

Atlantic Coast Conference

Most power struggles follow a fairly predictable trajectory: king is deposed, successors battle to fill the vacuum, new king emerges from the contenders, etc., repeat as necessary. You know, you watch Game of Thrones. Only in the ACC version, the new king turns out to be the same as the old king, resurrected and omnipotent as ever. In retrospect, Florida State's re-ascension after a decade in the wilderness seems inevitable—who else in the conference has the resources, the personnel, the pedigree? In the end, of course it's Florida State.

But it's not as if the rest of the league didn't have its shot at the Seminoles' old crown. It just failed, repeatedly, to produce a worthy successor. From 2001-11, as FSU trudged through the decline of the Bowden era and the awkward transition to Jimbo Fisher, six different schools claimed at least one ACC championship, none of whom made any pretense to national relevance outside of the conference. In the same span, the ACC champion went 1-10 in BCS bowls, culminating in a series of blowouts that included in the most lopsided beating in BCS history in the 2012 Orange Bowl. In those years the conference earned a single top-10 finish in the AP poll.

Once the Seminole juggernaut was back up and running under Fisher, there wasn't even a pretender to stand in its way. The 2012 Noles ran roughshod, losing once in ACC play—by one point—en route to an otherwise uncontested title. (The Coastal Division contenders were so weak that not just one but two of them, Miami and North Carolina, turned down a shot at FSU in the championship game in favor of a self-imposed postseason ban to appease NCAA investigators; the honor fell instead to 6-6 Georgia Tech, which was promptly trounced.) In 2013, Florida State unleashed maximum destruction, oblit-

erating conference opponents by 39 points per game; the only ostensible challenger, Clemson, was left scattered in tiny pieces across its own field in a 51-14 massacre that wasn't even that close. Before the BCS nail-biter against Auburn, only one other opponent (Boston College, a 48-34 victim in September) had come within four touchdowns of FSU. In our F/+ ratings, the Seminoles ranked No. 1 nationally on defense, No. 2 on offense and No. 1 overall by an historic margin: dating back to 2005, the first year in the F/+ database, the Seminoles' final score (+49.2%) is the fourth-best on record, behind only Alabama in 2011-12 and Florida in 2008. Meanwhile, the only other ACC outfit that managed to crack the top 25 was Clemson, at No. 16.

The gap in 2014 may be even wider. Across the conference, 11 teams will be breaking in new starters at quarterback, while Florida State plans to trot out the reigning Heisman winner. Including Jameis Winston, FSU has more players who arrived on campus with a five-star rating from the major recruiting sites (11) than the rest of the conference combined, just one reflection of its ongoing dominance in stockpiling talent. Like last year, the question where the ACC is concerned isn't so much the outcome at the top, but the margin. In that respect, the Seminoles are playing against history: no FBS program has pulled off back-to-back undefeated seasons since Nebraska in 1994-95. In the BCS era, a handful of defending champions came close—Miami in 2001-02, USC in 2004-05, Florida in 2008-09—only to watch the repeat slip away at the last moment. The arrival of a playoff format relieves some of the pressure of running the table, if only slightly, but for projection purposes we can take the 'Noles' presence in the "final four" for granted. From there, they're playing for posterity.

ATLANTIC DIVISION

No. 1 Florida State Seminoles (12-0, 8-0)

2013: 14-0 (8-0) / F/+ #1 / FEI #1 / S&P+ #1 / Program F/+ : #6						2013 Five Factors			
2013 Offense			2013 Defense						
Offensive F/+	21.5%	3	Defensive F/+	25.7%	1	Efficiency	Off Success Rate+	130.4	2
Offensive FEI	0.499	12	Defensive FEI	-0.653	5		Def Success Rate+	128.3	3
Offensive S&P+	148.4	1	Defensive S&P+	161.9	1		Total Efficiency	258.7	1
Rushing S&P+	121.9	14	Rushing S&P+	138.1	4	Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+	116.9	6
Passing S&P+	156.7	1	Passing S&P+	142.4	4		Def IsoPPP+	118.0	4
Standard Downs S&P+	130.9	4	Standard Downs S&P+	147.2	2		Total Explosiveness	234.9	1
Passing Downs S&P+	165.7	1	Passing Downs S&P+	125.3	12	Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA)	0.562	2
2013 Special Teams			Special Teams F/+	2.0%	27	Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+	139.0	2
2014 Projections			SOS Rk	56	Def Red Zone S&P+		117.6	17	
Ret. Starters: 8 OFF, 5 DEF			Offensive F/+	14.5%	4		Total Red Zone Rating	256.6	3
Proj. F/+	32.5%	1	Defensive F/+	17.9%	1	Turnovers	Turnover Margin	+17.0	2
Mean Wins / Conf Wins	11.6 / 7.8		Conf. / Div. Title Odds	86.0% / 89.6%			Exp. TO Margin	+6.1	23
							Difference	+10.9	5

