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PRIORITY PICKS and PREFERENCES

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CKO CHOICE IN CAPITALS
* - Denotes Home Team

RATINGS: 11 - Exceptional, 10 - Strong, 9 - Above Average

11 NORTHWESTERN over Auburn
Late Score Forecast:
NORTHWESTERN 26 - Auburn 23
Outback Bowl at Tampa, Florida
(Friday, January 1, 2010)

After posting big offensive numbers vs. soft early slate and zooming to 5-0 SU mark for new HC Gene Chizik, Auburn tailed off noticeably, dropping 5 of last 7. A steady diet of SEC defenses slowed o.c. Gus Malzahn's spread, and Tigers also fell flat on road, dropping their last 3 away from Jordan-Hare. Although Pat Fitzgerald's well-schooled NU "D" lacks SEC quicks, it has seen the road map to contain Tigers, while Cats' sr. QB Kafka emerged as an uncanny playmaker in NU's late-season uptick. Note that Cats have also covered their last 8 as a dog away from Evanston (including Alamo Bowl LY vs. Mizzou).

10 E. CAROLINA over Arkansas
Late Score Forecast:
EAST CAROLINA 35 - Arkansas 34
Liberty Bowl
at Memphis, Tennessee
(Saturday, January 2, 2010)

C-USA sources report that ECU's battle-tested sr. QB Pinkney (264 ypg, 66%; no ints. L4 games) has fully regained his mojo over the final month of season after uneven play earlier in '09. So, expect well-protected Pinkney & scintillating WR D. Harris (79 catches, 6 TDs) to repeatedly hook up vs. 104th-ranked Arkansas pass defense. The steady, veteran Pirate defense, which has effectively coped with several high-octane C-USA attacks, well-equipped to mitigate impact of Hog QB Mallett. Focused ECU eager to avenge LY's stinging 25-19 loss in the same bowl, when Kentucky beat the Pirates on a 56-yd. fumble return with 3:02 to play. Skip Holtz's squad 22-10 as a dog since '05, and 7-pt. bowl dogs are 66% play since '98. Upset very possible.

10 PHILADELPHIA over *Dallas
Late Score Forecast:
PHILADELPHIA 23 - *Dallas 16
(NFL on Sunday, January 3)

Dallas has struck back at ghosts of Decembers past with back-to-back road victories at New Orleans and Washington. But gaining a 2009 sweep of Philly and this year's NFC East crown figures to be a tougher task. The Eagles are also closing the campaign with a rush (six straight wins), and they possess the type of speed that has given the Dallas defense fits all season. Andy Reid (16-3 SU in Dec. & Jan. regular-season games the last four years) knows how to get his offense in a late groove.

10 SAN FRANCISCO over *St. Louis
Late Score Forecast:
SAN FRANCISCO 27 - *St. Louis 10
(Sunday, January 3)

While St. Louis is limping into the offseason (and why not, with a chance to draft either Ndamukong Suh or a new, young QB), San Francisco (7-8) is fighting hard to avoid a losing season. The Rams are hurting in many areas that the hard-nosed 49ers can exploit—namely, QB, WR, OL & S. And things could get even worse if star RB Steven Jackson is held out again with a herniated disk (why play him?). S.F. is pretty healthy for this time of the season, and the Niners easily won the first meeting TY when RB Frank Gore was sidelined and WR Michael Crabtree was holding out. Mike Singletary is 10-4-1 vs. the spread in his first full season as HC.

11 *TROY over Central Michigan
Late Score Forecast:
***TROY 34 - Central Michigan 26**
GMAC Bowl at Mobile, Alabama
(Wednesday, January 6, 2010)

Eager to take points in contest between two potent spread offenses led by senior QBs. CKO scouts say Trojans pleased as punch to be playing a bowl game in their own state. QB Levi Brown (37 TDP, only 12 ints. the last two years) has lots of elusive smurfs available as targets. And Troy is noted in the Sun Belt for being able to land the defensive speed needed to spring surprises vs. favored opposition. Many Central Michigan veterans were around two years ago when Brian Kelly bolted for Cincinnati, and this season's mentor (Butch Jones) has done the same thing!

