the four seasons between 2013 and 2016 under coach Darrell Hazell. Brohm coached Purdue to a 38-35 win over Arizona at the Foster Farms Bowl last season but faces a tough battle this season as an underdog against Auburn at the Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl. Early bettors are perhaps seeing motivation as a factor for Purdue as the line opened at Auburn -5 but **has since dropped to -3.5**.

Rounding out the list (as of mid-December) is Utah State, which brought back coach Gary Andersen after Matt Wells and his top-two coordinators left for Texas Tech. Anderson previously coached the Aggies from 2009-12, after which he coached Wisconsin (2013-14) and then Oregon State (2015-17). The Aggies opened as an 11-point fave but the **line has ticked down to -9**.

Bowl season is many things to many teams.

To some, it's the culmination of a hard-fought season. To others, it's a relief from years of losing. And to a few programs, it's a reminder of missed opportunities and wasted potential. Understanding the mindset of a bowl team is paramount before placing any bets.

Which programs are just happy to be invited to a bowl game and which ones are actually serious about winning? The first step college football bettors should take when looking at potential plays is to call out any teams disappointed with the bowl they've drawn. While some could lack motivation, this situation usually serves as motivation with a chip on the team's shoulder.

The best example of this is teams who think they should be playing in the College Football Playoff but aren't. For the second consecutive season, we look at Big Ten champs Ohio State and undefeated Central Florida as prime examples of those feeling the playoff snub.

Last season, the Buckeyes settled for the Cotton Bowl despite winning the Big Ten and managed a 24-7 victory over USC as a 10-point favorite. This year, Ohio State is again on the outside looking in of the CFP and settles for a Rose Bowl date with Washington. We're not overly worried about a lack of motivation here, however, as the Buckeyes will want to send off coach Urban Meyer with his first-ever Rose Bowl win in his last game at Ohio State. The Buckeyes opened as a 5.5-point favorite and **have now ticked up to -6.5**.

Another program feeling disrespected for the second year in a row could be Central Florida, a team that finished eighth in the CFP rankings despite going 12-0 for the second consecutive season. In fact, the Knights have won 24 consecutive games, including a 34-27 win over Auburn in the Peach Bowl last season where they were a 9.5-point dog. UCF again settles for a New Year's Six Bowl and this year takes on LSU in the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl. The Knights didn't get any respect from oddsmakers last season and that trend continues as they opened as an 8-point underdog, though the market has **now shifted to LSU -7.5**.

Motivation isn't just reserved for the big boys, though. Programs that barely qualified for bowl eligibility and still earned a berth in a postseason game can often feel a sense of accomplishment. Covers Expert Art Aronson of AAA Sports calls these the "just glad to be there" teams.

"This might take some digging, but there are teams which are just happy to be aboard the gravy train," says Aronson. "Coaches get a little more job security and players get to brag when they go home for semester break. With dozens of games, it's a win-win for everyone."

Littering the bowl season landscape are a number of six-win squads that just barely qualified for postseason consideration: BYU, Minnesota, Oklahoma State, Purdue, TCU, Tulane, Vanderbilt, Virginia Tech, and Wake Forest all made the bowl grade by the skin of their teeth. Football bettors should do a deep dive into how coaches, players, and even fan bases feel about their respective postseason contests.

One team that could be happy to just be at a bowl game is Virginia Tech, a team that now owns the nation's longest streak for consecutive bowl appearances — but it took the Hokies some dramatics to get there. At 4-6 heading into Thanksgiving weekend, the Hokies were in a situation on Black Friday where they had to win as a home underdog to rival Virginia just to extend their season. The Hokies prevailed 34-31 in overtime, which then triggered a conditional game against Marshall on Dec. 1 that was only played to allow Virginia Tech the opportunity to become bowl eligible. The Hokies won easily, 41-20, and then accepted an invite to the Military Bowl, where they'll take on Cincinnati. The Bearcats opened as favorites at -6.5 but that **has since moved down a point to -5.5**.

Bettors must also measure the motivation of teams that are ending an extended bowl drought, and determine whether they're feeling a false sense of accomplishment – bound for a letdown – or using that big stage to push the program even further up the food chain.

