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As avid college football fans, three of the topics we enjoy discussing (arguing about) the most are "who is the best team?" "which teams have the most talent?" and "which team gets the most out of their talent?" The answers to these questions are almost by definition subjective, but we have developed a fact-based, "objective" system (really a set of systems) to measure and compare both on field performance and talent levels for college football teams and conferences.

In an effort not to clutter up this post, we will explain in detail the "formulas" for all the calculations we reference at the end of the post. However, we want to make it clear that we recognize that these systems are not perfect….they have flaws, flaws that we will point out. However, we do believe that these systems are very accurate and do a good job of putting objective, quantitative measures on subjective college football characteristics. Importantly, we also believe this data provides a great basis for discussion among knowledgeable and reasonable college football fans. We are always open to suggestions on how to improve the systems. We will discuss performance, talent and performance vs talent (i.e. who gets the most/least out of their talent).

Summary

The data and analyses below will show that talent is critical for elite success in college football. Over the last decade, the vast, vast majority of national title contenders have had elite talent. Oklahoma in 2000, Nebraska 2001 (although one could argue the Huskers should not have been a title contender) and potentially Boise in 2010 are the rare examples of teams without elite talent competing for titles. However, collecting elite talent is not enough…in fact the data will show that once programs get to the very top end of talent levels, performance starts to decline (we intend to do a more in depth analysis on this counter intuitive pattern in the future). Our take away from this is that coaching is also very important. There are several examples of programs that achieved high levels of success without top talent. Virginia Tech, Boise, Utah, Oregon St, Oregon and West Virginia are examples of this. Some programs achieve this by finding "diamonds in the rough" recruits and others achieve this by designing and implementing systems that can be effective with less talent. Those teams excel at getting the most out of their talent. However, the programs that find the balance of assembling great talent (not the best talent in the country) and match that with outstanding coaching are the programs that consistently compete for titles. That was USC 2002-2004. Good talent, not crazy talent and great coaching. From 2005-2008, USC's talent gap over the rest of college football grew to unbelievable heights, yet the performance failed to match….the program got less out of the talent. Conversely, there are programs that consistently aggregate good/great talent, but rarely if ever "convert" that talent to performance on the field. Tennessee, Cal, Notre Dame and Wisconsin are some of those teams with legit NFL talent and little to show for it. UCLA and South Carolina consistently show up in recruiting rankings, but don't get performance on the field and don't "convert" their recruiting talent into NFL talent. These are all key components in putting together a successful program over the long run. None of these conclusions are shocking, but we believe the application of fact-based, objective analyses and ranking systems bring the facts into a clear light, away from the bias and subjectivity that is rampant in the media and with fans. We hope you find the analyses helpful and interesting.

Performance

The bottom line in college football is how a team performs on the field. To that end, we will start by ranking which teams have performed the best on the field (not talent, not potential, but purely on field performance) and then discuss the various ways those teams achieved their success (recruiting talent, developing talent, coaching acumen, etc) . We will describe our ranking system in detail at the end, but it is based on the Sagarin composite rankings and then adjusted to add points for national championships, top 10 finishes, wins over ranked teams and BCS performance. Here are the top 25 teams of the decade based on our system:

Top 25 Programs 2000-2009-Table 1

Performance

Rank	Team	Points
1	USC	164.6
2	Oklahoma	151.4
3	Florida	147.3
4	Texas	136.5
5	LSU	136.1
6	Ohio St	132.5
7	Miami	127.7
8	Georgia	105.5
9	Virginia Tech	105.4
10	Alabama	102.3
11	Florida St	102.1
12	Auburn	95.1
13	Oregon	94.3
14	Boise	93.9
15	West Virginia	91.5
16	Nebraska	90.7
17	Michigan	90.1
18	Tennessee	89.2
19	Penn St	88.6
20	Oregon St	87.7
21	Iowa	87.4
22	Utah	86.1
23	Texas Tech	83.5
24	TCU	82.9
25	Louisville	82.4

Not too many surprises here, particularly at the top. Oklahoma finishes 2nd despite having only 1 national title in the decade….ahead of Florida and LSU that each has 2 national titles. The combination of no poor seasons (worst finish was 17th in Sagarin), the second most wins in the decade (and most wins vs Top 10 competition) and 4 trips to the BCS title game propel the Sooners to #2. Close call (essentially a tie) between Texas and LSU for 4th. LSU has two national titles in the decade compared to one for Texas, but LSU also had 3 finishes outside the top 20 (Sagarin) while Texas had none. Texas had 11 more wins (and a higher winning percentage vs top 10 and top 30 opponents) and a title game loss to just close the gap on LSU. Also a close battle between Georgia and Virginia Tech for 9th and between Alabama and Florida St for 10th. Alabama's 2009 national title allowed the Tide to skyrocket up the board and sneak into the top 10. Seven elite teams in the decade with a big drop off to number eight. Boise and West Virginia finish ahead of traditional powers Michigan, Tennessee and Penn St. Utah and TCU also make the list from outside the BCS conferences. Two SEC teams in the top 5, four SEC teams in the top 10 and six SEC teams in Top 20…very impressive. Only 6 programs compiled 100 wins in the decade: Boise (112), Texas (110), Oklahoma (110), Ohio St (102), USC (102) and Florida (100). Of the teams knocking on the 100 win door, it was interesting to see TCU there with 95 wins.