TOTALS: OVER (51) in the Connecticut-South Carolina Game (Papajohn's Bowl, Sat., Jan. 2)——Steve Spurrier happy he doesn't have to face another SEC defense; Huskies relentless if behind...UNDER (54½) in the Boise State-TCU Game (Fiesta Bowl, Mon., Jan. 4)——Everybody knows about the rugged Horned Frog defense; but don't underestimate the quick Bronco defenders.

NINE-RATED GAMES: WEST VIRGINIA (-2½) vs. Florida State (Gator Bowl, Fri., Jan. 1)——Last game for Bobby Bowden, but is it not true that the Mountaineers have the better QB, RB, and defense?...OAKLAND (+9½) vs. Baltimore——With a chance to play the rowdy, nothing-to-lose role they like, can the improving Raiders bring their swagger the full 60 minutes?

CONFIDENTIAL TIP-OFF BASKETBALL RELEASES FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 1-7, 2010

Friday, Jan. 1

*ATLANTA over New York (NBA)...Atlanta will remember New York's last visit to Philips Arena. Hawk leader Josh Smith (15 ppg, 8 rpg) was ejected after playing just 13 minutes of a 114-107 Knick upset. New York shot an unlikely 58% in that game, and the Knicks won despite being outrebounded and committing 6 more turnovers than the Hawks. Revenge motive should work. *ATLANTA 110 - New York 91 RATING - 10

Monday, Jan. 4

*GEORGIA STATE over Drexel...CAA sources have an issued an alert to keep a close eye on Rod Barnes' emerging GSU, playing suffocating defense (allow just 38% FGs & 24% on 3s) and controlling the tempo expertly with sr. Gs Dukes & Golston. Meanwhile, Bruiser Flint's Drexel lacking dimensions on attack end with faulty 3-pt. shooting (just 29%) and absence of injured 6-8 sr. PF Spencer.
*GEORGIA ST. 64 - Drexel 51 RATING - 10

OKLAHOMA CITY over *Chicago (NBA)...Oklahoma City has had good results visiting Chicago the last few years, winning and covering 9 of last 11 trips to the United Center. The Bulls have covered just 2 of 10 chances as a home favorite and are just 4-5 SU last 9 at home prior to facing Indiana Dec. 29. F Kevin Durant and Nick Collison combined for 45 ppg and 20 rpg in last year's games against the Bulls, and Thunder PG Russell Westbrook is much improved. OKLAHOMA CITY 100 - *Chicago 90 RATING - 10

Wed., Jan. 6

*ST. BONAVENTURE over George Washington...Ascending St. Bonny revved-up for this rematch after enduring season-worst 90-62 blowout at GW last season. And with Bonnies' 6-9 soph F Nicholson (15 ppg, 7 rpg) suffering no 2nd-year jinx after being voted LY's A-10 Newcomer of Year, and 6-3 jr. PG Eleby (7 ppg, 5 apg) running attack with greater precision, youthful Colonials (especially in backcourt) get their comeuppance. St. Bonny 14-3 vs. spread last 17 reg.-season contests (thru Dec. 29). *ST. BONAVENTURE 82 - George Washington 68 RATING - 10

Thurs., Jan. 7

*SOUTH ALABAMA over Western Kentucky...USA has rapidly reloaded under sharp 10th-year HC Ronnie Arrow, evidenced by impressive preseason upsets at both Arkansas and Florida! Jags' 6-4 juco A-A T. Williams (14 ppg, 8 rpg, 2.2 apg) is a legit triple threat, while poised 6-5 frosh swingman Brock (11 ppg, 6 rpg) takes advantage of WKU squad missing "glue guy" 6-5 wing Kerusch (2nd leading scorer & rebounder), out with broken foot. Triple-revenge-minded USA jazzed-up right from opening tap after falling behind 11-0 in LY's 8-pt. series loss in Sun Belt title game.
*SOUTH ALABAMA 81 - Western Kentucky 71 RATING - 11

