

## No. 11 Washington Huskies (10-2, 7-2)

### 2017 Projections

F/+	41.7 (11)
FEI	.162 (10)
S&P+	18.1 (13)
Total Wins	10.1
Conf Wins	7.2
SOS	.234 (65)
Conf SOS	.238 (57)
Div Champ	47%
Conf Champ	23%
CFP Berth	20%

### Projection Factors

2016 F/+	50.8 (5)
2016 FEI	.229 (5)
2016 S&P+	20.6 (7)
5-Year F/+	25.4 (21)
5-Year FEI	.178 (8)
5-Year S&P+	11.3 (22)
2-Yr/5-Yr Recruiting	28/27
Ret. Offense	75% (40)
Ret. Defense	50% (110)
Ret. Total	63% (70)

### Projected Win Likelihood by Game

Date	Opponent (Proj Rank)	PWL	Projected Loss	Projected Win
Sep 1	at Rutgers (93)	99%		
Sep 9	vs Montana (FCS)	100%		
Sep 16	vs Fresno St. (111)	99%		
Sep 23	at Colorado (60)	86%		
Sep 30	at Oregon St. (61)	86%		
Oct 7	vs California (68)	96%		
Oct 14	at Arizona St. (49)	81%		
Oct 28	vs UCLA (35)	83%		
Nov 4	vs Oregon (22)	70%		
Nov 10	at Stanford (9)	40%		
Nov 18	vs Utah (41)	88%		
Nov 25	vs Washington St. (36)	84%		

The Huskies have two big-picture questions for 2017: can they win the Pac-12 and make a repeat trip to the College Football Playoff even though USC appears to be surging? And did the Huskies hit close to their ceiling in last year's loss in the semi-finals, or can Washington get even better?

The Huskies were the 24th-most talented team last season in 247 Sports' College Team Talent Composite last season, which measures the entire team's composite recruiting rankings. They averaged an 85.62 recruiting ranking. For comparison, the other playoff members averaged 92.69 (Alabama), 91.43 (Ohio State), and 89.00 (Clemson). It looks like the Huskies definitely punched above their weight when it comes to talent and performance—as is typical for a Chris Peterson-coached team.

And Washington seems primed for a showdown with USC in the Pac-12 Championship Game based on the talent returning. Essentially the entire 15th-ranked S&P+ offense returns, while most of the big pieces of the front seven on defense do as well. There are only a few big departures. First, and most critical for the Huskies next season, is that wide receiver John Ross went off to the NFL in the first round of the draft. He set the record for the fastest 40 at the modern NFL Combine with a 4.22 time. Junior quarterback Jake Browning is definitely going to miss that breakaway speed, especially when Ross received 33.1 percent of his passing targets last season.

The cupboard isn't bare, though, with Dante Pettis (15.5 yards per catch, 1.3 higher than Ross, and 72.6 percent catch rate, again better than Ross) and Chico McClatcher (18.5 yards per catch) ready to assume leading roles. And the offense is stabilized by not only those second- and third-leading receivers and Browning returning, but also the two leading rushers in Myles Gaskin and Lavon Coleman. Those two quietly ran for 2,228 yards last season, and Coleman averaged 7.2 highlight yards per opportunity, with over a 50 percent efficiency rate.

The only other major concern for Huskies fans hoping for a repeat is whether the secondary can survive the losses of Bud-da Baker, Kevin King, and Sidney Jones. There's talent on the roster, including blue chip young guys like Austin Joyner, Byron Murphy, and Isaiah Gilchrist. It's just a matter of whether that young talent is ready to go. Last year's Huskies defense was tenth in rushing S&P+ and fifth in passing S&P+, so it's fair to expect the passing numbers to fall this season. But the run defense should be just as solid.

The schedule is extremely manageable as well. Besides a matchup against Colorado in their fourth game, the Huskies likely won't be seriously challenged until a critical two-game stretch against Oregon and Stanford in November. Those two games will likely determine the Pac-12 North winner. Current S&P+ projections favor Stanford by about a field goal, but the Huskies are favored by more than a touchdown in all other games.