Here are the top 25 single season teams…. USC leads the way with 6 teams followed by Florida with 4 and Miami, LSU and Ohio St with 3 each. 2000 Miami is the highest ranked team not to win a title (did not even play in title game), finishing ahead of 2002 National Champion Ohio St. 2008 Florida is the highest ranked 1 loss team, 2007 LSU is the highest ranked 2 loss team.

Top 25 Single Season Teams 2000-2009-Table 2

Rank	Year	Team	Performance Points
1	2005	Texas	123.7
2	2001	Miami	123.4
3	2004	USC	120.4
4	2000	Oklahoma	119.1
5	2009	Alabama	117.8
6	2008	Florida	115.5
7	2003	LSU	114.7
8	2006	Florida	113.4
9	2003	USC	111.3
10	2007	LSU	110.1
11	2000	Miami	110.0
12	2002	Ohio St	109.0
13	2000	Florida St	108.3
14	2005	USC	108.2
15	2001	Florida	108.0
16	2002	USC	105.1
17	2006	USC	104.1
18	2002	Miami	104.1
19	2009	Florida	104.0
20	2008	USC	103.4
21	2005	Ohio St	103.1
22	2008	Oklahoma	102.9
23	2004	Auburn	101.8
24	2006	LSU	101.8
25	2006	Ohio St	101.4

Please note that the point totals for multiple year analyses (i.e. table 1) and single year analyses (i.e. table 2) are not comparable. We will explain in detail below, but the main point is that in order to maintain the appropriate weighting for the bonus points applied to the Sagarin score, multiple year calculations use the average Sagarin score over the period.

The other side of the coin is the list of worst performing teams during the decade:

Worst 10 BCS Programs 2000-2009-Table 3

Rank	Team	Performance Points
1	Duke	44.9
2	Indiana	53.2
3	Baylor	53.9
4	Vanderbilt	57.5
5	Rutgers	59.5
6	Syracuse	60.9
7	Mississippi St	61.9
8	Illinois	62.3

9	Iowa St	64.3
10	Kentucky	65.3

Duke was the worst performing team from a BCS conference this decade…by a WIDE margin. As you we see below, Duke had 3 of the bottom 4 single season performances of the decade (and 4 of the bottom 7). Since we were so complimentary of the SEC above, it is only fair to point out that the SEC had three of the worst programs of the decade. The Big 12, Big 10 and Big East each had 2 teams on the list. It is amazing that Illinois makes this dubious list given the Illini played in 2 BCS games during the decade! Outside of those two years, Illinois' performance score was 55.5. Those seasons included years with 11, 10, 9, 8, 7 and 7 losses. The Pac 10 Ten had no teams represented in the list…the only BCS conference that can make that claim. Note this list only includes teams that were in a BCS conference for all years during the decade.

For the sake of completeness, below are the worst single season performances of the decade…

Worst 25 Single Season Teams 2000-2009-Table 4

Rank	Year	Team	Performance Points
1	2001	Rutgers (2-9)	44.0
2	2001	Duke (0-11)	46.6
3	2006	Duke (0-12)	47.5
4	2000	Duke (0-11)	47.9
5	2002	Rutgers (1-11)	48.1
6	2000	Wake (2-9)	51.6
7	2005	Duke (1-10)	52.7
8	2002	Kansas (2-10)	52.7
9	2008	Washington St (2-11)	53.7
10	2000	Baylor (2-9)	53.8
11	2003	Temple (1-11)	54.4
12	2003	Baylor (3-9)	54.6
13	2009	Washington St (1-11)	55.2
14	2008	Washington (0-12)	55.2
15	2003	Indiana (2-10)	55.4
16	2000	Rutgers (3-8)	55.4
17	2007	Minnesota (1-11)	55.7
18	2002	Baylor (3-9)	55.9
19	2008	Indiana (3-9)	56.2
20	2003	Illinois (1-11)	56.5
21	2001	Cal (1-10)	56.5
22	2005	Syracuse (1-10)	57.1
23	2001	Vanderbilt (2-9)	57.2
24	2007	Syracuse (2-10)	57.6
25	2007	Duke (1-11)	57.7

As discussed above, Duke really shines on this list! Other repeat offenders include Rutgers (3 times), Baylor (3 times), Washington St (twice) and Indiana (twice).

We can also look at these performance rankings by conference:

Average Performance Ranking by Conference 2000-2009-Table 5

Rank	Conference	Average Performance Points
1	SEC	79.7
2	Pac 10	78.8
3	Big 12	78.2
4	ACC	76.5
5	Big 10	76.2
6	Big East	76.0

No surprise to see the SEC at the top of the list, but it is interesting to see the Pac 10 in 2nd….ahead of the Big 12 and far ahead of the ACC, Big 10 and ACC. While the Big 12 has 2 great teams leading the way, the bottom half of the conference drags it down (21 of the 100 worst BCS teams of the decade are from the Big 12). The Pac 10 has had few elite teams outside of USC this decade (only 7 non-USC teams in top 100 teams this decade), but has had consistent strength in the middle of the conference (only 9 teams in bottom 100, fewest of any conference). It is important to note that these rankings assume the teams were in their respective conference at the time. For example, the Big East gets credit for Miami 2000-2003…which happens to be when the Canes were the best team in college football. If one were to look at the Big East today, under current alignment, the performance of that conference would be lagging even more. We do note that the Big 10 has fallen quite a bit back from the Big 12 and Pac 10 this decade.