Maybe it would be more constructive at this point to examine the ways in which FSU is not an irresistible force destined to reduce every obstacle in its path to rubble. It will certainly be more succinct. Let's start with the defense, which lost six starters—four of them NFL draft picks—including last year's leading tackler, linebacker Telvin Smith, and All-Americans Timmy Jernigan and Lamarus Joyner. The projected starting lineup on that side of the ball doesn't feature a single senior. Surely Jernigan's muscle will be missed in the middle of the defensive line? Who can replace Joyner's Polamaluvian range and versatility in the secondary? Who takes the place of wide receiver Kelvin Benjamin, a truly freakish talent even by Florida State standards? Raw as he may have been, Benjamin was arguably the best receiver in the nation over the last six weeks of the season, and he was the only Seminole drafted in the first round in April. And perish the thought, but what if Jameis Winston is injured, or suspended, or otherwise indisposed—even briefly—against this year's tougher schedule? The top backup in 2013, Jacob Coker, transferred to Alabama, leaving the nondescript sophomore Sean Maguire as the Seminoles' safety net.

So yes, if catastrophe strikes, the defending champs are potentially vulnerable. Otherwise, the deck is pretty well stacked. The ace, of course, is Winston, whose bona fides are well established. Aside from the most decorated quarterback in college football, though, the offense returns four other All-ACC picks (wide receiver Rashad Greene, tight end Nick O'Leary, tackle Cameron Erving and guard Tre' Jackson), all of whom are arguably the best in the nation at their respective positions entering their third year as full-time starters. Two other starters up front, Bobby Hart and Josue Matias, have 51 combined starts between them. The new tailback, converted safety Karlos Williams, has yet to start a game at either position, but looked so good last year in a part-time role (730 yards, 8.0 yards per carry, 7.5 highlight yards per opportunity, 11 TD) that he's already the top senior running back on most draft boards. Yet with blue-chip sophomore Ryan Green and five-star freshman Dalvin Cook in the pipeline, there's no

guarantee Williams will remain the top running back on his own team.

On the other hand, the heavy attrition outlined above is much less concerning in context. Losses notwithstanding, FSU is still projected by both F/+ and S&P+ to repeat as the No. 1 overall defense in the nation. And why not? Last year's edition was forced to replace seven defensive starters from a top-five defense in 2012, and outperformed its predecessor with room to spare. Among the players we know about, juniors Mario Edwards Jr. and Eddie Goldman on the defensive line and P.J. Williams and Ronald Darby in the secondary are all on track for an early exit next spring, having firmly established themselves in the starting lineup as sophomores; were he eligible, sophomore free safety Jalen Ramsey would join that group after starting every game as a true freshman. Among the new faces—most notably sophomore defensive ends Chris Casher and DeMarcus Walker, sophomore strong safety Nate Andrews and a pack of second- and third-year linebackers—there is every reason to believe they'll follow the same track. Heck, even the special teams are loaded: Kicker Roberto Aguayo (21-of-22 on field goals) was a consensus All-American as a redshirt freshman, while true freshman Levonte "Kermit" Whitfield took a pair of kickoffs back for touchdowns en route to the best kick-return average in the nation. (The second of those touchdowns you'll recall from the fourth quarter of the BCS Championship Game.) Punting was a weak spot last year (116th in punt efficiency), but the Seminoles only had 30 non-garbage time punts on the season, fewest of any team in the nation.

