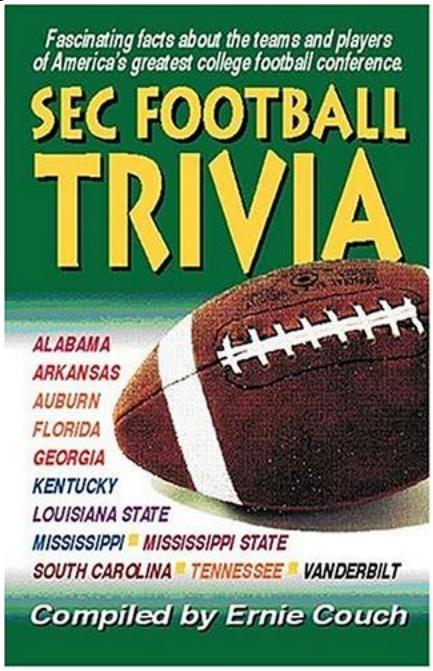
Fresh off debunking the myth of "SEC Speed" in his previous column, Furls now takes aim at the SEC, which has been hailed all season by the national media as the top conference in America. Yet tonight, the Buckeyes have a chance to make the Big Ten 3-0 in bowls against the big, bad SEC. Furls breaks down the Big Ten and the SEC in his latest, looking for the truth.




In a sense, the relative strength of a conference and the polls that support each conference's claims are a house of cards built on expectations and the legacies of programs. In today's college football world teams cannot afford to lose, so they insulate themselves with garbage non-conference games, making it impossible to really measure these teams against those expectations because there is no real meaningful intersection between the conferences. The SEC in particular gets a pass on its non-conference games because people think that the SEC conference schedule is so difficult that they deserve the break.

Basically what I did was I ranked the SEC and Big Ten teams in order and then put them against each other to see if their was a decisive advantage for one team or another. The results were a bit surprising. There are twelve teams in the SEC and eleven in the Big Ten. In order to compensate for this I dropped the middle.

I compared the top five teams and the bottom five teams, and omitted the middle matchup. The SEC fan will say that this is unfair because the depth is what makes the SEC tough. I would counter that argument by saying that only the top five teams in the SEC finished with records over .500 implying that the middle of the road in SEC gets there by beating the bottom feeders - which is largely true. Neither of the two SEC teams that I dropped (South Carolina and Georgia) beat even one of the top tiered SEC teams.

**Top 5:**

**1 vs 1. Ohio State vs. Florida:** We will actually get to see this game played out. I personally think the Buckeyes will win in a walk, but there are going to be differing opinions. I think that at worst we can call this a wash, but their clearly is no decisive SEC advantage here.

**2 vs. 2. Michigan vs. LSU:** It is tough to say who would win this game, but regardless of who you would actually pick to win, I don't think you could say that it is an SEC landslide.

**3 vs. 3. Wisconsin vs. Arkansas:** Didn't we see this game?

**4 vs. 4: Penn State vs. Auburn:** We saw Penn State beat Tennessee, but Tennessee did not play Auburn this year. I refuse to try to extrapolate a result from common opponents results and so on, but I think that Penn State did demonstrate that they were in fact able to play with the SEC, so much so that I do not think that you cannot award the SEC some type of significant advantage.

**5 vs 5. Iowa vs. Tennessee:** Tennessee was soundly defeated by Penn State, but unfortunately Iowa did not play Penn State. Iowa has looked spotty this season, on and off, playing Texas to the wire and losing to Minnesota and Northwestern in the same game.

**Bottom 5:**

**1 vs. 1 Mississippi State vs. Illinois:** Don't ever tell me that there is no such thing as a week off in the SEC. Mississippi State is horrible, so are the Fighting Illini. Again, there is nothing significant between these two bottom feeders.

**2 vs. 2 Ole Miss vs. Michigan State:** I personally would give the Big Ten the advantage in this game. Drew Stanton and the Spartans are decent, better than their record would lead you to believe and Ole Miss is just not good.

**3 vs. 3: Vanderbilt vs. Northwestern:** I would be more interested in seeing an academic decathlon between the two schools than a football game. Vandy did beat Georgia and Northwestern did get the best of Iowa. If those games were replayed I think they would both lose. This game is a wash.

**4. vs. 4. Indiana vs. Kentucky:** Neither of these teams beat anyone that was particularly impressive, but Kentucky did win its bowl game and Indiana failed to get one. Kentucky knocked off Georgia (who was clearly suspect at times), so I will give them the edge, but I do not think that you can claim this is a "runaway." We are really trying to find the least stinky of two turds here.

**5 vs 5. Minnesota vs. Alabama:** I know Kentucky has a better record than 'Bama, but I think 'Bama was a better team. Their only quality win was against Hawaii early in the season. That win seems more significant now, give Hawaii's late season success, but we need to cut the Bows a break. The came from halfway around the world; talk about a road game. Minnesota blew its bowl game, but they were up by 31 in the third quarter. They are clearly not as bad of a team as they looked at times this year. Personally, I like 'Bama in this game, but it is a wash.

So in the end you see that both conferences have their shining stars and their turds but across the board they are fairly even. There is not this disparity the size of the Grand Canyon that the national media would have you believe. The Big Ten just don't have the sexy names and legacies like Tennessee, Arkansas, and Florida; teams they will have beaten by the end of the bowl season.