We don't quite have a situation like last year where New Mexico State snapped a 57-year bowl absence (by winning the Arizona Bowl outright as a 4-point underdog). The longest bowl drought in the nation now belongs to Kansas, who hasn't been to a bowl game since 2008 (and isn't bowling in 2018).

The longest streak snapped this season belongs to Syracuse, who heads to a bowl game for the first time since 2013. The Orange are coming off a nice season that saw them go 9-3 to earn a trip to the Camping World Bowl in Orlando, where they take on West Virginia. The Mountaineers might actually be missing some motivation in this one after back-to-back losses to end the season cost them a chance at the Big 12 title and perhaps a New Year's Six bowl. They'll also be without star quarterback Will Grier. WVU opened as a 6.5-point favorite but the **line has dropped to -1.5** after Grier's decision to skip the game.

One of the most underlying motivational capping tools is finding a team playing in the same bowl as it did last season. The best example of this comes from the 2014-15 bowl schedule that found Arkansas State back in the GoDaddy Bowl for the fourth straight season, losing to Toledo 63-44 as a 3.5-point underdog in Mobile, Alabama.

"Teams returning to the same minor bowl game they played in last year tend to become disinterested," notes Covers' expert Marc Lawrence.

Examples from last season include Washington State, who returned to the Holiday Bowl for the second consecutive season and lost 42-17 to Michigan State despite an opening line of Cougars -3, and LSU, who returned to the Citrus Bowl for the second consecutive season only to lose 21-17 to Notre Dame as a 3-point favorite.

This season, Army is the only FBS team that fits the bill as it returns to the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl in Fort Worth, Tex. for the second consecutive season. Army comes in at 10-3 and faces a Houston squad that finished at 8-4 but will be without stud defensive lineman Ed Oliver as he prepares for the NFL Draft. Army opened as a 5-point favorite but **has since slipped to -3**.

Digging a bit deeper, we also see that North Carolina A&T returns to the Air Force Reserve Celebration Bowl for the second consecutive season (and third time in four years). This relatively unknown bowl features the winner of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) and is the only bowl game to feature two FCS schools. The Aggies have won both of their appearances in the last three seasons and are a 7.5-point favorite on Dec. 15th against Alcorn State. The Braves return to the Celebration Bowl for the first time since 2015, when they lost 41-34 to the Aggies, so revenge could be a factor here as well.

And while it's not a rematch of a particular bowl, Miami and Wisconsin play each other in a bowl game for the second consecutive season as they face off in the New Era Pinstripe Bowl from Yankee Stadium. Last season, Wisconsin earned a 34-24 win in the Orange Bowl as a 6.5-point favorite. The Hurricanes are in a rare bowl revenge spot and opened as a 3-point favorite over the Badgers, though the **line has grown to plus-4**.

Time, time, time... is on my side. YES, IT IS! Or maybe it isn't...

Some programs are thrust right into the bowl schedule with a small break between the finale, finals and the bowl game. Other teams are collecting dust for almost a month while they prepare for their year-end showcase.

A team that gained momentum late in the year may not have that same mojo working for it in bowl season, thanks to the extended hiatus. Depending on the break between games, programs could be completely different come game day and that opens up a lot of value to go against, with oddsmakers setting these lines based on their past accomplishments.

The longest layoff in the nation belongs to Notre Dame as its last contest came on Nov. 24 due to not having a conference championship game. This means that the Irish will have not played for 35 days, giving them an extra week of rest (or rust?) over Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinal at the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 29. **Clemson is an 11-point fave.**

Army comes in with the shortest rest after having played on Dec. 8 in the annual Army-Navy game. This gives them just a two-week layoff before playing Houston in the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl. The Cougars haven't played since Nov. 23, giving them 29 days between games. **Houston is a 3-point dog.**

Then there's the list of top-end players joining the growing trend of skipping the bowl game. The long layoff plays a factor here as every added practice is another risk of being hurt and perhaps losing millions of dollars in contract money. Those expected to go in the first round are more worried about their health than earning the swag that comes with winning the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, and rightly so.