Talent

More interesting to us than absolute performance is analyzing how these teams achieved this success on the field. It all starts with talent. Talent is not everything, but it is a big factor in college football success. We recognize talent is subjective, but we believe that by looking at recruiting rankings as well as NFL draft results, one can make objective observations about talent. For what its worth, we believe the NFL draft is the far superior way to measure college football talent, but it all starts with recruiting so lets evaluate recruiting over this time frame. We believe Rivals provides the best recruiting rankings. Below are the top 25 aggregate Rivals points for the 2002-2009 classes (we stretched to 26 to include Virginia Tech). We recognize this is not a perfect overlap with the time frame above, but Rivals data does not go back before 2002 and when we analyze the data in detail below we employ a weighting system to address this shortfall.

Most Aggregate Rivals Points 2002-2009 Recruiting Classes-Table 6

Rank	Team	Rivals Points
1	USC	20,314
2	Florida	18,039
3	LSU	17,972
4	Florida State	17,493
5	Georgia	17,182
6	Oklahoma	16,997
7	Texas	16,881

8	Miami	16,272
9	Ohio State	15,712
10	Michigan	15,665
11	Tennessee	15,145
12	Alabama	14,785
13	Auburn	13,711
14	Notre Dame	13,236
15	South Carolina	12,612
16	Texas A&M	11,578
17	UCLA	11,489
18	Nebraska	11,065
19	Clemson	10,781
20	Penn State	10,572
21	California	10,279
22	North Carolina	10,163
23	Ole Miss	10,086
24	Arkansas	10,084
25	Oregon	10,028
26	Virginia Tech	9,861

By combining charts 1 and 6, we can look at recruiting and performance rankings side by side and draw loose conclusions (while also recognizing that the time frames do not match up exactly). In a more detailed analysis below, we use weighted data that matches timing much better.

Rivals Ranking and Performance Ranking as Presented Above-Table 7

	Ranking	
	Rivals Points	**Perform Points**
Alabama	12	10
Arkansas	24	33
Auburn	13	12
Boise	**70**	**14**
Cal	21	31
Clemson	**19**	**30**
Florida	2	3
Florida St	**4**	**11**
Georgia	5	8
Iowa	42	21
Louisville	53	25
LSU	3	5
Maryland	27	35
Miami	8	7
Michigan	**10**	**17**
NC St	39	48
Nebraska	18	16

North Carolina	**22**	**56**
Notre Dame	**14**	**27**
Ohio St	9	6
Oklahoma	6	2
Ole Miss	23	46
Oregon	**25**	**13**
Oregon St	**50**	**20**
Penn State	20	19
South Carolina	**15**	**34**
TCU	**61**	**24**
Tennessee	11	18
Texas	7	4
Texas A&M	16	39
Texas Tech	44	23
UCLA	**17**	**36**
USC	**1**	**1**
Utah	**60**	**22**
Virginia	30	47
Virginia Tech	**26**	**9**
West Virginia	**41**	**15**
Wisconsin	43	28

By looking at the chart we can glean that teams such as Virginia Tech, Boise, Oregon, Oregon St, TCU, Utah, West Virginia have found a way to perform better on the field than in recruiting, while teams like Clemson, Florida St, South Carolina, Michigan, Notre Dame, North Carolina have done the opposite. Teams like USC, Florida, and LSU recruit well and perform well. What we don't know is how does Virginia Tech do it? Do the Hokies find diamonds in the rough? Does Boise just coach up their talent better? Does Oregon St employ a system designed to maximize the college potential of their players and teams? Does Notre Dame just recruit off of lists or do they not properly utilize their talent? In order to help answer some of these questions, we need to evaluate one more data set….NFL draft results. While recruiting rankings project the potential success of a high school football player, the NFL draft provides more of a backward looking hindsight analysis of how talented a college football player is….thus we believe it is the most accurate measure of college football talent. We recognize that some outstanding football players do not translate to the NFL and this is a flaw in the system….fortunately, this is the exception not the rule. By looking into the NFL draft, we can fill in the gaps to the questions above. For example, if a team recruits well, performs poorly, but has many NFL players drafted….the problem is likely the coaching or utilization of talent. If a team recruits well, performs poorly and has poor NFL draft success, the problem is likely either lack of player development or poor talent evaluation in recruiting.

Below are the top 25 teams with the most success in the NFL draft this decade. Our system will be described below in detail, but it awards points for draft picks with 1st round picks receiving 30 points down to 7th round picks receiving 1 point. This is intended to cover the 2000-2009 seasons, but it is important to note that the data will not be 100% complete until the 2011 and 2012 drafts are complete (i.e. there are key players on the 2009 teams that will not be drafted until 2011 or 2012). This data does completely cover the 2000-2007 seasons, roughly 80% of the 2008 season and 40% of the 2009 season. Again when we evaluate this in more detail, we will adjust and weight to deal with this shortcoming.