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2009 CKO BOWL STAT SERVICE

KEY: Statistics include all 2009 games played vs. CKO Stat Teams. GP-Number of games played. SUR-Straight-up Wins and Losses. PSR-Pointspread Wins and Losses. Ties are not listed in SUR and PSR records. PF & PA-Average points for & against. YR-Average yards rushing. YP-Average yards passing. T-R-P-Total TDs (including TDs via kick returns, fumble recoveries, possession through turnovers), Rushing TDs and Passing TDs. YPT DIFF-Yards Per Point Differential. (difference between offensive yards per point scored and defensive yards per point allowed). OPR-Average Gold Sheet Power Rating (at the time they met) of all Stat Service teams played. The latest Las Vegas Line is listed for each matchup. NFL lines include a total points number for over-under players. P-Pick Game. Home team in CAPS. Offensive averages listed first.

						OFFENSE			DEFENSE				YPT	
TEAM	GP	SUR	PSR	PF	PA	YR	YP	T-R-P	YR	YP	T-R-P	TO	DIFF	OPR
Texas A&M	12	6-6	6-5	34	33	190	275	53-24-28	169	263	50-26-20	0	-.5	10.6
Georgia -6.5	11	6-5	4-7	27	29	144	208	34-11-20	140	213	38-11-23	-16	-.9	4.3
Ucla -4	12	6-6	5-6	21	21	116	223	25-12-8	144	194	31-12-15	5	.0	10.7
Temple	11	9-2	8-3	31	21	197	130	42-26-10	113	221	28-9-15	9	5.1	18.5
Wisconsin	11	8-3	5-6	32	23	202	213	44-27-14	79	236	30-5-20	4	.5	11.4
MIAMI-FLORIDA -3.5	11	8-3	6-5	30	23	138	269	42-17-22	118	208	28-7-14	-1	.8	6.4
Bowling Green -1	12	7-5	7-5	27	26	81	310	42-17-23	193	201	41-25-14	5	.7	16.8
Idaho	12	7-5	7-5	32	36	160	291	49-23-24	156	269	57-25-30	-9	-2.2	16.1
Navy	12	8-4	6-6	27	20	275	71	41-35-5	122	208	29-11-14	8	3.6	15.5
Missouri -6.5	11	7-4	4-7	28	26	126	281	34-13-21	97	258	33-12-18	3	-.6	9.7
Nebraska -1	13	9-4	8-5	25	11	141	176	37-16-15	95	189	16-7-7	4	12.3	9.0
Arizona	11	7-4	6-4	29	24	150	244	39-16-18	116	208	32-14-16	0	.2	9.2
Air Force	11	6-5	6-5	24	17	255	81	30-18-7	140	157	22-12-9	13	3.9	15.7
Houston -4.5	12	9-3	8-4	43	31	138	447	67-20-41	218	240	49-32-14	7	1.4	14.4
Stanford	12	8-4	7-5	36	26	224	217	56-36-14	145	252	40-18-20	0	2.9	9.3
Oklahoma -10	11	6-5	4-6	28	15	128	278	37-12-22	99	196	19-7-11	4	5.5	5.5
Iowa St.	11	5-6	7-4	20	23	175	177	27-13-14	166	251	33-12-21	6	.4	11.4