Speaking of the Gator Bowl, NC State will be without two of its stars as receiver Kelvin Harmon and linebacker Germaine Pratt will both skip the Wolfpack's bowl game. Harmon led the team with 81 catches for 1,186 yards and seven touchdowns, while Pratt had team-highs with 104 tackles, 10.5 tackles for loss and six sacks. The Wolfpack are **a 5-point dog against Texas A&M.**

South Carolina will be missing its top playmaker as receiver Deebo Samuel will sit out the Belk Bowl. The senior has had injury issues throughout his career and won't risk another one against Virginia. Samuel was second in the SEC this season with 1,478 all-purpose yards and had 11 receiving touchdowns. The Gamecocks are still favored but the **line has dropped from -6.5 to -4.**

Arizona State will also be missing its top receiver as N'Keal Harry will sit out the Las Vegas Bowl. Harry leaves Tempe as one of the top receivers in program history with 26 total touchdowns and 213 receptions for 2,889 yards. The Sun Devils opened as a 3-point dog and are **now giving away 4 points.**

Justice Hill was the first big-name running back to sit out a bowl game as the Oklahoma State star won't make the trip to Memphis for the Liberty Bowl. In 36 career games, Hill had 632 carries for 3,539 yards and 30 touchdowns, while adding 49 receptions for 304 yards and another touchdown. The Cowboys opened as a 10-point underdog but the **line has since jumped up to plus-8.**

Memphis' Darrell Henderson has also declared for the NFL Draft after posting 1,909 rushing yards on 214 carries for an average of 8.9 yards per carry. Henderson led the nation with 2,328 all-purpose yards and added 25 total touchdowns. It's unclear as to whether he'll play in the Birmingham Bowl on Dec. 22, but the betting market seems to think he'll sit as the **line dropped from Tigers -5 to -3.5** after his announcement.

Iowa will also be missing a top offensive option as tight end Noah Fant won't play in the Outback Bowl. Fant posted 39 catches for 519 yards and seven touchdowns this season and is expected to be the first tight end off the board at the NFL Draft in April. The Hawkeyes are now **a 6.5-point underdog after opening at plus-5.**

Houston will be missing the core of its defense as defensive tackle Ed Oliver will skip the Armed Forces Bowl to prepare for the draft. Oliver is likely to be a Top 5 pick and will focus on getting healthy as injuries forced him to miss four of the Cougars' final five games. Houston is **a 3-point dog after opening at plus-5.**

Defensive tackle Rashan Gary, another Top 10 prospect for the upcoming draft, likely won't suit up for Michigan in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl after declaring for the draft and implying his Michigan career was over. The top overall recruit from the 2016 class finishes his Wolverines career with 137 tackles, 24 tackles for loss, and 10.5 sacks in 35 games. Michigan opened as a 6-point favorite but the **line has now grown to -7.5.**

Cornerback Greedy Williams is another projected early first-round pick who won't play his bowl game as the LSU star will begin his pre-draft training process early. His presence will be missed as the Tigers try to shut down the high-flying UCF passing game. LSU is still a heavy favorite but the line has **ticked down from -8 to -7.5.**

Finally, perhaps the biggest name skipping bowl season is West Virginia quarterback Will Grier, who led the Mountaineers to an 8-3 season with 3,864 passing yards and 37 touchdowns. Grier will focus on the 2018 NFL Draft where he is one of the top-rated quarterbacks. Next up is expected to be sophomore Jack Allison, a transfer from Miami, who went 6-of-10 for 75 yards with a touchdown and an interception in 2018. WVU is still favored but the line **dropped from -7.5 to -1.5** upon Grier's announcement.

For many players, a bowl game means a chance to get outside of the norm — to get off campus and travel to far-off exotic places. For some teams, though, bowl season can mean a two-hour bus trip down the highway, which has its positives and negatives.

Some programs and their fan bases have the benefit of staying near campus for their bowl game, which means good ticket sales and a home-field advantage. However, sometimes not getting to travel for a bowl game is disappointing to players and can hurt their motivation heading in.