Recent history tells us that no road to a repeat is that smooth, that faint cracks will appear in the surface ahead of the inevitable lapse. Fine. But as for the what, when and where, and especially the who, there are no answers in sight.

2015 Draft Prospects: DE Mario Edwards Jr. (1), OT Cameron Erving (1), QB Jameis Winston* (1), TE Nick O'Leary (1-2), CB P.J. Williams* (1-2), WR Rashad Greene (2), CB Ronald Darby* (2-3), DT Eddie Goldman* (2-3), G Tre' Jackson (2-3), RB Karlos Williams (3-4)*

No. 14 Clemson Tigers (9-3, 6-2)

2013: 11-2 (7-1) / F/+ #16 / FEI #22 / S&P+ #6 / Program F/+ : #19				2013 Five Factors					
2013 Offense		2013 Defense							
Offensive F/+	13.0%	19	Defensive F/+	14.0%	13	Efficiency	Off Success Rate+	118.0	12
Offensive FEI	0.343	26	Defensive FEI	-0.422	17		Def Success Rate+	125.8	5
Offensive S&P+	126.0	12	Defensive S&P+	130.7	12		Total Efficiency	243.8	2
Rushing S&P+	113.3	32	Rushing S&P+	123.8	12	Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+	107.2	32
Passing S&P+	132.8	10	Passing S&P+	121.2	17		Def IsoPPP+	91.4	107
Standard Downs S&P+	124.2	9	Standard Downs S&P+	120.7	13		Total Explosiveness	198.6	74
Passing Downs S&P+	120.6	24	Passing Downs S&P+	120.7	18	Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA)	0.509	49
2013 Special Teams		Special Teams F/+		-0.4%	78	Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+	97.7	72
2014 Projections		SOS Rk		7			Def Red Zone S&P+	121.4	11
Ret. Starters: 4 OFF, 8 DEF		Offensive F/+		5.7%	33		Total Red Zone Rating	219.1	25
Proj. F/+	16.0%	14	Defensive F/+	10.3%	13	Turnovers	Turnover Margin	+6.0	29
Mean Wins / Conf Wins	8.9 / 6.1	Conf. / Div. Title Odds		4.5% / 6.4%			Exp. TO Margin	+2.0	52
							Difference	+4.0	26

It didn't always feel this way at the time, thanks to the long shadow cast by Florida State in the same division, but at some point the last three years are going to be acknowledged as a kind of renaissance for Clemson football. Maybe even a golden era: from 2011-13, the Tigers won 32 games, spent 47 consecutive weeks in the national polls, spent 24 weeks in the top ten, and claimed their first conference championship since 1991, their first major bowl win since 1981, and their best finish in the AP poll since 1982. Contrary to its reputation for serial flopping in big games, Clemson was 7-5 in that span against ranked opponents, including wins over Auburn, Florida State, Virginia Tech (twice), LSU, Georgia and Ohio State. In the process, the university rewarded coach Dabo Swinney—and warded off would-be poachers—by making his staff as a whole the highest-paid in the nation outside of the SEC. After two decades on the fringe, from the outside the program looks as healthy as it's ever been.

Depending on how things go this fall, that appreciation may arrive very soon. It's no coincidence that the surge ran parallel to the tenure of the most prolific passer in ACC history, Tajh Boyd, the only constant in an offense that averaged 41 points per game over the past three seasons, ranking in the top 20 in Offensive F/+ in all three. (The only other teams that can make the latter claim are Alabama, Baylor, Oregon and Texas A&M.) When it came to highlight-reel talent, Boyd was often eclipsed by his favorite target, Sammy Watkins, but there is no mistaking the burden on senior quarterback Cole Stoudt to keep pace after an extended tour as Boyd's understudy. Obviously, there is no equivalent of Watkins among the returning wideouts, or anywhere else in college football, but there is depth: between junior Charone Peake, sophomores Mike

Williams and Germone Hopper, and four incoming freshmen with four-star ratings from recruitniks, breakout candidates abound. Same goes for the tailbacks, and for a pair of new tackles, juniors Shaq Anthony and Isaiah Battle, both of whom have some starting experience under their belts. Stoudt, on the other hand, was not a highly regarded recruit four years ago and has only appeared in the meantime in mop-up roles. If the offense stalls in the season opener at Georgia, the presence of hyped freshman Deshaun Watson only increases the odds of a quick hook heading into the season-defining trip to Tallahassee three weeks later.

