

MATTHEW HATFIELD'S 2005-06 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

All the information you need to know for the upcoming College Football and NFL Season!



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Letter from the Author:

Welcome to the second annual Matthew Hatfield Football Preview for 2005-06! I've been following sports for quite a few years now and have a great passion for them. It's been my privilege to prepare this magazine for your enjoyment this year. A lot of hard work and time has been put into the project as with all my other projects. It's an every day event for me in my life and great thanks goes out to everyone, especially to my closest friends and family. Other sports in addition to football that I cover include local area High School sports, Major League Baseball, NCAA Basketball, a little bit of NBA and other stuff sprinkled in every now and then.

What's my style of writing and looking at the games? Bringing an equal balance of both positive and negative outlook to the people. My desire is to be outgoing with fans and at the same time tell it how I see things with no harm directed at anyone. Also, I have very little time to check for errors or mistakes in my writing. Since everything written on my web site and magazine is done solely by me, it's only fitting that errors be pointed out by others. Proofreading is not one of special qualities or gifts. However, I strive to continue making improvement in that field. If you find something you think is wrong or disagree with - tell me and Hatfield Sports will be glad to work with you as best as humanly possible. Nothing is taken personally because everything I do involving sports can be classified as work, but ultimately I have a lot of fun doing it all.

Like the late great Jimmy Valvano said, "To me, there are three things we all should do every day. We should do this every day of our lives. Number one is laugh. You should laugh every day. Number two is think. You should spend some time in thought. And number three is, you should have your emotions moved to tears, could be happiness or joy. But think about it. If you laugh, you think, and you cry, that's a full day. That's a heck of a day. You do that seven days a week, you're going to have something special." I abide by that rule of thought and my hope is for everyone to do the same! Sports is a special part of many people's lives and certainly is in mine, too.

During the football season from September to the Super Bowl, you can read my Football Weekly columns. For any questions, comments or further information on that,

please feel free to e-mail me any time at hatfieldsports2k4@yahoo.com. I also do a piece on Mondays entitled Monday Morning Analysis. There I break down the past weekend games and offer my perspective on the National Football League. In those weekly pieces you will find predictions, opinion, statistics and more. That's what my magazine is all about - predictions, opinions, statistics and more! So with nothing else to say, I bring you *Matthew Hatfield's 2005-06 Football Preview!*

Thanks & Enjoy,
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***** Be sure to check out the Matthew Hatfield Sports Message Board exclusively on VirginiaPreps.com - part of the Rivals.com network. Also, be sure to check out all the fine pieces of work there, including High School sports articles done by Mr. Hatfield Sports himself. *****

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Extreme Makeover

CLEVELAND BROWNS

4. Cleveland Browns (4-12): If you're 30-66 since 1999... then you might be the Cleveland Browns. Think about all the Cleveland draft busts in recent years. DE Courtney Brown and DT Gerrard Warren were highly invested first round picks who are in Denver. Like Brown, QB Tim Couch was a #1 overall draft pick and currently is out of the league. Receivers Quincy Morgan and Kevin Johnson are now catching passes as third/fourth options on NFC organizations. And last but not least, running back William Green (3.7 career YPC) has yet to build on a 887-yard rookie season by making the Pro Bowl. I don't see third overall pick Braylon Edwards - the team's new go-to-guy at wide receiver - turning out to be another Browns bust. He should be very productive in this league for a very long time, and the same could go for early third round pick QB Charlie Frye of Akron. Frye was my #1 overall rated quarterback in the draft, while Edwards made spectacular play after spectacular play every game of his college career. In to coach these rookies is 57-year-old Romeo Crennel, a heart warming person who was part of the New England Patriots' brain trust.



Braylon Edwards was a big-time performer at the University of Michigan where he caught 39TD's. (AP)