## No. 12 Wisconsin Badgers (10-2, 8-1)

### 2017 Projections

F/+	41.6 (12)
FEI	.157 (12)
S&P+	18.6 (11)
Total Wins	10.4
Conf Wins	7.7
SOS	.327 (70)
Conf SOS	.398 (64)
Div Champ	79%
Conf Champ	28%
CFP Berth	25%

### Projection Factors

2016 F/+	45.5 (9)
2016 FEI	.210 (6)
2016 S&P+	18.2 (11)
5-Year F/+	33.0 (10)
5-Year FEI	.175 (9)
5-Year S&P+	14.0 (13)
2-Yr/5-Yr Recruiting	36/34
Ret. Offense	66% (58)
Ret. Defense	68% (56)
Ret. Total	67% (52)

### Projected Win Likelihood by Game

Date	Opponent (Proj Rank)	PWL	Projected Loss	Projected Win
Sep 1	vs Utah St. (75)	98%	<div style="width: 2%;"></div>	<div style="width: 98%;"></div>
Sep 9	vs Fla. Atlantic (92)	99%	<div style="width: 1%;"></div>	<div style="width: 99%;"></div>
Sep 16	at BYU (40)	76%	<div style="width: 24%;"></div>	<div style="width: 76%;"></div>
Sep 30	vs Northwestern (33)	83%	<div style="width: 17%;"></div>	<div style="width: 83%;"></div>
Oct 7	at Nebraska (45)	80%	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	<div style="width: 80%;"></div>
Oct 14	vs Purdue (97)	99%	<div style="width: 1%;"></div>	<div style="width: 99%;"></div>
Oct 21	vs Maryland (79)	83%	<div style="width: 17%;"></div>	<div style="width: 83%;"></div>
Oct 28	at Illinois (95)	99%	<div style="width: 1%;"></div>	<div style="width: 99%;"></div>
Nov 4	at Indiana (43)	79%	<div style="width: 21%;"></div>	<div style="width: 79%;"></div>
Nov 11	vs Iowa (58)	92%	<div style="width: 8%;"></div>	<div style="width: 92%;"></div>
Nov 18	vs Michigan (13)	60%	<div style="width: 40%;"></div>	<div style="width: 60%;"></div>
Nov 25	at Minnesota (57)	82%	<div style="width: 18%;"></div>	<div style="width: 82%;"></div>

Wisconsin had one of the most surprising runs of 2016. Pre-season projections weren't optimistic for the Badgers, who were ranked 36th in last year's projections. They had LSU, Michigan State, Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio State all on the schedule (and with the latter four all in a row starting in late September!), so it was understandable why nearly everyone was down on a team that managed ten wins in 2015. But we were proven wrong, as the Badgers managed another double-digit-win season, including victories over three of those five dangerous opponents. The Badgers also only lost by a touch-down in each of their three losses (to Michigan, Ohio State, and Penn State). To get yet another 10-plus-win season in 2017, the Badgers will likely play with the same script: decent, decidedly unflashy offense, and elite defense.

The offense has a few notable departures from last season, including part-time starting quarterback Bart Houston. Houston and 2017 starter Alex Hornibrook split passing attempts nearly down the middle last season, but Houston averaged 1.8 yards per attempt more than the then-freshman Hornibrook. Houston reclaimed the job from Hornibrook for the last four games, with efficient performances in each. Hornibrook loses third-leading receiver Robert Wheelwright, but the top two targets, Jazz Peavy and potential All-American tight end Troy Fumagalli, should keep the receiving game near where it was last season. Peavy showed some big-play ability, averaging nearly 15 yards per catch, while Fumagalli is a huge (6-foot-6) target with reliable hands (71.2 percent catch rate). Wisconsin teams are never huge passing teams—Joel Stave nearly got to 3,000 passing yards in 2015, but their combined 2,507

yards last season was on par with Badgers teams going back to 2012, after Russell Wilson's lone year in Madison.

The offense will instead be centered on the running game, which lost key pieces in a unit that was disappointingly just 48th in rushing S&P+ and 108th in opportunity rate. Those departed players include first round pick offensive tackle Ryan Rameczyk, stalwart rusher Corey Clement, and senior Dare Ogunbowale. Though Clement had nearly 1,400 yards last season, he and the run game overall were inefficient, averaging just a 30.7 percent opportunity rate. The hope is that there will be some addition by subtraction. Sophomore Bradrick Shaw likely takes the top spot, and he was at least consistent in his more limited time last season (43.2 percent opportunity rate). The run game will also get a boost from Pitt transfer Chris James. James was originally a high-three star recruit and should be a solid option on third downs.