Even if the offense falters, the defense will remain dangerous. The front seven boasts nightmare potential exceeding even FSU's. As a team, Clemson led the nation in 2013 in total tackles for loss (123) and TFLs per game (9.5), and returns five players—defensive ends Vic Beasey, Corey Crawford and Shaq Lawson; defensive tackle Grady Jarrett; and linebacker Stephone Anthony—who were credited with at least ten TFLs apiece. In our S&P+ ratings, the Tigers ranked among the top 20 in every defensive category, finishing 12th overall, a great leap forward from the 2012 defense on all counts. (They also finished 13th in Defensive F/+, up from 51st in 2012, and led the nation by forcing three-and-outs on 46.4 percent of opponent drives) If a pair of untested second-year corners, MacKensie Alexander and Cordrea Tankersley, play up to expectations, for once the offense can afford to play it relatively close to the vest.

2015 Draft Prospects: DE/OLB Vic Beasley (1), ILB Stephone Anthony (2), DT Grady Jarrett (2), DE Corey Crawford (3-4), OLB Tony Steward (5-6).

No. 21 Louisville Cardinals (9-3, 6-2)

2013: 12-1 (7-1) / F/+ #12 / FEI #21 / S&P+ #5 / Program F/+ : #39				2013 Five Factors	
2013 Offense		2013 Defense			
Offensive F/+	11.8%	23	Defensive F/+	15.1%	10
Offensive FEI	0.361	25	Defensive FEI	-0.397	21
Offensive S&P+	119.7	18	Defensive S&P+	137.6	7
Rushing S&P+	108.6	42	Rushing S&P+	113.5	28
Passing S&P+	121.3	18	Passing S&P+	128.0	9
Standard Downs S&P+	117.0	19	Standard Downs S&P+	116.0	22
Passing Downs S&P+	113.7	38	Passing Downs S&P+	133.8	5
2013 Special Teams		Special Teams F/+		2.0% 28	
2014 Projections		SOS Rk		29	
Ret. Starters: 8 OFF, 5 DEF		Offensive F/+		8.4% 19	
Proj. F/+	13.8%	21	Defensive F/+	5.4%	33
Mean Wins / Conf Wins		9.0 / 5.7		Conf. / Div. Title Odds	
				2.6% / 4.0%	
				Efficiency	Off Success Rate+ 115.6 17
					Def Success Rate+ 111.6 25
					Total Efficiency 227.1 15
				Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+ 100.8 56
					Def IsoPPP+ 108.5 25
					Total Explosiveness 209.4 34
				Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA) 0.531 25
				Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+ 98.6 68
					Def Red Zone S&P+ 116.9 18
					Total Red Zone Rating 215.6 29
				Turnovers	Turnover Margin +17.0 2
					Exp. TO Margin +10.7 3
					Difference +6.3 17

Rarely, if ever, has a school had the luxury of replacing the second-winningest coach in program history with the only guy who ranks ahead of him on the list, but then Bobby Petrino's career has never followed a conventional trajectory. In three decades in the business, Petrino has never remained in any one place longer than four years, including Louisville, where he won 41 games from 2003-06 with two conference championships—just good enough, as it turns out, to earn a repeat performance despite his infamous exits from Atlanta

and Arkansas. Seven years after his first tour ended, he arrives from a one-year layover at Western Kentucky to find the place more or less as he left it. New conference notwithstanding, the 2013 Cardinals under Charlie Strong matched the school record for wins set by Petrino's last Louisville outfit in 2006, ranking 12th in overall F/+ and 15th in the final AP poll. Just as in 2006, the Cards came within a field goal of a perfect season, only to watch the coach who engineered that success use it as a springboard to a more high-profile job.

