Texas Tech Red Raiders 2008 College Football Betting Preview

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Tuesday, 29 July 2008
Last Updated Friday, 01 August 2008

Coach Mike Leach and his Texas Tech Red Raiders football team seem to be flying just below the radar in terms of pre-season expectations. While getting some respect, you seldom hear them discussed around the office water cooler; unless it’s in Lubbock. However, in the recent media poll at the BIG XII media days held in Kansas City last week, the Red Raiders came in third narrowly getting nipped in votes by Texas for second. Oklahoma is the favorite to win the leagues south division. Oddsmakers at online sportsbook BetUS.com also see the Red Raiders as third best in the BIG XII South listing the team at +400 money line odds to win the division. The Oklahoma Sooners were installed at EVEN odds while the Texas Longhorns are listed at +150. Currently the Red Raiders are listed at +800 money line odds to win the BIG XII outright and at +1200 to win the BCS National Championship. For those who like to guess the number of games Tech will win or lose, BetUS.com has issued betting odds on the OVER/UNDER (9). The price of an OVER bet is -115 while UNDER is -125. Returning at quarterback for the Red Raiders is Graham Harrell. The senior gunslinger completed 71.8% of his passes during his junior campaign, throwing for a career-best 48 touchdowns and becoming just the sixth player in NCAA history to pass for more than 5,000 yards in a season (5,705). At his disposal this spring will be three of the team’s four returning starters at wide receiver, a backfield stocked with versatile ball carriers, and an experienced offensive line that allowed him to be sacked just once every 39.6 pass attempts last season.

Harrell’s top offensive weapon returns in sophomore wide-receiver Michael Crabtree. He smashed school, conference and national records for receiving by a freshman, totaling 134 catches for 1,962 yards and 22 touchdowns, and becoming the first freshman to ever win the prestigious Biletnikoff Award, given annually to the nation’s top receiver. Crabtree headlines a group of returning players that accounted for 65 percent of the catches made by wide receivers in the Tech offense last season.

The rap on Mike Leach’s program has been the teams offense is its best defense. In other words; nobody talks about shutting another team’s offense down only outscoring it. While it might seem that way at times, it is mostly myth. After interim Defensive Coordinator Ruffin McNeil took the reins in September of 2007, the Red Raider’s defense arose to finish third in the league in total defense. Following the 2007 campaign, the interim tag was removed and Ruffin became Defensive Coordinator.

Ruffin returns the nucleus of his 2007 defense that had become very stingy at the end of the campaign. Returning are leading sack man, junior Brandon Williams, who led the team in both sacks (6) and tackles for loss (12) during his sophomore campaign, emerging as the team’s top pass rusher early on. On the other side, rising senior Jake Ratliff started 12 of the 13 games at left end.

Junior Rajon Henley lived up to his billing as an all-conference caliber player, finishing 2007 with 52 total tackles (31 solo, 7.5 TFL) from his defensive tackle post. Opposite Henley was the player who may have individually symbolized the defensive line’s progression during the season, true freshman Colby Whitlock, who started the final 10 games at the nose guard spot. Whitlock garnered multiple freshman All-American honors following a rookie season that saw him rack up 47 tackles.

If Texas Tech is going to inflict any damage on BIG XII competition, it will have to come on the road. The team travels to Kansas State (Manhattan, Kan.), Texas A&M (College Station, Texas), Kansas (Lawrence, Kan.), and Oklahoma (Norman, Okla.) over a six week period. The home schedule is rather lame with only Texas drawing much excitement.

Texas Tech Red Raiders 2008 Football Schedule

Aug 30 Eastern Washington Sep 06 @Nevada (Reno) Sep 13 SMU Sep 20 UMass Oct 04 @Kansas State Oct 11 Nebraska Oct 18 @Texas A&M Oct 25 @Kansas Nov 01 Texas Nov 08 Oklahoma State Nov 22 @Oklahoma

Nov 29 Baylor