There are a number of programs staying close to home this bowl season, none more than the Hawaii Rainbow Warriors, who play their bowl game in the SoFi Hawai'i Bowl in their home stadium on Dec. 22. The Rainbow Warriors opened as a 1.5-point favorite and **have since slipped to -1** as they take on a Louisiana Tech squad that will travel over 4,000 miles. Hawaii went 5-2 SU and 3-4 ATS at home this season, while the Bulldogs were 4-3 SU and 5-2 ATS on the road.

South Florida joins Hawaii in getting an added home game as the Bulls play in the Bad Boy Mowers Gasparilla Bowl in Raymond James Stadium, which is also where they play their home games. USF **opened as a 3-point underdog** against Marshall as the Bulls covered the spread just once in six games at home in 2018.

There are a few other teams who have a short trip to their bowl game. South Carolina travels up the road to face Virginia in the Belk Bowl in Charlotte, North Carolina on Dec. 29. The Gamecocks are **a 6.5-point favorite** against a Cavaliers team that was 4-2 ATS on the road.

Houston stays in state to play in the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl on Dec. 22, where the Cougars face an Army squad traveling over 1,300 miles. Army is 4-1 ATS on the road this season and opened as a 5-point favorite, though the line **was quickly bet down to -3**. Note that the crowd might actually be on the Knights' side, however, due to the nature of the Armed Forces Bowl Game.

Baylor also gets to stay in the Lonestar State as it hops on a bus and heads south-east to Houston for the Academy Sports + Outdoors Texas Bowl on Dec. 27. Vanderbilt travels around 700 miles and were 4-1 ATS on the road in 2018. The Commodores opened as 6-point chalk but the **line has since dropped to -3.5**.

Troy is another team that doesn't have to leave state lines as it travels south-west to Mobile, Alabama in the Dollar General Bowl on Dec. 22. The Trojans match up against a Buffalo squad that travels about 1,000 miles and was 5-1 ATS on the season. The Bulls opened as a 3-point favorite and the **line has since dipped to -2.5**.

As we've seen in the past, travel can play a big part in bowl performance. One of the biggest travel advantages of this bowl season might be in the Bahamas Bowl on Dec. 21, where Florida International hops on a short flight from Miami, while Toledo travels roughly 1,200 miles. FIU has traveled quite well in 2018, posting a 5-0 ATS record on the road, while the Rockets were just 2-3 ATS away from home. Toledo **opened as a 6-point favorite and are now -5.5**.

The biggest travel disparity among teams staying on the mainland comes in the Redbox Bowl from Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara where Michigan State makes a trek of roughly 2,000 miles to face an Oregon squad that travels less than 500 miles. While each team will have its group of loyal fans in this one, don't expect a packed house after the Pac-12 championship game drew just over 35,000 in the same locale a couple weeks ago. MSU is 3-2 ATS on the road in 2018, while the Ducks are 2-3 ATS. Oregon is **a 3-point fave after opening at -1.5**.

A similar situation occurs in the Rose Bowl where Ohio State travels roughly 2,000 miles while Washington goes less than 1,000. The crowd will certainly be a factor in this one, however, as both teams travel well and the Rose Bowl Game is always sold out. The Buckeyes are 2-4 ATS on the season and the Huskies 2-3. The Buckeyes are **6.5-point chalk after opening at -5.5**.

As for the most total miles in a bowl game, we head to the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl where LSU and UCF combine for around 3,200 traveled miles. LSU's fan base historically travels very well and it has only 1,200 miles to Glendale, Arizona as opposed to 2,000 for UCF. The Knights are 3-1 ATS on the road this season and the Tigers are 2-2 ATS. LSU is **favored by 7.5**.

One final factor travel factor to consider is overall travel fatigue, and it comes into play for the Cotton Bowl when Notre Dame faces Clemson. The Fighting Irish are one of the most traveled teams in the country in 2018, with round trips from South Bend, Ind. to San Diego, Newark, and L.A. — totaling over 8,500 miles — over their last five games. Oppositely, Clemson's furthest road game in 2018 was at Texas A&M and that was back in Week 2. Its four other road games of the season were at Georgia Tech, Wake Forest, Florida State, Boston College, and in Charlotte for the ACC Championship Game. Notre Dame is 4-1-1 ATS away from South Bend this season, while Clemson is 5-1 ATS away from home (with the one ATS loss at Texas A&M). The Fighting Irish are **getting 11 points as a double-digit dog**.