While the offense looks to be maybe slightly improved from last season, the defense takes a few hits from the losses of T.J. Watt and Vince Biegel at linebacker, Sojourn Shelton at corner, and Leo Musso at safety. That's a lot of lost playmaking ability. The Badgers defense was 13th overall in havoc rate, and those four players led the team in sacks (11.5 for Watt, four for Biegel), tackles for loss (15.5 for Watt), interceptions (five for Musso and four for Shelton), and pass breakups (12 for Shelton). The 2016 Badgers defense was incredibly experienced, made a lot of big plays, limited explosive plays (11th) and control the red zone (3.6 points per trip inside the 40, tenth). There's still plenty of talent on the roster, but it's hard not to imagine some step back in playmaking ability on defense.

## No. 13 Michigan Wolverines (9-3, 7-2)

### 2017 Projections

F/+	40.4 (13)
FEI	.133 (16)
S&P+	19.8 (10)
Total Wins	9.2
Conf Wins	6.8
SOS	.090 (25)
Conf SOS	.141 (28)
Div Champ	20%
Conf Champ	13%
CFP Berth	9%

### Projection Factors

2016 F/+	58.9 (4)
2016 FEI	.242 (4)
2016 S&P+	26.8 (3)
5-Year F/+	29.7 (18)
5-Year FEI	.190 (6)
5-Year S&P+	14.3 (10)
2-Yr/5-Yr Recruiting	4/19
Ret. Offense	46% (98)
Ret. Defense	22% (127)
Ret. Total	34% (126)

### Projected Win Likelihood by Game

Date	Opponent (Proj Rank)	PWL	Projected Loss	Projected Win
Sep 2	vs Florida (14)	50%	50%	50%
Sep 9	vs Cincinnati (77)	98%	2%	98%
Sep 16	vs Air Force (104)	99%	1%	99%
Sep 23	at Purdue (97)	99%	1%	99%
Oct 7	vs Michigan St. (46)	89%	11%	89%
Oct 14	at Indiana (43)	78%	22%	78%
Oct 21	at Penn St. (8)	38%	62%	38%
Oct 28	vs Rutgers (93)	99%	1%	99%
Nov 4	vs Minnesota (57)	91%	9%	91%
Nov 11	at Maryland (79)	97%	3%	97%
Nov 18	at Wisconsin (12)	40%	60%	40%
Nov 25	vs Ohio St. (2)	46%	54%	46%

Last year was supposed to be the year for the Wolverines. And until a fluky 13-14 loss to Iowa in November, it was. Michigan was loaded with upperclassmen who would go on to be drafted. A year after archrivals Ohio State dominated the NFL draft, Michigan would send the most players through the draft in 2017 with 11. That was a school record and a testament to Brady Hoke’s recruiting prowess. But after the Wolverines lost again to Ohio State in The Game, the year felt like a missed opportunity for Jim Harbaugh’s second season back in Ann Arbor.

For 2017, 11 of Michigan’s top 13 players in total tackles are now gone, including Jabrill Peppers; top defensive ends Taco Charlton and Chris Wormley; both safeties; and both cornerbacks, including star Jourdan Lewis. On offense, Michigan loses starting running back De’Veon Smith and the top three receiving targets, including star tight end Jake Butt. Michigan is last in the country in overall returning starters according to Phil Steele’s charts, and third-to-last in Bill Connelly’s returning production rankings. So how can Michigan avoid the dreaded rebuilding year as Big Ten East rivals Ohio State and Penn State carry contrasting high expectations into 2017? Well, through high accumulated talent and a darn good coaching staff.

