Ah, bowl preseason. That time when amateur bettors blow their college football winnings on college hoops while waiting for the bowl games. Discipline is so critical during the months where both football leagues and both basketball leagues are playing. At this stage of the game, the best thing to do is cut down on the amount of games you play, but increase the amount of money you bet per game.

The reason is quite simple. By now, with the NFL, college football, and the NBA, you should know about every team. The oddsmakers certainly do, and, as crazy as it sounds, that may be an advantage for you. If a line looks low, it is for a reason. If a line looks high, it is for a reason. There's a terrific example of that in college football on Saturday. Tulsa is just a two-point favorite over Central Florida in the Conference USA Championship game. These two teams played back on November 17 and Tulsa won 23-21. That seems like a close game, right? Look deeper. Tulsa outgained UCF by nearly 230 yards. The final score was closer than the yardage disparity because of a defensive touchdown from UCF and a missed field goal from Tulsa.

Why is the line so low when Tulsa very clearly dominated the first game? Tulsa held UCF to 66 yards rushing (UCF averages 182.3 per game). Tulsa's QB, Cody Green, passed for over 250 yards, Trey Watts ran for over 120 yards, and Tulsa was 8-for-17 on third down, while UCF was 4-for-15. And, to top it off, Tulsa is at home! Amateurs will look at this matchup and immediately lay the two points with Tulsa. However, every line tells a story. The question you need to ask yourself is, "What story is this line telling?" To me, the story this line is telling is that the oddsmakers believe that UCF is the better, more talented team and likely have them favored on a neutral field.

Things like that should absolutely be considered in the NFL as well. In some instances, travel or look-ahead/sandwich spots may be dictating a line, but the posted lines are mostly consensus power ratings. Lines that appear to be off should not immediately be bet. They should be examined further. There has to be a reason why a line looks that way. If you can't figure out

why, then you should probably leave that game alone.

The long gap between Saturday and the start of bowl season is the time where bettors tend to get in trouble. Most college basketball teams are six or more games into the season, so bettors think that the teams have everything figured out and what we see is what we'll get the rest of the way. That's not always the case. It's important to understand that a lot of teams may still be looking at underclassmen to see who they can rely on during conference play. Also, transfers, suspended players, and injured players are all starting to get more playing time or return to the lineup.

Bankroll management is critical in basketball. If you spread yourself thin betting a high volume of games, you're likely going to get crushed. But, if you can isolate a game or two per night and possibly bet twice your regular amount, you can show a substantial profit at college basketball. College basketball is the home of bad beats. With a lot of half-point lines and games coming down to free throws, it's important to know your limits and play within them, otherwise you'll start chasing out of frustration.

In all of the sports going on right now, one of the most important elements is coaching. During bowl season especially, but as it pertains to the other sports, the best coaches will get maximum effort out of their players. Think about the NBA – where even scrubs make $5M per season. Great coaches are able to keep their players constantly motivated. Those are the guys you want to back. In college basketball, great coaches constantly recruit the best athletes. If a team is currently struggling, like Michigan State for example, they're a team to watch. Amateurs may fade the Spartans, saying things like "Oh, they're just not very good this year" or "Izzo's magic is wearing off". You can get a line to move in your favor on Michigan State, simply by playing off their public perception. If you follow college basketball, you know Tom Izzo will fix what's wrong and the athletes he has recruited will begin playing up to their potential.

In the NFL, it continues to be a grind. Some teams already know that the playoffs are well out of reach and that the coach may be a lame duck. Other teams are in the thick of the hunt and are feverishly trying to win games. The goal should be to isolate coaches who are good motivators and coaches who have been through the difficult times. Take a look at the Eagles, for example. Andy Reid is really suffering in Philadelphia and is readying his resume for a new job next season. He, and that team, is halfway out the door. A maximum effort from them seems like a stretch. If you don't want to lay the full spread, look at a teaser to get their opponent at a better number. Not only do unmotivated teams struggle to win, they have a very hard time blowing teams out.

I'll cover a lot more with bowl season and coaches in the coming weeks. For now, keep bankroll management and discipline in the front of your mind. If you've been successful to this point, keep those profits. If you haven't been successful, it's hard to imagine that you can bet your way out of it with volume on basketball or late season NFL.

Good luck and pick winners.