Out went Couch and Kelly Holcomb and in came veteran Jeff Garcia to quarterback the '04-05 version of the Browns. Garcia didn't play too poorly, throwing for 1731 yards, a 10-9TD/Int. differential and rushing for 169 yards with a bad back. But because of that bad back the team has decided to go elsewhere at this position and give 33-year-old Trent Dilfer a try. Dilfer comes over from Seattle where he was a backup. We could see the Dilfer that stunk at times in Tampa Bay or the one that did considerably well in Baltimore. What he doesn't have is the Super Bowl Ravens type defense and a TE Shannon Sharpe. They were supposed to have a playmaker at the tight end position, but Kellen Winslow Jr. may never play again. Winslow's Harley motorcycle wreck in 2005 may turn out to be a major blow. Andre Davis (99Yd. TD) and Antonio Bryant have yet to live up to their potential at the wide receiver position. They combined for 58 catches, less than 1000 yards and six touchdowns in '04. That's what Edwards should give them [around there at least] in his first pro season. Dennis Northcutt may be catching on as a deep threat every now and then. Northcutt has 117 receptions for 1535 yards since '03. He caught seven passes for 40+ yards last year, but is averaging less than

2TD's per game since being drafted in 2000. At running back the situations is very sketchy. Reuben Droughns ran for 1000 yards in Denver behind an offensive line that's been effective for over a decade. Droughns comes in and could be the starting tailback, fullback or be a plain backup. In '01 the Browns had the worst rushing attack around and William Green averaged 1.7YPC in ten games through 2002. Green really got rolling after that and topped the 100-yard plateau six times in his final eight rookie season games. Green's yet to shun the doubters, splitting carries with Lee Suggs and going for just 585 yards, two scores and 3.6YPC. Suggs, a great contributor in college at Virginia Tech, went for 744 yards and 2TD's in '04. He'd like to have a career year as Cleveland brings in a pair of new guards to block for him. Cosey Coleman has dropped some weight in hope to have good focus and movement. Joe Andruzzi will be the other guard and use a blue-collar approach coming in from New England. No clarity as to how long tackles Ross Verba and Ryan Tucker will be if they indeed make it to play all 16 games here. Center Jeff Faine out of Notre Dame keeps opponents on their heels by using great upper body strength. Faine anchors this so-so unit. If the tackles don't block consistently vs. the blitz and the guards still don't pull out well on sweeps and pitches, the brownies will carry over a league worst -23 turnover differential since '03 over to next year.

This could [operative word] be a Redskins situation on defense. Huh? By that I mean a group effort with no bona-fide star. Cleveland ranked fifth overall in pass defense, but allowed 144.6YPG through the running game (32nd overall) and tied for 27th in sacks. Nearly the entire defensive line left town for Denver. As corky as it may sound, that's a good thing. They retain defensive end Kenard Lang, who has made 20.5 sacks in three seasons since coming over from Washington, and signed Gary Baxter away from Baltimore to make up for three key losses - Anthony Henry (**10Int.** for 177Yds. in '01), Earl Little + Robert Griffith - in the secondary. Crennel wants more speed and intense hitters on defense. Drafting Oklahoma safety Brodney Pool might be a good start. Pool had a poor showing vs. USC, though classifies as a fine pick when considering his seven interceptions. Fellow safety Sean Jones, who will be in the mix with Brian Russell (**9Int. for 185Yds.** in '03), had similar production as Pool in his final college campaign two years ago. Corner Daylon McCutcheon and line hybrid Orpehus Roye are in need of big seasons under first year d-coordinator Todd Grantham. If extraordinary blitzing inside linebacker Andra Davis fails to stay healthy, sacks/stops will be very hard to come by. Still two pieces away, Cleveland will look to OLB Matt Stewart for leadership. Oklahoma return man Antonio Perkins had 270+ PR yards and 3TD's on special teams vs. UCLA.

Final Thoughts: Cleveland made the playoffs three years ago, but have struggled lately because of turnovers, a few subtractions, no established go-to runner and a defense that is a work in progress for the coming year. New GM Phil Savage, an architect with Ozzie Newsome of the Ravens Super Bowl team, and Crennel know the importance of building a defense. The foundation is in place and things will be headed in the right direction pretty soon. Give them till 2007.