Most NFL Draft Points 2001-2010 Drafts-Table 8

Rank	Team	Talent Points
1	Miami	1,081
2	USC	962
3	Ohio St	881
4	Texas	753
5	Florida St	746
6	Georgia	741
7	Florida	739
8	Oklahoma	683
9	Tennessee	629
10	LSU	599
11	Michigan	581
12	Penn St	531
13	Auburn	458
14	Virginia Tech	441
15	Iowa	440
16	Wisconsin	434
17	Notre Dame	417
18	Cal	415
19	Alabama	412
20	Nebraska	400
21	Oregon	379
T22	NC St	323
T22	Maryland	323
T24	Ole Miss	322
T24	Arkansas	322

If you look at the top 10 most talented teams during this time period, those teams won ten of the eleven (two in 2003) national titles in the decade. In addition to the ten titles, those teams also lost in the title game 9 times. Of the 21 national championship game participants, the top 10 teams in this chart accounted for 19 participants. NFL talent matters big time in terms of achieving elite success in college football.

The concentration in talent becomes even more clear when you look at the 25 most talented singe season teams. Note that this list is for 2000-2007 as the 2008 and 2009 teams cannot be completely judged until the 2011 and 2012 drafts are complete. Despite still having the 2011 draft to add to the total, USC's 2008 team made the list. We would expect that 2008 and 2009 Florida will be on the list when all the points are in.

Most Talented Single Season Teams 2000-2007 Based on NFL Draft Points-Table 9

Rank	Year	Team	Talent Points
1	2001	Miami	432
2	2007	USC	404
3	2000	Miami	402
4	2002	Miami	370

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5	2006	USC	342
6	2003	Miami	331
7	2005	USC	325
8	2003	Ohio St	324
9	2004	Florida St	314
10	2005	Ohio St	309
11	2004	USC	297
12	2004	Ohio St	290
13	2005	Miami	279
14	2004	Miami	271
15	2003	OK	268
16	2004	OK	267
17	2003	Florida St	266
18	2002	Ohio St	264
19	2003	USC	262
20	**2008**	**USC**	**256**
21	2000	Georgia	254
T22	2002	Georgia	245
T22	2005	Texas	245
24	2005	LSU	241
25	2005	Florida St	240

Note that a single season is represented by the 3 drafts following that season (with the third draft only counting 50%). For example, a 2006 team will receive full credit for players drafted in the 2007 and 2008 drafts and 50% credit for those drafted in the 2009 drafts. The idea is to try and give appropriate weightings to players that contribute to the success of a team…while we believe this method is the best and most accurate way to measure talent, it is certainly not perfect.

USC and Miami have ALL of the top 7 spots and 10 of the top 15. USC, Miami and Ohio St have 13 of the top 15 spots. That is pretty amazing. Also interesting to note that only one of the top 10 teams (Miami 2001) won a national title and only 5 of the top 25 (Miami 2001, USC 2004, Ohio St 2002, USC 2003 and Texas 2005) won national titles. An additional 4 of the top 25 lost in the title game (Miami 2002, USC 2005 and Oklahoma 2003 and 2004). Florida St has 3 teams in the top 25 for the decade….those teams went a shockingly bad 27-11.

We will discuss performance relative to talent later, but the top 5 teams from table 9 above in terms of getting the most out of their considerable talent are (in order) Texas 2005, USC 2004, USC 2003, Ohio St 2002 and Miami 2001. The 5 biggest underperformers relative to their considerable talent from table 9 above are (in order) Ohio St 2004, Georgia 2000, Florida St 2003, Florida St 2004 and Miami 2005.

Only 6 teams produced single season draft scores of 175+ points in the decade (draft year listed): 2006 Ohio St (194 pts), 2002 Miami (192), 2008 USC (191), 2004 Miami (183), 2004 Ohio St (181) and Florida 2010 (177).

Another stat that we like to follow is the talent gap between the most talented team and the second most talented team in the country. What this shows is how much talent Miami and USC accumulated in 2000-2002 and 2006-2007, respectively. We also have the data for 1998 and 1999 which indicated talent gaps of 18 points and 10 points, respectively. It is very rare to have 100+ point talent advantages (let alone 200+!) yet Miami did it 3 times and USC did it twice…interestingly….only one BCS title from those 5 occurrences. Maybe those teams had too much talent? That is a topic for another day….

Talent Gap Between #1 and #2 Most Talented Team in College Football 2000-2007 Based on NFL Draft-Table 10

Year	Team	Talent Gap #1 vs #2
2000	#1 Miami #2 Georgia	148
2001	#1 Miami #2 Florida	202
2002	#1 Miami #2 Ohio St	106
2003	#1 Miami #2 Ohio St	6.5
2004	#1 Florida St #2 USC	17
2005	#1 USC #2 Ohio St	15.5
2006	#1 USC #2 LSU	119.5
2007	#1 USC #2 Florida	228.5

We can also evaluate the talent metrics by conference. While it is no surprise that the SEC has been the most talented conference throughout the decade, there are some interesting trends developing since the ACC/Big East re-alignment in 2004….this may have some bearing on the Big 10's interest in expanding in the near term. Look at the shift in talent away from the Big East (primarily Miami and Virginia Tech) as well as the decline in talent in the Big 10….

