



Top Rated-Recruiting Class: A reliable factor in determining BCS ranking?



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Introduction



- College athletic departments are spending increasing amounts of money on recruiting (James & Aurand, 2004).
- The perception of a successful recruiting class is closely linked to the annual rankings of top recruiting classes in college football and coverage of National Signing Day.
 - Record coverage for the fourth year in a row

Recruiting



- For the fourth consecutive year, ESPNU headlined coverage of National Signing Day with nine hours of coverage.
- ESPNEWS, ESPN RISE, ESPN.com, CBS College Sports, The NFL Network and CSN also provided extensive coverage of NSD.
- In recent years, coaches have received bonuses for top recruiting classes
 - “discretionary bonuses”(Feldman, 2009).

Recruiting



- Nearly half of the nation's largest athletic programs have doubled or tripled their recruitment spending over the last decade.
- 21 Division I institutions spent more than \$1 million in recruiting, led by the University of Tennessee.

Conference	2006-2007	1996-97	% Increase
Southeastern	\$13,129,700	\$6,639,000	98%
Big 12	11,538,200	6,663,000	73
Atlantic Coast	10,748,200	4,401,000	144
Big Ten	10,134,600	5,792,000	75
Pacific-10	8,344,700	4,625,000	80
Big East	6,125,700	4,334,000	41

Sander, L. (2008). Have Money, Will Travel: The Quest for Top Athletes. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(47), A1.

College Bowl Games



- 34 Bowl Games in 2009-10
 - Sell an allotment of tickets, pay for transportation, hotels, etc.
 - Schools lose money
- The payout for the five BCS bowl games was \$18 million each (NCAA, 2010).
- The remaining payouts ranged from \$300,000 to \$5.65 million.

College Bowl Games



- Payouts are misleading
- Average payout for schools participating was approximately \$700,000 in non-BCS bowl games
 - Difficulty breaking even?
- Schools received between \$3 and \$5 million for participating in BCS bowl games



Research Questions



- Is there a correlation between recruiting rankings and winning percentage?
- What year of recruiting is the most vital to a program's success?
- Is there a relationship between finishing in the top-25 in the final Bowl Championship Series rankings and “team rankings” for each individual conference.

Sample



- College recruiting data for 118 NCAA Division I-A schools were collected from 2002-2009.
- Archived recruiting data from Scout.com and Rivals.com were used by the researcher ($r=.901$)
- The data is available on both websites without subscription.



How Scout Calculates Team Rankings



Team Rankings are a math formula that based on a player's rating and his rankings. 5-Star is a rating, No. 1 quarterback is his ranking.

5 Star = 200 points

4 Star = 120 points

3 Star = 40 points

2 Star = 20 points

The No. 1 player at a position is worth 100 points, counting down to the last ranked player at his position to 0.

For Example, assuming Scout ranks 100 quarterbacks.

5-Star, No. 1 QB = 300 points

4-Star, No. 10 QB = 210 points

3-Star, No. 50 QB = 90 points

2-Star, No. 75 QB = 45 points

The Team Rankings are compiled of the Top 25 players per class. Some teams will over-sign, but only 25 count towards the Team Rankings.



Methodology



- Overall records and conference records were collected from 2005-2009
- The four years of recruiting data prior to each season was used and averaged between the two websites
 - 2005 → 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005
 - “Team rankings” for each individual conference were figured by the researchers using the average of the four years of recruiting rankings
- ✦ Example: University of Southern California
 - 2005: 1
 - 2006: 3
 - 2007: 2
 - 2008: 6
 - Average: 3

Results: Q1



- Conference Recruiting Rank → Win Percentage

Year	Conference Winning %	Overall Winning %
2005	-.206*	-.421**
2006	-.169	-.771**
2007	-.184	-.398**
2008	-.168	-.354**
2009	-.206*	-.404**

- **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
- *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results: Q2



- Win Percentage → Year-by-Year Recruiting

Year	Three-year lag		Two-year lag		One-year lag		Current Year	
	CONF	OVR	CONF	OVR	CONF	OVR	CONF	OVR
2005	-.201*	-.396**	-.175	-.356**	-.184	-.409**	-.224*	-.435**
2006	-.126	-.694**	-.160	-.745**	-.193*	-.742**	-.143	-.742**
2007	-.148	-.368**	-.154	-.373**	-.151	-.353**	-.234*	-.428**
2008	-.147	-.330**	-.180	-.369**	-.187*	-.358**	-.121	-.294**
2009	-.139	-.337**	-.210*	-.389**	-.186*	-.372**	-.212*	-.414**

- **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
- *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results: Q3



•Recruiting Rank →Top-25 BCS finish

Year	Conference Recruiting Ranking	Overall Recruiting Ranking
2005	3.88 avg.	24.86 avg.
2006	3.48 avg.	28.76 avg.
2007	3.84 avg.	34.75 avg.
2008	4.76 avg.	37.13 avg.
2009	4.16 avg.	32.99 avg.

•Average conference and overall recruiting ranking for teams finishing in the top-25 of the BCS.

Results: Q3 (Con.)



- Chi-Square Analysis: *Likelihood of having a Top 2 Conference Recruiting Class and Achieving a BCS Top-25 Finish.*
- $\chi^2 (1, n=119) 7.73, p < .01 (2005)$
- $\chi^2 (1, n=119) 15.23, p < .001 (2006)$
- $\chi^2 (1, n=119) 7.73, p < .01 (2007)$
- $\chi^2 (1, n=119) 2.75, p > .05 (2008)$
- $\chi^2 (1, n=119) 1.21, p > .05 (2009)$

Discussion and Implications



- Recruiting rankings are correlated to overall team winning percentage
- A school doesn't necessarily have to finish in the top-2 in their conference in recruiting to appear in the BCS
 - Top-4 recruiting class
- “Splitting hairs”—conference and overall team recruiting rankings

Discussion and Implications



- The “arms race” in college athletics includes recruiting
 - Better recruiting=better conference and overall winning percentage
- The importance of signing day can be debated as schools like Boise State and Utah have won BCS games in recent years while other schools with highly rated classes struggle.
- The verdict is that it is important but not a guarantee of future success.

Discussion and Implications



- It is important to consider other factors in addition to recruiting rankings
 - Coaching, conference, non-conference opponents, budget
- Recruiting rankings are subjective
 - “Skewed towards the Big 6”
 - Important that player analysis is generated early
- School’s will continue to devote more time and money to recruiting
 - Limit of 20 hours per week on practice

Future Research



- What is the most important factor to building a successful football program?
- What is the most efficient way to use recruiting capital?
- What impact does recruiting budget have on program success?

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