Jim Harbaugh turned Wilton Speight into a solid quarterback last season. Speight averaged just 6.8 yards per attempt and completed only 61.6 percent of his passes, but managed to keep the passing game at a top-30 level nonetheless. The offense overall was 41st, due a lack of explosive production and just average efficiency. In fact, the Wolverines offense overall seemed to lack star power. That’s not due to recruiting—for instance, the Wolverines have had three five-star running backs on their rosters over the last three years (Derrick Green, Ty Isaac, and Kareem Walker, who redshirted last season and will likely fight for third string this season). But it has been much more of a committee approach to produce steady, but not eye-

popping results. The Wolverines were 49th in rushing S&P+ and 28th in passing S&P+. But despite the experience advantage that Speight, a senior, brings to the passing game, the run game might be in better shape with sophomore Chris Evans taking on the leading role. As a freshman last year and easily the less-heralded running back recruit, Evans was the best running back on the team despite receiving just half of De’Veon Smith’s carries—6.9 yards per carry and a 47.2 percent opportunity rate. The passing game will have to rely heavily on underclassmen after losing its three top targets. But there’s no shortage of young talent coming in, including five-star top 2017 receiver Donovan Peoples-Jones and four-star Tarik Black.

The defense was the backbone of Michigan’s 2016 title aspirations. It was the second overall S&P+ unit, first in overall S&P+ efficiency, eighth in defensive FEI, and first in finishing drives, holding opponents to just 3.09 points per trip inside the 40. And while we’ve already discussed all of the new starters that Michigan has to break in, especially on the line and in the secondary, the defensive line should surprisingly be one of the top in the country just a year after leading the country in adjusted sack rate and ranking seventh in defensive line havoc rate. That’s because Michigan returns Maurice Hurst, Bryan Mone, Chase Winovich, and last year’s top overall recruit Rashaan Gary. That’s not to mention their 2017 recruiting class, which includes five-star second-ranked defensive tackle Aubrey Solomon.

Michigan has a ton of talent on its roster and some decent defensive experience that just wasn’t starting last year. There are really just two challenges. First, with all of that talent, the big concerns are the losses in the secondary and at wide receiver, where returning productions seems to have the highest correlation year-to-year with next year’s offensive and defensive S&P+. Second, there still aren’t stars on offense, unless Evans can break out at running back or if Peoples-Jones can emerge as a true freshman at wide receiver.

## No. 14 Florida Gators (9-3, 6-2)

### 2017 Projections

F/+	40.4 (14)
FEI	.146 (14)
S&P+	17.8 (15)
Total Wins	8.6
Conf Wins	5.6
SOS	.069 (15)
Conf SOS	.169 (39)
Div Champ	44%
Conf Champ	18%
CFP Berth	11%

### Projection Factors

2016 F/+	30.8 (16)
2016 FEI	.126 (21)
2016 S&P+	14.1 (15)
5-Year F/+	29.8 (17)
5-Year FEI	.121 (18)
5-Year S&P+	13.8 (15)
2-Yr/5-Yr Recruiting	8/10
Ret. Offense	81% (21)
Ret. Defense	53% (103)
Ret. Total	67% (50)

### Projected Win Likelihood by Game

Date	Opponent (Proj Rank)	PWL	Projected Loss	Projected Win
Sep 2	vs Michigan (13)	50%	50%	50%
Sep 9	vs No. Colorado (FCS)	100%	0%	100%
Sep 16	vs Tennessee (24)	73%	27%	73%
Sep 23	at Kentucky (55)	81%	19%	81%
Sep 30	vs Vanderbilt (50)	90%	10%	90%
Oct 7	vs LSU (7)	51%	49%	51%
Oct 14	vs Texas A&M (20)	68%	32%	68%
Oct 28	vs Georgia (15)	51%	49%	51%
Nov 4	at Missouri (52)	80%	20%	80%
Nov 11	at South Carolina (32)	68%	32%	68%
Nov 18	vs UAB (130)	99%	1%	99%
Nov 25	vs Florida St. (3)	47%	53%	47%

Florida’s 2016 felt all too familiar for Gators fans: nearly double-digit wins, a trip to the SEC Championship Game, but no quarterback production and a resulting middling offense. A top-5 S&P+ defense was wasted by the offense’s inability to move the ball (or score if it did get in the red zone, since the offense ranked 112th in points per trip inside the 40).