The other above-the-fold departure, of course, was Teddy Bridgewater, whose success here is hard to overstate: on a long list of prolific Louisville quarterbacks dating back to Johnny Unitas, Bridgewater had the most wins and was selected highest in the NFL draft. At the same time, though, it may be fairly easy to exaggerate the impact of his absence. In fact, the defense arguably took the bigger hit this offseason, losing three starters to the draft—two of them going ahead of Bridgewater in the first round—from a unit that quietly ranked No. 1 nationally with only 3.3 points per value drive allowed, second nationally in scoring defense, and tenth in Defensive F/+. Only four full-time starters from that unit return, none of them on the defensive line. (Senior defensive end Lorenzo Mauldin, a

second-team All-ACC pick in 2013, is moving from end to outside linebacker in the transition from a 4-3 scheme to a 3-4.) By contrast, the offense returns eight starters, all in their fourth or fifth year in the program. Yes, the young quarterbacks vying to replace Bridgewater—sophomore Will Gardner and redshirt freshman Kyle Bolin—are blank slates. Given the experience around them, though, and Petrino’s stellar track record with college passers, they’re a better bet to keep the offense on course than the new faces on the other side.

2015 Draft Prospects: WR DeVante Parker (2-3), DE/OLB Lorenzo Mauldin (4-5), OT Jamon Brown (5-6), C Jake Smith (6-7), RB Dominique Brown (7-FA), RB Michael Dyer (7-FA).

No. 65 Syracuse Orange (5-7, 3-5)

2013: 7-6 (4-4) / F/+ #75 / FEI #86 / S&P+ #75 / Program F/+ : #64						2013 Five Factors			
2013 Offense			2013 Defense			Efficiency	Off Success Rate+	99.4	66
Offensive F/+	-5.6%	83	Defensive F/+	-0.3%	63		Def Success Rate+	99.7	54
Offensive FEI	-0.205	87	Defensive FEI	-0.007	65	Total Efficiency	199.0	65	
Offensive S&P+	93.9	75	Defensive S&P+	104.1	67	Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+	94.1	92
Rushing S&P+	113.2	33	Rushing S&P+	104.4	56		Def IsoPPP+	98.2	68
Passing S&P+	87.9	94	Passing S&P+	101.3	59		Total Explosiveness	192.3	92
Standard Downs S&P+	107.3	42	Standard Downs S&P+	100.7	66	Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA)	0.498	64
Passing Downs S&P+	84.6	102	Passing Downs S&P+	103.3	58		Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+	111.0
2013 Special Teams			Special Teams F/+	-0.3%	77	Def Red Zone S&P+		94.8	77
2014 Projections			SOS Rk	27	Total Red Zone Rating	205.7		51	
Ret. Starters: 8 OFF, 7 DEF			Offensive F/+	-2.1%	79	Turnovers	Turnover Margin	+2.0	48
Proj. F/+	-1.2%	65	Defensive F/+	0.9%	60		Exp. TO Margin	+1.9	56
Mean Wins / Conf Wins	5.1 / 2.6		Conf. / Div. Title Odds	0.0% / 0.0%			Difference	+0.1	55

Syracuse fans aren’t about to start taking winning records for granted or anything. Before 2012-13, the Orange hadn’t finished above .500 in consecutive seasons since 2000-01, a span that included six losing campaigns in a row and five last-place finishes in the Big East. Still, having done so now under two different head coaches, it’s safe to say the proverbial bar has been raised—that is to say, it’s emerged from its previous setting somewhere in the depths of Lake Erie. With junior Terrel Hunt entrenched at quarterback and seven starters back on defense (all of them seniors), a middling bowl appearance no longer qualifies as success, but as the bare minimum. Such is progress.

Offensively, Hunt is the key to sustaining that progress, and also a bit of a Rorschach test. On paper, last year’s offense was dreadful, coming in 83rd nationally in Offensive F/+ and averaging just 15.5 points in ACC games, tied for dead last in the conference. On the other hand, the Orange rebounded from an 0-2 start to finish 7-4 with Hunt taking a majority of the snaps, good enough to make him the season MVP according to his teammates. He certainly looks the part at 6-foot-3, 215 pounds, and he has the tools athletically. The offense as a whole was dramatically better when defenses were forced to respect Hunt as a runner: according to S&P+, Syracuse ranked 42nd in efficiency on standard downs, compared to 101st on

passing downs. (On an individual level, Hunt was sometimes able to function almost as a de facto tailback, averaging 60 yards rushing on 6.0 per carry in wins; in losses, that dropped to just 16 yards on 2.2 yards per carry.) Although he improved as a passer as the season wore on, in conference games Hunt finished with the worst efficiency rating among ACC starters (95.2), serving up eight interceptions to just three touchdowns.

