

COLLEGE & PRO FOOTBALL

'08 / '09 Season Review

When I started All-Star Sports almost 32 years ago, there were about 35 or so professional handicappers in the country. Now, there are over 1500 and if you listen to most of them, you'd have to think that this is an easy business. After all, most of them hit in the high 70s to low 80s when it comes to their winning percentages. I'm here to tell you that if you actually handicap the games (and there are 15 - 20 of us who actually do) and honestly try to come up with valid reasons why you and your customers should bet on one team instead of the other, it's a pretty damn tough business. I spend literally 60 to 70 hours each week going over every game on the board. Some days, the games play out almost exactly like I thought they would. Some days, it's like a dozen or so teams swapped uniforms and everybody is playing for a different team, because they sure don't look like any of the teams I'd been looking at. About half this season seemed to go that way.

Every year, I expect the ball to bounce funny directions. I expect 19 to 20 year old guys to do some incredibly stupid things. I know the referees are going to make some calls that any of my daughters would know was wrong- and then they're going to uphold the call "upon further review". I know the coaches are going to call plays that make absolutely no sense. All those things and more are going to go against us and we're going to lose games that there simply was no possible way to lose. I also know that most years, those crazy things are going to even out over the course of the season and we'll win about the same number of games that there was simply no way to win. That just didn't happen this year.

Bear in mind that I'm not whining- at least I'm not trying to, but we caught very few breaks this season. If a key player got hurt, he was our key player. If one of the stars was suspended for doing something stupid, he was one of our stars. Throw in a few games where I simply blew it and the season can get out of hand in a hurry. And in most seasons, we'll have the occasional bad Saturdays and follow it with a really good Sunday, or a great Saturday and then a Sunday where we give it all back. This season was a season of runs. Runs that lasted two to three weeks at a time and drove all of us crazy. Fortunately, of the three big runs we had, two of them were good ones. We had a couple of those "bad days, good days" as well. Our first bad day was September 27 when we went 6-13. We followed that on Sunday, 9/28 with an 11-2 day. October 11th was my famous 2-25 day. I couldn't spell my name that day, but we followed it with a 22-1 day on October 18th.

We had a great run over Thanksgiving, going 54-17 from November 23rd to the 30th. Then, as was so properly pointed out to me by several people, we went 34-72 from December 7th to December 31st. Miserable to be sure, but those people did not point out that on December 6th we had a very nice 15-3 day. And thank goodness we've closed it out on a strong 51-20 run from January 1st to January 19th with the Super Bowl still to go. So, up 37, down 38 and then up 31. An unpleasant roller coaster ride. The bottom lines for all of it is that we finished the year at 281 - 237 or 54.8% in College Football and 169 - 122 or 58.1% in the NFL. Combined, that's 450 - 359 or 55.6%. Since everyone knows that you have to hit 52.38% to break even, you don't have to be a math genius to see that this was not a good year- certainly not by our standards. I'm about a month and a half away from starting to work on next year and you can be sure that I'll do everything I can to make next year much better than this one. Good luck to all of you in the meantime, and thank you for your business. I appreciate each one of you.