Minnesota -2.5	11	5-6	4-7	22	26	94	208	31-13-14	156	221	34-18-14	-5	1.0	8.4
Tennessee	12	7-5	7-5	31	21	170	226	47-18-27	143	166	25-16-5	3	1.8	8.2
Virginia Tech -6	12	9-3	7-5	31	16	206	182	47-28-14	139	161	18-9-8	8	6.7	10.9
Northwestern	11	7-4	5-6	23	24	111	266	29-12-15	129	228	34-16-16	4	-1.5	12.8
Auburn -7	11	6-5	6-5	30	27	208	204	41-16-20	168	193	37-21-14	1	-.0	8.1
West Virginia -2.5	11	8-3	5-6	26	21	182	194	37-23-12	121	212	25-5-18	-2	1.5	9.8
FLORIDA ST.	11	5-6	3-8	31	33	149	274	42-22-16	214	242	49-24-25	2	.2	6.7
Lsu	12	9-3	5-7	26	16	130	180	37-14-18	134	192	18-6-12	7	8.3	8.4
Penn State -2	11	9-2	5-6	28	13	163	236	39-17-21	97	186	15-5-9	2	8.0	11.8
Ohio State	12	10-2	8-4	29	12	200	165	42-20-17	83	179	17-6-10	16	9.1	10.9
Oregon -4	12	10-2	7-5	38	24	236	189	58-36-16	127	203	33-15-16	3	2.7	6.0
Cincinnati	11	11-0	5-6	37	22	136	318	53-20-31	149	217	30-16-13	5	4.1	11.8
Florida -12.5	12	11-1	6-6	32	12	213	214	47-21-22	103	144	15-6-7	6	7.0	8.9
Northern Ill.	11	6-5	5-6	30	22	200	152	40-24-12	126	210	31-11-16	7	3.2	20.0
So. Florida -7	10	5-5	4-5	22	25	161	183	28-14-13	142	212	29-14-14	-3	-1.4	8.9
Connecticut	11	6-5	9-2	30	26	170	220	43-24-13	147	256	36-18-16	2	2.4	8.8
So. Carolina -4.5	11	6-5	7-4	20	21	117	241	25-9-15	134	169	27-13-10	-3	-3.2	4.7
Mississippi -3	10	6-4	5-5	27	20	179	217	33-14-16	149	170	22-8-11	-12	1.2	6.9
Oklahoma St.	11	8-3	5-5	28	23	180	177	38-17-16	81	255	32-11-16	4	1.7	7.8
East Carolina	12	8-4	6-6	28	22	146	225	40-21-13	125	272	33-8-23	14	4.7	13.3
ARKANSAS -7.5	11	6-5	7-4	36	27	135	290	52-21-28	156	263	35-13-21	12	3.7	5.0
Michigan St.	11	5-6	5-6	28	27	132	267	38-14-21	117	266	37-8-29	-6	.0	9.6
TEXAS TECH -8	11	7-4	6-5	37	23	85	378	54-19-33	130	232	30-16-9	-4	3.3	9.1
Boise St.	12	12-0	8-4	45	18	202	264	70-27-37	135	170	28-15-12	20	6.7	16.9
Tcu -7	11	11-0	8-3	39	12	252	212	56-28-22	85	147	15-6-8	4	8.1	14.9
Iowa	11	9-2	8-3	24	15	111	219	30-11-16	125	155	20-8-8	4	4.2	9.0
Georgia Tech -3.5	12	10-2	8-4	35	26	305	133	55-43-10	154	208	37-16-19	8	1.8	6.8
Cent. Michigan -3.5	12	10-2	9-3	32	19	173	253	51-22-27	126	216	25-12-11	4	5.0	16.8
TROY	12	9-3	7-4	33	29	148	331	50-25-23	140	278	46-17-28	-6	.2	18.3
Texas	13	13-0	5-7	41	15	153	280	66-28-27	62	189	22-5-14	12	5.9	10.8
Alabama -4	12	12-0	8-4	31	12	208	205	41-23-16	82	174	16-5-9	13	8.0	7.3