The defense was a boom-or-bust affair, volunteering to serve as target practice for the likes of Northwestern (48 points), Clemson (49), Georgia Tech (56) and Florida State (59), while effectively clamping down on everyone else. (Among teams defeated by Syracuse, only Boston College topped 17 points.) The net effect, appropriately enough, was a unit that ranked 63rd in Defensive F/+, dead center among FBS programs. If that divide holds, the Orange are in for more long afternoons against Notre Dame, Louisville, FSU, and Clemson, all in a span of five weeks in September and mid-October. On either side of that gauntlet, though, Hunt should be able to remain in his comfort zone without having to worry about passing the team out of an ever-expanding hole.

2015 Draft Prospects: OLB Dyshawn Davis (3-4), OT Sean Hickey (3-4), SS Durrell Eskridge (4-5), WR Jarrod West (7-FA).

No. 70 N.C. State Wolfpack (6-6, 2-6)

2013: 3-9 (0-8) / F/+ #92 / FEI #98 / S&P+ #85 / Program F/+ : #53						2013 Five Factors		
2013 Offense			2013 Defense					
Offensive F/+	-9.7%	100	Defensive F/+	-2.9%	77	Efficiency	Off Success Rate+	91.5 87
Offensive FEI	-0.349	103	Defensive FEI	0.121	80		Def Success Rate+	99.0 57
Offensive S&P+	88.8	92	Defensive S&P+	103.6	70		Total Efficiency	190.5 89
Rushing S&P+	97.4	77	Rushing S&P+	89.3	99	Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+	101.9 50
Passing S&P+	91.4	88	Passing S&P+	109.1	35		Def IsoPPP+	97.3 77
Standard Downs S&P+	94.7	87	Standard Downs S&P+	99.3	71		Total Explosiveness	199.2 73
Passing Downs S&P+	93.3	80	Passing Downs S&P+	102.3	62	Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA)	0.487 83
2013 Special Teams			Special Teams F/+	0.0%	68	Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+	83.7 111
2014 Projections			SOS Rk	25	Def Red Zone S&P+		82.1 114	
Ret. Starters: 7 OFF, 8 DEF			Offensive F/+	-5.7%	93		Total Red Zone Rating	165.8 117
Proj. F/+	-2.6%	70	Defensive F/+	3.2%	46	Turnovers	Turnover Margin	0.0 61
Mean Wins / Conf Wins	5.7 / 2.4		Conf. / Div. Title Odds	0.0% / 0.0%			Exp. TO Margin	-1.6 85
						Difference	+1.6 43	

Listen, do we really need to dwell on the past here? Yes, 2013 ranks among the worst seasons in N.C. State history. Yes, the Wolfpack failed to win a conference game for the first time since 1959, all but one of the losses coming by double digits. No, they didn't place a single player on the postseason All-ACC team, even as "honorable mention." They were bad on defense (77th in Defensive F/+), worse on offense (100th in Offensive F/+) and died a slow, painful death in the red zone (which we'll get to in a moment). But let's focus on the positive! In 2014, the best quarterback on the roster is finally eligible, the offensive line is intact, and every position on the defense is manned by an upperclassman with starting experience. And let's face it: it would be almost impossible for things to get any worse.

First, the quarterback. After sitting out last year, Florida transfer Jacoby Brissett dominated the competition in the spring, and looks like the conference's most athletic quarterback this side of Jameis Winston. At 6-foot-4, 236 pounds, Brissett is certainly in the Winston mold physically, as evidenced by his sterling marks as a recruit in 2011. In front of him, the starting offensive line is no longer a ramshackle group with three untested sophomores on the interior, but rather a veteran group with a combined 71 career starts from tackle to tackle. One of those

tackles, senior Rob Crisp, is a former five-star signee whose potential has been curbed by a bad back and a concussion that forced him to sit out last year as a medical redshirt. The lineup will also welcome back 2013 injury casualties at wide receiver (Bryan Underwood) and safety (Jarvis "Don't Call Me Jairus" Byrd), along with last year's leading rusher (Shadrach Thornton) and pass rusher (Art Norman).