Florida is the Wisconsin of the SEC: elite defense and poor offense where two quarterbacks—one a senior and the other an underclassman—split passing yards nearly equally. Austin Appleby and the returning Luke Del Rio were nearly identical. Both averaged around 6 yards per attempt, under a 61 percent completion rate, and had nearly a 1:1 ratio of touchdowns to interceptions. But even though Del Rio returns for his junior season, odds are that he won’t be the starting quarterback. After the spring, where Del Rio sat out due to shoulder surgery, redshirt freshman Feleipe Franks looks to have the lead over classmate Kyle Trask. Franks came to Gainesville as a high-ceiling (.9721 in the 247 Sports Composite), but raw recruit whom analysts expected would need two or three years of development before assuming the starting job.

But Franks will have some more competition from recently announced Notre Dame graduate transfer Malik Zaire. Zaire’s reputation was built on three games—the 2014 season bowl win over LSU, and then the first two games of the 2015 season when he started over his eventual replacement (and this year’s NFL draft pick) Deshone Kizer before getting injured. Zaire was part of a quarterback rotation at Notre Dame last season before eventually ceding the job to Kizer. Zaire will likely be the most athletic quarterback on the roster and add a running dimension to the Florida offense. If Franks isn’t ready for the

starting job yet, Zaire certainly has sufficient experience to lead the Gators in 2017. The only problem is that even with Zaire or Franks, the Gators still don’t have a developed passing threat to lead the offense.

Zaire, Franks, and Florida fans can at least expect to see the greatest concentration of offensive skill talent since the Urban Meyer days. Jordan Scarlett is the first in the running back committee, and the offensive line is deeper than it has been in recent seasons. It will need to be, because last year’s offensive line offered decent pass protection but extremely poor run blocking, ranking 99th in adjusted line yards and 110th in opportunity rate. Antonio Callaway, now a junior, led the Gators with 721 yards last season, but former blue chip sophomore Tyrie Cleveland flashed big-play potential (averaging 21.3 yards per catch) despite extremely limited action due to hamstring injuries.

The defense has been consistently among the best in the country for years, but might take a step back this season due to personnel losses, including corners Teez Tabor and Quincy Wilson, lineman Caleb Brantley, and linebacker Jarrad Davis. But sophomore Jabari Zuniga led the team in sacks as a freshman, defensive lineman Cece Jefferson was a five-star recruit, and Chauncey Gardner was a high four-star recruit with three interceptions as a freshman last season, so the talent is likely there to get back up to elite level.

The Gators have early tough matchups with Michigan and Tennessee, but neither of those teams should give the defense much of a challenge while new starters work their way in. Look for plenty of low-scoring games early in Florida’s 2017 season as well.

## No. 15 Georgia Bulldogs (9-3, 6-2)

### 2017 Projections

F/+	39.6 (15)
FEI	.189 (7)
S&P+	13.4 (20)
Total Wins	8.6
Conf Wins	5.6
SOS	.073 (16)
Conf SOS	.161 (36)
Div Champ	43%
Conf Champ	17%
CFP Berth	11%

### Projection Factors

2016 F/+	3.4 (59)
2016 FEI	.046 (54)
2016 S&P+	-.2 (68)
5-Year F/+	32.7 (12)
5-Year FEI	.108 (24)
5-Year S&P+	12.5 (18)
2-Yr/5-Yr Recruiting	6/6
Ret. Offense	77% (35)
Ret. Defense	85% (5)
Ret. Total	81% (9)

### Projected Win Likelihood by Game

Date	Opponent (Proj Rank)	PWL	Projected Loss	Projected Win
Sep 2	vs Appalachian St. (54)	90%	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>
Sep 9	at Notre Dame (17)	47%	<div style="width: 53%;"></div>	<div style="width: 47%;"></div>
Sep 16	vs Samford (FCS)	100%	<div style="width: 0%;"></div>	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>
Sep 23	vs Mississippi St. (34)	81%	<div style="width: 19%;"></div>	<div style="width: 81%;"></div>
Sep 30	at Tennessee (24)	57%	<div style="width: 43%;"></div>	<div style="width: 57%;"></div>
Oct 7	at Vanderbilt (50)	79%	<div style="width: 21%;"></div>	<div style="width: 79%;"></div>
Oct 14	vs Missouri (52)	89%	<div style="width: 11%;"></div>	<div style="width: 89%;"></div>
Oct 28	vs Florida (14)	49%	<div style="width: 51%;"></div>	<div style="width: 49%;"></div>
Nov 4	vs South Carolina (32)	80%	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	<div style="width: 80%;"></div>
Nov 11	at Auburn (10)	38%	<div style="width: 62%;"></div>	<div style="width: 38%;"></div>
Nov 18	vs Kentucky (55)	90%	<div style="width: 10%;"></div>	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>
Nov 25	at Georgia Tech (27)	63%	<div style="width: 37%;"></div>	<div style="width: 63%;"></div>