NFL

NFL TEAM	SUR	PSR	PF	PA	YR	YP	OFFENSE T-R-P	YR	YP	DEFENSE T-R-P	TO	YPT DIFF	OPR
Indianapolis	14-1	10-5	27	18	85	292	52-15-34	118	217	28-10-16	4	4.3	4.3
Buffalo NL	5-10	7-7	15	21	108	157	22-6-15	166	187	36-18-14	0	-.9	5.5
New Orleans	13-2	8-7	33	21	134	283	63-20-34	119	241	35-18-14	14	4.5	5.9
Carolina NL	7-8	8-7	19	20	155	176	33-17-15	126	197	35-14-14	3	-.8	3.1
Jacksonville 38.5	7-8	5-10	18	24	126	211	32-19-13	110	246	42-10-28	1	-3.6	5.6
Cleveland -2.5	4-11	9-6	15	24	125	133	23-8-11	146	247	39-15-20	-12	-.9	5.1
Philadelphia 47.5	11-4	9-6	29	21	107	259	47-14-27	100	211	36-10-25	15	2.1	5.9
Dallas -3	10-5	8-7	22	17	130	265	38-12-23	98	232	28-7-19	2	2.2	4.7
Chicago	5-9	4-10	18	23	88	211	28-6-19	128	203	37-12-25	-9	-2.1	4.5
Detroit NL	2-13	4-10	16	30	101	195	26-9-14	125	266	53-17-32	-16	-5.7	4.7
New England 46	10-5	7-7	27	17	123	280	47-17-28	108	204	30-4-23	7	3.6	4.3
Houston -7.5	8-7	7-7	24	20	89	290	41-11-27	109	216	36-15-19	-2	-.1	5.1
Pittsburgh	8-7	5-10	23	20	106	263	38-10-25	89	216	34-6-20	-5	-1.1	5.6
Miami NL	7-8	8-7	22	24	142	198	38-21-13	109	237	39-16-20	-7	-.8	3.1
NY Giants	8-7	6-9	26	26	120	258	45-13-28	109	204	49-20-27	-5	-2.1	5.1
Minnesota NL	11-3	8-5	28	19	119	250	47-16-28	90	221	31-4-22	5	3.1	6.6
Cincinnati 36.5	10-5	7-8	20	17	132	193	34-9-21	88	212	28-8-18	3	1.7	6.1
NY Jets -10	8-7	8-7	21	16	167	154	33-17-12	100	163	26-11-8	-2	1.3	5.1
San Francisco -7	7-8	10-4	20	18	98	190	35-9-22	98	243	28-12-14	9	4.3	4.9
St. Louis 40.5	1-14	7-8	11	27	114	177	17-4-12	138	237	50-21-21	-13	-12.0	4.4
Atlanta -1	8-7	10-5	23	21	113	224	42-15-24	111	247	37-10-24	4	2.3	3.8
Tampa Bay 41.5	3-12	6-9	16	25	106	187	27-5-17	157	207	44-16-27	-6	-4.4	3.6
Green Bay 43.5	10-5	10-5	29	19	118	264	50-18-29	86	205	35-5-28	22	1.7	8.1
Arizona -3	10-5	8-7	25	19	96	259	45-15-27	113	234	34-11-21	-5	3.4	5.5
Kansas City 38	3-12	6-9	17	27	106	181	26-5-18	161	219	45-16-24	1	-3.0	5.7
Denver -13	8-7	9-6	20	19	117	213	31-7-20	116	185	29-8-18	8	-.3	4.5
Baltimore -10	8-7	8-7	25	17	131	222	44-19-21	96	203	26-8-16	8	3.8	5.1
Oakland 38	5-10	7-8	12	24	110	152	16-7-9	150	214	38-21-16	-11	-6.1	4.7
Washington 39.5	4-11	7-8	16	21	100	218	27-8-19	117	194	30-9-16	-12	-4.5	5.5
San Diego -4	12-3	8-7	29	20	92	268	49-17-27	121	205	33-10-21	10	3.8	5.7
Tennessee -5	7-8	7-8	22	26	164	191	37-17-16	105	264	47-16-30	-2	-1.5	3.2
Seattle 43.5	5-10	5-10	18	25	95	222	29-7-19	110	250	44-15-27	-9	-3.4	5.4