Live betting is still very much an untapped market for many sports bettors, despite being around almost as long as online sportsbooks. The ability to get action down on a game as it unfolds, betting on constantly-evolving lines and odds, is one of the most lucrative ways to wager on college football bowl season — if you know what to look for.

Bowl games aren't like most college football contests. There are so many outside factors — many of which we dissected in the first four sections — that these showcases can produce some strange results. And strange results are the gift that keeps on giving for fans of in-game wagering.

The best in-game value comes from bowls in which a sizable favorite falls behind on the scoreboard early. And you'll see this a lot in postseason action. The team that is expected to win comes out flat, be it due to a long layoff between games or lack of motivation after missing out on a marquee bowl matchup, instantly slimming their in-game line compared to the closing pregame line.

A 9.5-point spread may take a tumble to a key number, like -6 or -3.5, depending on the game situation, allowing live bettors to scoop that shrunken spread in hopes that the favorite will eventually snap out it (for a bit of a price, as live lines are usually juiced more than the standard -110 vig. That's the price of convenience).

Live betting money lines are a great way to grab plus-money value on teams that were big pregame chalk and avoid sweating out a point spread, should they start out slow and fall behind on the scoreboard. A favorite that closed at -250 on the money line may go down 10-0 in the opening quarter, dropping their in-game money line to +110 or better. Having some faith in that favorite to at least come back and win the game can stuff some extra coin in your stocking this holiday season.

You can also take advantage of anomalies in scoring production, as it pertains to the in-running Over/Under. A bowl game may have closed with a total of 68 points but after one-and-a-half quarters, the score is just 3-0. These irregular results often correct themselves and bettors can bank on that by betting Over the adjusted live total or taking the Over with the posted halftime total.

Another reason to lean on live betting this bowl season is the opportunity for middling — winning bets on both sides at different spreads. As mentioned in the cases below, you can get some squirrely results early into bowl games which means major swings in the in-running odds.

A favorite may go down, allowing you to lay a short amount of points on the fave in-game. Then, as they battle their way back, you can get a live line with a bulk of points on the underdog. Should the difference in the final score land somewhere between the two spreads, you'll cash both bets on the same game. Totals also offer lucrative middling opportunities during in-game wagering.


You can also middle or even hedge a pregame bet depending on the original line you grabbed. If you took a pregame flyer on a big money line dog to win outright and it looks as though they could seriously cash in as the fourth quarter comes to a close, you may want to use live odds on the other side to guarantee a profit should your original high-yield wager not pay out. But make sure you're doing your math on risk and reward before pulling the trigger on any hedge bets.

And finally, one of the best uses for live in-gaming betting odds this bowl season has to do with the busy pace of the holidays. Sports bettors aren't just mindless money-hungry misers hiding away from the holidays like Ebenezer Scrooge. We're family men and women: sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends.

We have plenty of commitments outside of watching and wagering games, which means you can't always get a bet down before kickoff. In-running odds are perfect for those busy days when you can't sit down in front of the TV until midway through the second quarter, for whatever reason. From there, you can scan the action, get a feel for the pace and momentum of the game, measure the live lines against the closing pregame odds, and tap away on the in-game offerings.

Every family has a holiday tradition. Some decorate the tree on Christmas Eve, some go sledding, and others love to take those corny “ugly sweater” group photos for the annual Xmas card.

Well, our Covers family has a tradition of its own. And things get much, much uglier than those terrible sweaters. It’s bowl season, which means it’s time to see which member of our editorial team knows the most about college football betting.