Most Talented Conferences Based on NFL Draft 2000-2007-Table 11

		Average Performance Points		
Rank by 2000-2007	Conference	2000-2003	2004-2007	2000-2007
1	SEC	101.1	97.3	99.2
2	Big 10	**95.2**	**87.2**	91.2
3	Pac 10	85.2	83.8	84.5
4	ACC	**69.6**	**94.9**	83.9
5	Big East	**93.7**	**49.6**	71.9
6	Big 12	68.8	67.2	68.0

Looking at single season talent levels, the SEC dominates with six of the top 10, but the ACC grabs the top 2 spots driven by the talent levels at Florida St and Miami during 2004 and 2005.

Most Talented Single Season Conferences Based on NFL Draft 2000-2007-Table 12

Rank	Year	Conference	Average Talent Points
1	2004	ACC	111.0
2	2005	ACC	106.9
3	2000	SEC	102.8
4	2003	SEC	102.0
5	2001	SEC	101.3
6	2004	SEC	99.5
7	2006	SEC	99.3
8	2001	Big East	98.9
9	2002	Big 10	98.9
10	2002	SEC	98.3

Conversely, when we look at the least talented single season conferences, the Big East shows up every year since realignment. The Big East and the Big 12 each appear 4 times….the SEC and the Pac 10 none. The Pac 10 is the only conference that does not show up in either list.

Least Talented Single Season Conferences Based on NFL Draft 2000-2007-Table 13

Rank	Year	Conference	Average Talent Points
1	2004	Big East	34.2
2	2005	Big East	38.8
3	2001	ACC	56.1
4	2006	Big East	58.8
5	2005	Big 12	58.9
6	2000	ACC	64.5
7	2006	Big 12	64.8
8	2003	Big 12	66.3
9	2007	Big East	67.1
10	2001	Big 12	68.2

Before we break this down further let's do a quick recap of where the various teams are ranked in recruiting, NFL talent and performance. We have listed all teams that appear in the top 25 in any category and show their ranking in all 3 categories.

Rankings Summary-Table 14

	Ranking		
	Rivals	Talent	Perform

	Points	Points	Points
Alabama	12	19	10
Arkansas	24	T24	33
Auburn	13	13	12
Boise	**70**	**63**	**14**
Cal	**21**	**18**	**31**
Clemson	19	28	30
Florida	2	7	3
Florida St	**4**	**5**	**11**
Georgia	5	6	8
Iowa	**42**	**15**	**21**
Louisville	53	32	25
LSU	3	10	5
Maryland	27	T22	35
Miami	**8**	**1**	**7**
Michigan	10	11	17
NC St	39	T22	48
Nebraska	18	20	16
North Carolina	**22**	**31**	**56**
Notre Dame	**14**	**17**	**27**
Ohio St	9	3	6
Oklahoma	6	8	2
Ole Miss	23	T24	46
Oregon	25	21	13
Oregon St	50	38	20
Penn State	20	12	19
South Carolina	15	35	34
TCU	61	45	24
Tennessee	**11**	**9**	**18**
Texas	7	4	4
Texas A&M	16	36	39
Texas Tech	44	62	23
UCLA	**17**	**37**	**36**
USC	1	2	1
Utah	**60**	**33**	**22**
Virginia	30	29	47
Virginia Tech	**26**	**14**	**9**
West Virginia	**41**	**68**	**15**
Wisconsin	**43**	**16**	**28**

We want to clear that the above rankings are not all necessarily "apples to apples"…for example the performance rankings go through 2009, but the NFL draft points are not complete for the 2009 season (need 2 more drafts). Also, the recruiting data is for 2002-2009, but the 1998-2001 classes had an impact on performance in 2000 and 2001. Having said that, it is important to note we will break each of these down in a more detailed manner to mitigate and eliminate these issues. Nonetheless, we thought by putting all the rankings side by side, the conclusions become more clear. A team such as

UCLA just does a poor job of evaluating and/or developing talent. The Bruins do great in recruiting, but fail to send their fair share to the NFL and struggle on the field. Notre Dame just does not utilize their talent…14th in recruiting translates to 17th in NFL….yet 27th on the field. Teams such as Boise, Oregon St, Virginia Tech, and Utah…they find diamonds in the rough and develop them for their systems and make it work. USC recruits well, develops well and produces on the field…same with Florida, Ohio St and Texas.

Converting Talent

So which teams are the best (and worst) at "converting" recruiting talent into NFL talent? As noted above, we have used a weighting system to appropriately balance recruiting classes and draft timing and address some of the issues highlighted above. At a high level, this data looks at the 2002-2007 recruiting classes (2008 recruiting class not yet draft eligible) and the 2005-2010 drafts (2002 class began draft eligibility in 2005 draft). This weighting process is subjective and we will discuss it in detail at the end of the post. Please note that the rankings in tables 15-20 reflect the weighted data and thus may not correspond to other un weighted rankings elsewhere in this analysis.