Even if nothing else changed, however, the Wolfpack would still close some of last year's gap simply by regressing to the mean in the red zone. The Wolfpack were horrible at finishing drives, managing to put the ball in the end zone on just 43.6 percent of its trips inside the opposing 20-yard line; that rate ranked 123rd out of 125 FBS offenses. Meanwhile, the defense defied the odds by finishing 120th in red-zone defense, yielding 32 touchdowns in 40 opportunities (80 percent). Consider that six of N.C. State's nine losses last year came by margins between 14 and 18 points. All else being equal, if the red-zone math improves by as much as one additional touchdown and one additional stop per game, suddenly a few of those flops are nail-biters that can conceivably go the Wolfpack's way.

2015 Draft Prospects: None.

No. 74 Boston College Eagles (5-7, 2-6)

2013: 7-6 (4-4) / F/+ #65 / FEI #70 / S&P+ #61 / Program F/+ : #58						2013 Five Factors		
2013 Offense			2013 Defense					
Offensive F/+	2.9%	49	Defensive F/+	-7.8%	92	Efficiency	Off Success Rate+	99.4 65
Offensive FEI	0.048	54	Defensive FEI	0.311	98		Def Success Rate+	97.9 63
Offensive S&P+	108.2	43	Defensive S&P+	98.6	80		Total Efficiency	197.3 69
Rushing S&P+	113.7	31	Rushing S&P+	100.8	63	Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+	114.2 11
Passing S&P+	108.5	41	Passing S&P+	99.4	66		Def IsoPPP+	97.9 73
Standard Downs S&P+	119.6	15	Standard Downs S&P+	100.9	64		Total Explosiveness	212.0 26
Passing Downs S&P+	92.9	82	Passing Downs S&P+	97.6	79	Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA)	0.491 77
2013 Special Teams			Special Teams F/+	2.7%	14	Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+	97.9 71
2014 Projections			SOS Rk	11	Def Red Zone S&P+		102.7 47	
Ret. Starters: 5 OFF, 6 DEF			Offensive F/+	-2.6%	81		Total Red Zone Rating	200.6 61
Proj. F/+	-3.7%	74	Defensive F/+	-1.1%	68	Turnovers	Turnover Margin	+3.0 41
Mean Wins / Conf Wins	4.7 / 2.0		Conf. / Div. Title Odds	0.0% / 0.0%			Exp. TO Margin	+8.2 13
						Difference	-5.2 104	

Congratulations, Steve Addazio! In a single season on the job, you lifted Boston College from the ACC cellar into a bowl game, and got to enjoy the ride with BC's first Heisman finalist since Doug Flutie, to boot. Now comes the really fun part: starting over from scratch. Even without a single catch, running back Andre Williams accounted for 45.6 percent of the team's total yards from scrimmage, easily the highest individual share in the nation; subtract the production of wide receiver Alex Amidon, who accounted for another 22 percent, and two-thirds of last year's offensive production vanishes with just two players. Other departures include a four-year starter at quarterback (Chase Rettig); a trio of All-ACC picks at left tackle (Matt Patchan), linebacker (Kevin Pierre-Louis) and defensive end (Kasim Edebali); the leading tackler on defense (Steele Divitto); and an All-American kicker (Nate Freese) who connected on 26 consecutive field goal attempts going back to 2012. Sure, no problem, if we're talking about Florida State. At Boston College, those holes don't come with readymade refills.

Offensively, proven talent is in such short supply that Addazio went fishing over the winter for a quick fix, and came back with a pair of fifth-year transfers from Florida, quarterback Tyler Murphy and offensive tackle Ian Silberman. As Gators, Murphy and Silberman were both recruited to Gainesville by Addazio, then serving as Urban Meyer's offensive coordinator, and made a limited impact in 2013 as part-time starters. As Eagles, they wasted no time sewing up starting roles in the spring and figure to be cornerstones for the rebuilding offense. Otherwise, the only remotely recognizable name among the skill players is senior wide receiver Bobby Swigert, who had 249 receiving yards in 2012 but didn't see the field at all last year due to a lingering knee injury. The defense is in slightly better shape, experience-wise, thanks mainly to four returning starters in the secondary. But most of that experience came as part of a unit that ranked 92nd in Defensive F/+, and the most productive members of last year's front seven are all in NFL training camps.