COVERS EDITORIAL BOWL GAME PICKS									
		LOGAN	CALEY	HANSON	FORTENBAUGH	MOSSMAN	EVERSON	DUBREUIL	PONNAIYA
CURE BOWL TULANE UL LAFAYETTE (+3.5)	SAT, DEC 15 1:30 PM ET	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5	TULANE -3.5	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5	UL LAFAYETTE +3.5
NEW MEXICO BOWL NORTH TEXAS UTAH STATE (-9.5)	SAT, DEC 15 2:00PM ET	NORTH TEXAS +9.5	NORTH TEXAS +9.5	UTAH STATE -9.5	NORTH TEXAS +9.5	NORTH TEXAS +9.5	NORTH TEXAS +9.5	UTAH STATE -9.5	UTAH STATE -9.5
LAS VEGAS BOWL FRESNO STATE ARIZONA STATE (+4.5)	SAT, DEC 15 3:30PM ET	ARIZONA STATE +4.5	FRESNO STATE -4.5	ARIZONA STATE +4.5	ARIZONA STATE +4.5	FRESNO STATE -4.5	FRESNO STATE -4.5	FRESNO STATE -4.5	FRESNO STATE -4.5
CAMELLIA BOWL GEORGIA EASTERN MICHIGAN (+1)	SAT, DEC 15 5:30PM ET	GEORGIA -1	GEORGIA -1	EASTERN MICHIGAN +1	EASTERN MICHIGAN +1	GEORGIA -1	GEORGIA -1	GEORGIA -1	GEORGIA -1
NEW ORLEANS BOWL MIDDLE TENNESSEE APPALACHIAN STATE (-7)	SAT, DEC 15 9:00PM ET	APP STATE -7	APP STATE -7	APP STATE -7	MIDDLE TENNESSEE +7	APP STATE -7	APP STATE -7	APP STATE -7	MIDDLE TENNESSEE +7
BOCA RATON BOWL UAB NIU (+2.5)	TUES, DEC 18 7:00PM ET	UAB -2.5	UAB -2.5	UAB -2.5	NIU +2.5	UAB -2.5	UAB -2.5	UAB -2.5	UAB -2.5
FRISCO BOWL SAN DIEGO STATE OHIO (-3)	WED, DEC 19 8:00PM ET	SAN DIEGO STATE +3	SAN DIEGO STATE +3	OHIO -3	SAN DIEGO STATE +3	OHIO -3	SAN DIEGO STATE +3	SAN DIEGO STATE +3	OHIO -3
GASPARILLA BOWL MARSHALL USF (+2.5)	THURS, DEC 20 8:00PM ET	MARSHALL -2.5	MARSHALL -2.5	USF +2.5	USF +2.5	USF +2.5	MARSHALL -2.5	MARSHALL -2.5	MARSHALL -2.5
BAHAMAS BOWL FIU TOLEDO (-6)	FRI, DEC 21 12:30PM ET	TOLEDO -6	TOLEDO -6	TOLEDO -6	FIU +6	FIU +6	FIU +6	FIU +6	FIU +6
FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO BOWL WESTERN MICHIGAN BYU (-12)	FRI, DEC 21 4:00PM ET	BYU -12	BYU -12	WESTERN MICHIGAN +12	WESTERN MICHIGAN +12	WESTERN MICHIGAN +12	BYU -12	BYU -12	WESTERN MICHIGAN +12
BIRMINGHAM BOWL MEMPHIS WAKE FOREST (+5)	SAT, DEC 22 12:00PM ET	WAKE FOREST +5	MEMPHIS -5	MEMPHIS -5	WAKE FOREST +5	MEMPHIS -5	MEMPHIS -5	MEMPHIS -5	MEMPHIS -5
ARMED FORCES BOWL HOUSTON ARMY (-3)	SAT, DEC 22 3:30PM ET	HOUSTON +3	ARMY -3	HOUSTON +3	HOUSTON +3	HOUSTON +3	ARMY -3	ARMY -3	HOUSTON +3
DOLLAR GENERAL BOWL BUFFALO TROY (+2.5)	SAT, DEC 22 7:00PM ET	BUFFALO -2.5	BUFFALO -2.5	BUFFALO -2.5	TROY +2.5	BUFFALO -2.5	TROY +2.5	TROY +2.5	TROY +2.5
HAWAI'I BOWL HAWAII LOUISIANA TECH (+1)	SAT, DEC 22 10:30PM ET	HAWAII -1	HAWAII -1	HAWAII -1	LOUISIANA TECH +1	HAWAII -1	LOUISIANA TECH +1	HAWAII -1	HAWAII -1

[CLICK HERE TO SEE THE FULL LIST OF PICKS](#)