Best Conversion of Recruiting to NFL Talent-Table 15

		Convert	Rank		
Rank	**Team**	**Score**	**Rivals**	**NFL**	**Convert**
1	Connecticut	87.6	77	40	1
2	Utah	58.7	64	34	2
3	Boise State	57.4	70	44	3
4	Georgia Tech	55.3	56	23	4
5	USC	52.0	1	1	5
6	Wake Forest	50.3	67	45	6
7	Fresno State	49.9	69	47	7
8	Cincinnati	48.4	76	61	8
9	Ohio State	48.4	11	2	9
10	Vanderbilt	45.8	68	48	10

Obviously many of these teams rank high in conversion because they start with very little in terms of recruiting so just a little NFL success goes a long way. USC and Ohio St are the only 2 programs in the top 55 in terms of recruiting to make this list. It is important to note that Utah and Boise, programs that both have had significant success on the field are near the top of this list.

Conversely, here are the teams that have struggled to convert recruiting success into NFL draft success. Of the teams in the Top 25 for Rivals recruiting for the composite period (weighted), these are the worst teams at converting talent (ranking out of 80 teams total in survey)

Worst Conversion of NFL Talent (Top 25 Rivals Only)-Table 16

		Convert	Rank		
Rank	**Team**	**Score**	**Rivals**	**NFL**	**Convert**
1	Texas A&M	8.7	13	58	72
2	UCLA	14.8	20	46	67
3	South Carolina	15.2	15	42	66
4	Arizona	19.5	24	38	55
5	Maryland	23.1	22	33	48

6	Georgia	23.8	5	11	45
7	Nebraska	24.5	18	24	43
8	Arkansas	25.2	23	29	42
9	Auburn	26.1	12	14	40
10	Michigan	26.1	10	13	39

The data would tell us that either these teams are either (1) evaluating recruits poorly and those recruits are not living up to their ranking, (2) not properly developing good high school talent into good college talent or (3) not placing the high school talent in a system that produces strong NFL results.

Performance Relative to Talent

Converting recruiting talent to NFL talent is interesting, but what really counts is getting the most on field production from the talent you have. The analysis below attempts to identify which teams get the most out their talent. Here are the top 25 single season teams in terms of converting talent to performance. Data is for 2000-2007 as talent data for 2008 and 2009 is not finalized

Best Single Season Performance Relative to Talent 2000-2007-Table 17

			Convert	Ranking	
Rank	**Year**	**Team**	**Points**	**Talent**	**Perform**
1	2005	West Virginia (11-1)	90.6	68	6
2	2000	Georgia Tech (9-3)	53.3	75	14
3	2000	Oklahoma (13-0)	46.7	26	1
4	2002	Boise (12-1)	44.5	77	18
5	2007	West Virginia (11-2)	39.6	51	3
6	2007	Kansas (12-1)	31.2	47	2
7	2003	Boise (13-1)	27.3	71	14
8	2004	Utah (12-0)	26.0	35	4
9	2000	Toledo (10-1)	26.0	76	18
10	2003	Kansas St (11-4)	23.2	69	12
11	2000	Oregon St (11-1)	23.0	35	5
12	2003	Miami-Oh (13-1)	22.6	44	7
13	2005	Texas Tech (9-3)	22.4	66	11
14	2006	Boise (13-0)	21.5	36	6
15	2001	Nebraska (11-2)	20.8	33	3
16	2002	Kansas St (11-2)	19.6	40	6
17	2007	LSU (12-2)	18.8	6	1
18	2006	West Virginia (11-2)	18.8	60	11
19	2006	Florida (13-1)	18.7	8	1
20	2004	Boise (11-1)	17.8	46	10
21	2000	Virginia Tech (11-1)	16.9	23	6
22	2005	Texas (13-0)	16.5	4	1
23	2000	Washington (11-1)	16.2	24	7
24	2003	LSU (13-1)	16.2	7	1
25	2006	Louisville (12-1)	15.4	15	5

West Virginia (under Rich Rodriguez) and Boise have done an amazing job of taking limited talent (both from a recruiting and NFL perspective) and developing a system that utilizes that talent in a way that produces outstanding results on the field. Not every school can recruit like USC, Florida, Texas, Ohio St, Miami, Florida St and Michigan…some schools need to be creative…West Virginia and Boise exemplify that with 7 of the top 20 single season performances….may have been more if Rich Rod would have stayed at WVU. The 2000 Oklahoma team went 13-0 and won a national title without anything close to elite talent. For those interested, the highest ranking USC team in this category was the 2004 team that ranked 27th over this time frame.

On to the most dubious statistic in this post….the biggest underperforming teams relative to their talent. This list only includes teams that had top 25 talent that year. Only teams with top 25 talent can really be considered major underperformers relative to talent in our opinion. Here they are…

Worst Single Season Performance Relative to Talent 2000-2007 (Top 25 NFL Talent Only)-Table 18

