

## Winning BCS will be difficult for USC Trojans

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The University of Southern California Trojans football team is installed as 7-2 odds favorites to win the 2008 BCS National Championship according to oddsmakers at online sports wagering giant Sportsbook.com. However, before USC can carry off the Sears BCS Trophy they have some reloading to do and hope it's effective after losing 10 players to the NFL Draft including quarterback John David Booty.

"I think it will be difficult for USC to win it [BCS Championship] this coming year," said Point-Spreads.com College Football Annalist and Handicapper Reno Gold. "Oddsmakers are always going to rate the Trojans a little higher than they should based on past results and for good reason; however, this team has too many question marks coming into the season to expect a championship. From looking at their attrition, they will be lucky to win their league."

The Trojans will have a new quarterback and a new offensive line to deal with in 2008. With the quarterback position in transition, the competition was hot and heavy during Spring drills between junior Mark Sanchez and Arkansas transfer, sophomore Mitch Mustain. While competition will continue once August drills start, it was Sanchez who emerged on top of the depth chart as the No. 1 signal caller.

"He's [Sanchez] a little more resourceful of an athlete than John David Booty was," said USC head football coach Pete Carroll during spring drills. "Mark is quicker to take off and move. His subtle movements are more quicker to slide and bob and weave in the pocket. He's also quicker to take off and run. John was going to beat you throwing the ball. Mark will take off and make some yards with his legs which is a nice attribute to have."

Offensively the biggest challenge will be replacing at least half of the offensive line. Gone is All-American offensive tackle Sam Baker and All Pac-10 guard Chilo Rachel and All-American tight end Fred Davis.

"On the offensive line, we've had a lot of adjustments, a lot of guys moving in and out of spots," Carroll said. "We continue to do that and will continue to do that into the fall when we have the new offensive linemen come in to make sure we are doing the right thing."

Carroll was impressed with left tackle Charles Brown in the spring and said he is capable of being a "big time" tackle. Butch Lewis, who battled injury most of the spring is expected to start if healthy. Carroll expects Jeff Byers to step in and be effective after an excellent spring. Alex Parsons came out of the spring as the starting center.

Anthony McCoy and Rhett Ellison are running one and two on the tight end depth chart.

Defensively, the strong area appears to be at linebacker with the return of Ray Mauluga and Brian Cushing and the secondary could be the best in the Pete Carroll era.

"The defensive can be very solid for us," said Carroll at the end of Spring drills. "We expect them to play fast and aggressive. We'll feature the play of our linebackers and safeties and we should have effective run play and the ability to pressure the passer with those guys. How good I don't know. But I'm really exciting about the group coming back. They play with a lot of energy and are a very physical group. We feel they are experienced. Other than the nose tackle spot, I feel we are coming into the season with a good savvy group that knows what we are doing and gives us some flexibility.

The Trojans will be a very good football team and tested early as the schedule makers have them traveling to Charlottesville, Virg., for a date with the Cavaliers followed by a home game with Ohio State. If the Trojans can win those two early games they will go into the Pac-10 season with some momentum and who knows what will happen.