Georgia went from firing Mark Richt after a double-digit-win season to a disappointing 8-5 last year under new head coach Kirby Smart. After Smart's first season the primary concern is that Georgia is headed towards a future like Will Muschamp-era Florida: a team coached by a former elite defensive coordinator with a strong defense and no offense to speak of. It's too early to tell if that's true or not as Georgia fans expect the typical second-year bump.

Last year was always going to be a transition year as Georgia quickly changed quarterbacks, going from Virginia grad transfer Grayson Lambert to true freshman elite recruit Jacob Eason. Eason, with prototypical size and excellent throwing mechanics, nevertheless was faced with depleted offensive line and wide receiver talent and a large and complicated playbook from first-year offensive coordinator Jim Chaney. Last year's offense only had a single S&P+ offense performance better than 65 percent—and that was a 76 percent performance against North Carolina in the season opener.

With Eason and yet another five-star freshman quarterback recruit in Jake Fromm, the Bulldogs are set at quarterback for the immediate future, and the backfield is loaded, with Sony Michel and Nick Chubb returning for their final seasons. But wide receiver, offensive line, and play calling remain difficult questions for the Bulldogs. Last year's offensive line was 101st in line yards, 94th in stuff rate, and 58th in adjusted sack rate. JUCO transfer D'Marcus Hayes, five-star freshman Isaiah Wilson, high-four star freshman Andrew Thomas, and four-star Netori Johnson might all challenge for playing time this season. Wilson has the highest ceiling, but Hayes and Thomas might challenge if veterans Ben Cleveland or Dys-hon Sims can't lock down spots. Just as critical to the line's poor performance was the shift away from a zone-blocking scheme, and Georgia just might not have had the talent or size to handle the increase in one-on-one matchups.

Similarly, Jacob Eason was thrown into the starting role running a pro-style offense under center after operating out of the

shotgun throughout his record-setting high school career. It was a difficult situation, especially because the run game was so hot-and-cold, but Eason also showed a tendency to overthrow at times. He also lacked help at wide receiver. Isaiah McKenzie emerged as a capable primary target and freshman Isaac Nauta showed potential at tight end, but the Bulldogs expected more from Terry Godwin and freshman Riley Ridley, who have both shown potential in the past. Sophomores Charlie Woerner and Tyler Simmons, along with veteran Javon Wims, should all challenge for playing time as well. They will get help from Mark Webb and early enrollee Jeremiah Holloman, who should help upgrade the wide receiver room's talent base. But offensive line and wide receiver still remain the big questions for Georgia this offseason.

Georgia's defense got a decent amount of praise, especially in comparison to the offense, but they had their problems too at just 35th in S&P+ and 36th in FEI. The main problems were finishing drives (which was even worse for the offense); allowing 4.8 points per trip inside the 40 (95th); getting tackles for loss (101st in stuff rate) and general run defense (41st in adjusted line yards); and getting pressure from its defensive line (116th in defensive line havoc rate, 34th in adjusted sack rate). But the Bulldogs lost Alabama graduate transfer Maurice Smith and Quincy Mauger in the defensive backfield, and the baseline talent there is a little lower than ideal for SEC play. They have Richard LeCounte III, the second-rated safety, coming in, and veteran Dominick Sanders is around for another year, but the secondary might be a problem spot this season. Additionally, even though the front seven is loaded with former elite recruits like Lorenzo Carter and Trent Thompson, the front seven has arguably underperformed up to this point, which will make things tougher on the thin secondary. Georgia is almost assuredly the most talented team in the SEC East, but there are definitely enough question marks for the East race to be close again in 2017.