Projection: 4-12; 4th in the AFC North; no playoff appearance

This isn't D. C. nor is it Gainesville. Spurrier has his hands full



4. South Carolina (6-5): Out with the old and in with the new. Lou Holtz goes out a winner at South Carolina... somewhat. Holtz improved the Gamecocks as they went from 0-11 in his first year of 1999 to 6-5 in 2004. The season may have been tarnished as the team got in a fight with in-state rival Clemson to end the year. Not only did they lose the game 29-7, but the school was unable to participate in a bowl game. In comes Steve Spurrier, the man who helped turn Florida into a national power in the 1990's. While Holtz was able to take the school to consecutive Outback Bowls, Spurrier believes South Carolina can compete with the best in the SEC. Or why else would he have taken the job? Players know his college offensive system works, using trips and three wide receiver formations. So one has to think if a kid's a good athlete he will now give Columbia, South Carolina more thought in his recruiting process. At least those that didn't watch Redskins games. Balance will be the word attributed to the 'Fun & Gun' this fall. SC grooms a new QB in sophomore Blake Mitchell to hopefully energize an 84th ranked scoring charge. The offense was supposed to be keyed by RB Demetris Summers. However, Summers, a blue-chip recruit coming out of High School, has been dismissed from the team. It leaves the rushing duties to fullback Daccus Turman and tailback Cory Boyd, a pair of power runners with modest receiving ability. At receiver they do lose their best playmaker in years in Troy Williamson (91Rec. 1754Yds. 13TD in 34 of 35 starts). Syvelle Newton shared quarterbacking duties (1093Yds. 6-6 ratio) last yr. and now with junior Noah Whiteside, who brings dangerous/blazing speed to the return game, are the primary receiving options. Freshmen WR's O.J. Murdock and Carlos Thomas are long-term solutions there. Tackles Jabari Levey and N'Shon Goodard are the cornerstones of an offensive line that allowed 0 sacks in 3+ games for the second straight year.



Steve Spurrier's bolted from Duke, to Florida, to the nation's capitol, to his current stop in Columbia.

Three of four projected starting DB's are gone as is MLB Marcus Lawrence. Two years ago the Gamecocks pass defense was excellent early on thanks in large part to outstanding cover corner Dunta Robinson (Texas first round pick) and quick DB DeAndre Eiland. Do have a shutdown type of CB once again in Fred Bennett. Bennett's got Robinson like speed and helped lead them to a #14 ranking vs. the pass. Free safety

Ko Simpson was twice as good, earning Freshman of the Year honors in the conference by making six interceptions. **Simpson, who also recovered three fumbles, had his defining moment vs. Georgia when he intercepted David Greene and ran it back for a score.** Jonathan Joseph can be the prospect these two guys are if he stays healthy, continues to read offenses and work on his hitting at the line.

South Carolina's defense was 29th in scoring defense and 20th in points allowed last year. They'll need quite a few things to go their way to remain that high. One of them is to have outside linebackers Mike West and Lance Laury do a better job of picking up their assignment for the LB group to be good as a whole. Senior inside linebacker Ricardo Hurley has been injury plagued, but can have an effect. **Down the stretch in 2003 they went 0-4 and in those games opponents ran for 200+ yards three times.** All four of those linemen that started returned last year and improved a bit vs. the run. Now there are four new starters on a d-line that made just 12 sacks in '04. Ends De'Adrian Coley and Charles Silas can chase down most quarterbacks if they get free from blocks. Not an easy thing to do necessarily when you factor in the size of the SEC's offensive linemen. They replace George Gause and Moe Thompson - two men that made 18 sacks over the past two seasons. Gause and DT Darrell Shropshire (7th round - Atlanta) were two NFL level players for the majority of their careers. Marque Hall must come in and do good because backup Matt Raysor bulked up in the off-season, hoping to see some playing time.

Final Thoughts: Mediocre! Given time, Spurrier will get kids to flock to So. Carolina like he did at Florida. Maybe not at the same success rate, but they will come. A National Championship down the road? Lets not get ahead of ourselves.

Date	South Carolina	W/L	Score
Sep. 1	Central Florida		
Sep. 10	at Georgia		
Sep. 17	Alabama		
Sep. 24	Troy		
Oct. 1	at Auburn		
Oct. 8	Kentucky		
Oct. 22	Vanderbilt		
Oct. 29	at Tennessee		
Nov. 5	at Arkansas		
Nov. 12	Florida		
Nov. 19	Clemson		

Schedule Talk:

Not only does Steve have to play @ Georgia, @ Tennessee and face old Gator friends one week before the battle of state bragging rights, but they have a few other challenging games. They include an October 1st meeting at undefeated Auburn, a tough home game two weeks before that vs. Alabama, and no guarantees from there on with Arkansas on the road sandwiched in between TN and FL. At least he can chow down on non-conference weaklings like Troy and UCF as if it's the preseason.

Projection: 4th in the SEC East; outside looking in on a bowl