2015 Draft Prospects: None.

No. 92 Wake Forest Demon Deacons (4-8, 1-7)

2013: 4-8 (2-6) / F/+ #81 / FEI #80 / S&P+ #81 / Program F/+ : #83					2013 Five Factors				
2013 Offense			2013 Defense		Efficiency	Off Success Rate+	87.6	104	
Offensive F/+	-12.9%	112	Defensive F/+	4.5%		41	Def Success Rate+	99.7	53
Offensive FEI	-0.402	111	Defensive FEI	-0.119	47	Total Efficiency	187.3	94	
Offensive S&P+	79.8	111	Defensive S&P+	115.1	34	Explosiveness	Off IsoPPP+	87.4	121
Rushing S&P+	79.2	117	Rushing S&P+	111.2	34		Def IsoPPP+	114.4	9
Passing S&P+	84.0	107	Passing S&P+	104.1	51		Total Explosiveness	201.8	60
Standard Downs S&P+	87.8	106	Standard Downs S&P+	111.7	27	Field Position	Field Pos. Adv. (FPA)	0.465	103
Passing Downs S&P+	73.0	120	Passing Downs S&P+	99.7	70		Finishing Drives	Off Red Zone S&P+	94.7
2013 Special Teams			Special Teams F/+	0.0%	69	Def Red Zone S&P+		116.4	19
2014 Projections			SOS Rk		16	Total Red Zone Rating		211.0	40
Ret. Starters: 5 OFF, 5 DEF			Offensive F/+	-12.7%	125	Turnovers	Turnover Margin	-2.0	73
Proj. F/+	-8.2%	92	Defensive F/+	4.5%	36		Exp. TO Margin	+4.3	41
Mean Wins / Conf Wins	3.8 / 1.3		Conf. / Div. Title Odds	0.0% / 0.0%			Difference	-6.3	113

Jim Grobe spent 13 years at Wake Forest, building a resumé that included a conference championship, the highest poll finish in school history, a school record for wins (77), and five bowl games, as many as his predecessors in Winston-Salem had managed between them. At their best, from 2006-08, the Demon Deacons spent 18 weeks in the AP's top 25 and beat Florida State three years in a row. When he stepped down last December, Grobe boasted the best winning percentage over his entire tenure (.484) of any Wake coach since 1950. If there has ever been a better coach at Wake Forest, no one there is old enough to remember him. Still, in the end even Grobe had to admit he had been consumed by the Bermuda Triangle, conceding at his farewell press conference that "it's probably good for the program to have some new energy" after five consecutive losing seasons. Against opponents that finished above .500 in that span, the Deacons were 4-30.

In fact, "New Energy" is a fitting slogan for the lineup, too: besides the new coach, Dave Clawson, Wake returns the fewest full-time starters (eight) and fewest career starts across the roster (173) in the ACC. Really, though, what's to miss? Offensively, the departures include a quarterback, Tanner Price,

who logged 46 career starts, and the most productive receiver in school history, Michael Campanaro, who was drafted in the seventh round. But the offense as a whole last year ranked 112th in Offensive F/+ after coming in 113th in 2012, finishing dead last in the conference in scoring in both seasons. Spring practice yielded no firm answers in the quarterback duel between junior Kevin Sousa and sophomore Tyler Cameron, and the top two tailbacks were converts from wide receiver (Orville Reynolds) and linebacker (Dominique Gibson), respectively; the top receiver, E.J. Scott, was a graduate transfer from Virginia. The defense is adjusting from a 3-4 scheme under the old staff to a 4-2-5 by converting a pair of linebackers, Desmond Floyd and Zachary "Ziggy" Allen, into defensive ends while praying that a pair of sub-260-pound tackles, Josh Banks and Johnny Garcia, can hold up on the interior. So the new part, they've got that down. We'll see how long the energy lasts after a cushy non-conference schedule gives way to back-to-back dates with Louisville and Florida State in the first two conference games.

2015 Draft Prospects: CB Merrill Noel (5-6), CB Kevin Johnson (6-7).