			Convert	Ranking	
Rank	**Year**	**Team**	**Points**	**Talent**	**Perform**
1	2001	Cal (1-10)	(23.7)	24	76
2	2000	Penn St (5-7)	(18.3)	11	59
3	2004	Nebraska (5-6)	(18.1)	11	59
4	2007	Notre Dame (3-9)	(16.5)	25	69
5	2007	Iowa (6-6)	(16.4)	21	66
6	2005	Tennessee (5-6)	(16.2)	7	45
7	2006	Miami (7-6)	(16.2)	7	48
8	2007	North Carolina (4-8)	(15.6)	18	62
9	2007	Ole Miss (3-9)	(14.6)	23	65
10	2006	Virginia (5-7)	(14.6)	22	59
11	2000	North Carolina (6-5)	(14.3)	14	55
12	2005	Arkansas (4-7)	(14.1)	17	60
13	2006	Purdue (8-6)	(12.9)	20	54
14	2001	Arizona St (4-7)	(12.6)	20	56
15	2001	Penn St (5-6)	(11.9)	6	45
16	2004	Penn St (4-7)	(11.5)	21	52
17	2000	Cal (3-8)	(11.4)	21	54
18	2003	Virginia Tech (8-5)	(10.4)	10	35
19	2002	Texas A&M (6-6)	(10.3)	13	47
20	2004	Alabama (6-6)	(10.2)	24	51
21	2003	South Carolina (5-7)	(9.9)	22	46
22	2003	Alabama (4-9)	(9.8)	21	45
23	2000	Arizona St (6-6)	(9.6)	10	40
24	2004	NC St (5-6)	(9.4)	12	36
25	2004	Maryland (5-6)	(9.4)	18	40

If there is any question about how much these teams underperformed, consider this fact. Only 5 coaches from the above list continue to coach their teams today. Joe Paterno, Kirk Ferentz, Butch Davis (was his first year at UNC), Frank Beamer and Ralph Friedgen. The rest of the coaches of the above teams were relieved of their duties.

Looking at over or under performance over multiple years is less precise because there can be outlier results in a single year that skew the results for the entire time period. Nonetheless, it is still worthwhile in our opinion to look at the performance relative to talent over longer time frames.

Best Performance Relative to Talent 2000-2007-Table 19

		Convert	Rank		
Rank	**Team**	**Score**	**Talent**	**Perform**	**Convert**
1	West Virginia	138.7	62	13	1
2	Boise	99.9	63	19	2
3	Oklahoma	91.3	7	2	3
4	LSU	47.5	8	3	4
5	Texas	46.1	5	6	5
6	USC	39.0	2	1	6
7	Florida	33.8	9	7	7
8	Virginia Tech	33.5	14	10	8
9	Kansas St	33.3	40	20	9
10	Texas Tech	29.8	66	25	10

Given the single season data, it is no surprise to see West Virginia and Boise right at the top. Oklahoma is helped dramatically be their breakout performance in 2000. LSU, Texas, USC and Florida all won national titles and experienced tremendous success…when you succeed at that degree, you are doing something with your talent. Virginia Tech has consistently (with a few exceptions) done a great job of finding a way to win lots of games with less talent. Kansas St and Texas Tech developed systems that worked for them, generated success (albeit inconsistent success) despite having very little talent.

Worst Performance Relative to Talent 2000-2007 (Top 25 NFL Talent Only)-Table 20

		Convert	Rank		
Rank	**Team**	**Score**	**Talent**	**Perform**	**Convert**
1	Cal	(31.2)	18	28	80
2	Penn St	(30.7)	12	21	79
3	Purdue	(17.4)	25	40	75
4	Notre Dame	(16.8)	16	22	74
5	Alabama	(15.3)	24	39	73
6	Arkansas	(15.0)	20	30	72
7	NC St	(13.8)	22	43	71
8	Tennessee	(10.6)	10	14	68
9	Iowa	(6.8)	15	23	62
10	Wisconsin	(6.0)	17	24	61

From the list above, only Penn St and Iowa have not had a coaching change during this period. Cal has consistently struggled to perform up to its potential. Tedford has done a much better job than his predecessor, but results since 2004 have been disappointing. Penn St really struggled to perform in the early part of the decade…the Nittany Lions have turned it around as of late. We actually thought Tennessee would be much higher on the list. A bit surprised to see

Purdue so high on the list. If we were to expand this list to teams with top 30 talent, programs such as Virginia and Arizona St would be prominent on the list.

That wraps up our look at performance, talent and performance vs talent in college football over the last decade or so. We know this is was a ton of data, but thought a comprehensive look at the topic would be informative and helpful while hopefully generating some interesting dialogue.

Appendix-Formulas

Before we detail the formulas, let us explain the data. We have data for 80 teams during the BCS era (1998-present). The teams covered include all teams currently in a BCS conference or that were in a BCS conference any time from 1998-2007, plus any team finishing in the Sagarin Top 30 from 1998-2007. We have all the Sagarin data (composite), Rivals recruiting data (only available 2002-present) and NFL draft data for this period. We have all the calculations done for all 80 teams (and all the conferences) over the time frame. Below are the calculations/formulas for each table presented.

Table 1- Our performance metric is weighted towards outstanding performance. We believe that elite performances should greatly outweigh middle of the road performance. The base for our calculation is Sagarin, who we believe does a very good job (not perfect) with his computer rankings. By starting with Sagarin, we can capture strength of schedule, margin of victory and overall wins and losses. We then add emphasis to Sagarin for outstanding performance.

The performance points are calculated as follows: Average Sagarin Composite ranking points over the time frame (2000-2009 in this case) PLUS bonus points for top 10 finishes (final Sagarin) PLUS bonus points for BCS performance PLUS bonus points for wins over top 10 and 30 teams (final Sagarin) MINUS points for losses to non-Top 30 teams (final Sagarin). Bonus points for Top 10 finishes are awarded in this manner: 5 points for 1st, 4.5 points for 2nd, 4 points for 3rd…down to 0.5 points for 10th. BCS performance points are awarded in this manner: 10 points for BCS/AP championship, 3 points for loss in BCS championship game, 2.5 points for regular BCS game win and 1 point for BCS game loss. Bonus points for ranked wins are awarded as follows: 0.5 points for each win over top 10 team and 0.25 points for win over top 30 team (not double counting the top 10 wins). 0.25 points are deducted for each loss to a non-top 30 team.

*Table 2-*Same formula as above, but for a single season so no average involved.

*Table 3-*Same formula as table 1.

*Table 4-*Same formula table 2.

*Table 5-*Same formula as table 2. We then took the average of all teams in each conference from 2000-2009…so this is an average of the single season scores.

*Table 6-*Sum of Rivals recruiting points for 2002-2009 recruiting classes.

*Table 7-*Rankings of teams as calculated in table 1 and table 6. Not completely apples to apples because table 1 covers performance from 2000-2009 and table 6 covers recruiting classes from 2002-2009. Note that we do not make any calculations from this not perfectly comparable data, but rather use it to help show the correlation of recruiting and performance (or lack of correlation).

*Table 8-*Sum of NFL draft points for the 2001-2010 drafts. Draft points awarded as follows: 1st Round- 30 pts, 2nd Round- 20 pts, 3rd Round- 13 pts, 4th Round- 9 pts, 5th Round- 5 pts, 6th Round- 2 pts, 7th Round- 1 pt.. We did a simple sum of the NFL draft points, but could have summed up the talent on each team during the period as well (see table 9 discussion)….slightly different methodology, but substantially same answer.

Table 9-Same point calculation as above. To calculate a score for a given team in a given year, we look at the 3 drafts following a season, giving only 50% credit to the third draft. So for 2006 team, they get 100% points for the 2007 draft, 100% points for the 2008 draft and 50% points for the 2009 draft. This is why data is not complete for the 2008 and 2009 seasons…there are contributing players on those teams that are yet in the NFL draft. The thought process behind this is to most effectively capture the contribution of key players. It is not perfect…it does not capture true frosh contributors who stay 4 years (captures their soph, jr and sr years, but not their frosh year)…but missing that rare occurrence seems better than including all true frosh, few of whom actually contribute.

Table 10-Same points calculation as table 9, just subtract the number 2 score from number 1 team score for each year.

Table 11-Same points calculation as table 9. Represents the average of each team in each conference from 2000-2007.

Table 12- Same points calculation as table 9. Represents average of each team in each conference for each year.

Table 13-Same as table 12.

Table 14-Ranking of teams in tables 1, 6 and 8. Not completely apples to apples because table 1covers performance from 2000-2009, table 6 covers recruiting classes from 2002-2009 and table 8 covers aggregate NFL draft points for the 2001-2010 drafts. Note that we do not make any calculations from this not perfectly comparable data, but rather use it to help show the correlation of recruiting, NFL talent and performance (or lack of correlation).

Table 15-This gets a bit complicated, but appropriate weighting is necessary because a recruiting class is part of multiple NFL drafts and each NFL draft is comprised of multiple recruiting classes. We have assumed that each recruiting class goes to the NFL 20% after 3rd year, 70% after 4th year and 10% after 5th year. Certainly subject to debate, but moving the percentages around on the margin won't move the needle materially. Based on these percentages we weighted the 2002-2007 recruiting classes (2008-2010 classes not yet draft eligible) and the 2005-2010 NFL drafts (no one from 2002 class was draft eligible until 2005 draft). The rankings reflect the rankings based on these weightings and will not necessarily tie to the un-weighted data elsewhere in the post. The conversion formula takes the number of weighted NLF draft points divided by the weighted number of Rivals points and multiplies by 1000 (to get to an easy number without a bunch of decimals). Basically…."how many NFL draft points produced for each Rival point"

Table 16- Same as table 15.

Table 17- This is also a bit complicated. First we take the performance data as calculated for each individual year (same as table 2) from 2000-2007 (no final talent data for 2008 and 2009). Then we subtract out the Sagarin composite ranking score for the 20th ranked team for each respective year. The idea is to measure the amount of performance above a certain benchmark…we are not really interested in teams with the 50th best talent producing 40th best performance…to truly over perform, the bar needs to be set and we set it at 20th. To the extent that the number (performance-Sagarin #20) is positive, we then divide that number by the NFL talent points to measure to the over performance relative to talent level (we multiply by 100 to make the numbers more manageable). To the extent the number is negative, we multiply that number by the talent points and divide by 100. If you don't do that, the more talent an underperforming team has (negative number) the smaller the output. Rankings numbers are for 2000-2007 so may not tie to data for other time periods in the post.

Table 18- Same calculation as above, but only includes teams that had top 25 talent (as defined by NFL draft points). Basically, we are not looking for teams that "underperform" with less than top 25 talent.

Table 19- Same as table 17, but aggregate from 2000-2007 so we add up the single season numbers for all years.

Table 20- Same as table 19, but top 25 NFL talent (as ranked for the entire time frame) only. It is important to note that if a team had less than top 25 talent for a given year within the time frame, that year was essentially excluded from the calculation (team given zero convert points for that year).