

GoDaddy Bowl- Sunday, January 5, 2014

Ladd Peebles Stadium- Mobile, AL

(STRAIGHT UP) (AGAINST-THE-SPREAD)	(SU 7-5) ARKANSAS STATE (ATS 6-6)	(SU 10-2) BALL STATE (ATS 8-4)		
THIS YEAR AWAY	Away: ATS 3-3	Away: ATS 4-2		
2003-2012 ATS BOWL RECORD	2-1	0-3		
2003-2013 ATS WIN % (NON-BOWL) AWAY	Away: 46.48%	Away: 65.22%		
HEAD COACH AT THIS SCHOOL	Interim, Defensive Coordinator, and Linebackers Coach John Thompson will be coaching in his 2 nd game as HC at ASU. (He was the interim HC for ASU at this same game last year.) He is 1-0 ATS here. (He was 10-13 ATS as head coach at East Carolina from 2003-2004.)	HC Pete Lembo is concluding his 3 rd year at BSU: 64.86% ATS.		
OPENING LINE		Ball State -8		
CURRENT LINE		Ball State -7		
PUBLIC BETTING	30%	70%		
CURRENT SEASON DATA	FBS Ranking for Rushing Offense:	49	FBS Ranking for Rushing Defense:	97
	FBS Ranking for Passing Offense:	83	FBS Ranking for Passing Defense:	42
	FBS Ranking for Total Offense:	76	FBS Ranking for Total Defense:	81
	FBS Ranking for Rushing Defense:	91	FBS Ranking for Rushing Offense:	72
	FBS Ranking for Passing Defense:	74	FBS Ranking for Passing Offense:	9
	FBS Ranking for Total Defense:	96	FBS Ranking for Total Offense:	12
MOTIVATION: We consider many factors when analyzing motivation for Bowl games. Some of the important factors are assessing: whether or not the players want to be there, team and public expectations for the team on the season, the number of players (seniors) playing in their last college football game, time, location, and fan support.				
This is Arkansas State's third consecutive trip to the GoDaddy Bowl. They played MAC teams each time. Two years ago, they lost (both SU and ATS) to Northern Illinois, and last year they beat Kent State (both SU and ATS). For Ball State, this is their second Bowl game under HC Lembo. They lost by 3 TD'S SU and 2 TD'S ATS to UCF in the Beef 'O' Brady's Bowl last year. This will be Ball State's 9 th Bowl game in program history. They have never won one.				

Even though they have gotten a new head coach for each of the (now going on) four years, Arkansas State had high expectations coming into this year. They were 2-time defending Sun Belt Champions, and they were expected to win a third title. (Technically, they did. They were co-champions this season, even though they lost to the co-champs, Louisiana-Lafayette.) Those high expectations, and Arkansas State's failure to meet them in the first half of the season, were manifested by four SU and ATS losses in their first seven games. Since that time, however, they were 4-1 both SU and ATS in their last five games.

Each school projects 11 senior starters for this game.

Given that Arkansas State entered into this year after back-to-back 10-win seasons, this year could have been a bit of a disappointment for the team and their fans. The coaching carousel that has gone through A-State has been extreme, so there has to be some level of fan forgiveness, but even so, this game might not draw the same A-State crowd as the GoDaddy Bowls of the past two years (after those 10-win seasons). For their part, having a real shot at winning their first-ever Bowl game has to be real incentive for the Ball State players to show up. The fans, on the other hand, are unlikely to make the 800-mile trek to see a game in Mobile, AL, played late at night the day before most folks have to head back to work after the holiday break. Since A-State is around a 7-hour drive, and these fans know exactly how to manage the game travel (having done this same Bowl game for three consecutive years), we expect a sparse crowd, but one that favors A-State.

All told, since both teams will play in front of a small gathering, they have the same number of senior starters, and they both should be motivated to win the game, we believe **neither team has a significant motivational edge.**

ABOUT THE FOOTBALL: When held to 150 rushing yards (or fewer), A-State was 1-4 both SU and ATS. Ball State held just 3 FBS teams under 150 yards, and two of those three teams were among the nation's worst in rushing offense, and all three of those teams played Ball State at Ball State. As bad as Ball State's rushing defense has been (ranked 97th versus the FBS), they are even worse in Away games. In all FBS games, their defense allowed an average of 4.95 rushing yards per carry. In games played away from home, Ball State's defense gave up an average of 5.35 yards per carry (which ranks 101st in the FBS). This season, when Arkansas State rushed for at least 4.5 yards per carry (beneath Ball State's rushing defense average, both overall and Away), they were 4-0 both SU and ATS.

No one believes that Ball State got to 10 wins this season because of their defense. The Cardinals are a top-10 passing team. They passed for over 300 yards in all but two games this year. The closest opponent profile to Ball State that A-State faced this year was Troy's. Troy's passing offense ranks 12th in the FBS. Their rushing offense ranks 98th, admittedly worse than

Ball State's 72nd-ranked rushing offense. Even though Troy's offense put up 504! passing yards against A-State's defense, A-State still won (both SU and ATS), primarily because Troy could not stop A-State's run (and four additional turnovers). Troy ranks 82nd in stopping the run. Again, Ball State ranks 97th in that same category.

Ball State struggles with running QB's. In their two SU losses, they allowed Northern Illinois' Jordan Lynch to run for over 100 yards at over 6 yards per carry (both typical figures for Lynch). North Texas and Kent State, both ATS losses for Ball State, saw their QB's each rush for their season high. What is more, it was not just the QB's total rushing yards that were the difference. It was also the QB's mobility that allowed them to make passing plays. That looks to be trouble for Ball State facing a mobile QB in A-State's Adam Kennedy who rushed for over 500 yards this season (better than both QB's from North Texas and Kent State, combined.) The concern here is Kennedy's health. He injured his knee at the end of November against Western Kentucky (their last opponent), and until this week, he was listed as questionable for this game. He is now cleared to play, but that critical mobility is still left in question.

When it comes to strength of schedule (SOS), both teams rank poorly. Arkansas State played the 125th toughest schedule in the country, while Ball State's SOS ranks around 141st. With just 125 full-fledged FBS teams, Ball State's schedule indicates that there were FCS schools that played tougher schedules than Ball State. In fact, Ball State's schedule was so bad that they only played 3 teams that finished the season with winning records: North Texas, Toledo, and Northern Illinois. Ball State's record in those games was 1-2 both SU and ATS (and they were favorites in two of them). In those games, Ball State was out-scored 106-85. At least Arkansas State played two top-10 teams in Auburn and Missouri.

TURNOVERS: Turnovers, potentially, are game and wager-changing. Both teams have a positive turnover margin (TM). For A-State, TM has played a role in their wins (more than their losses). This season, in games when A-State won by a TD or less (i.e. close victories), they were +6 in TM. For Ball State this season, they were -4 in TM in their two SU losses, and -5 in TM versus teams (who finished the season) with winning records. Predictably, the more a team has to pass against A-State, the more likely they are to throw an interception. Only two teams threw more than 37 passes against A-State. Those teams threw four TD passes and four INT's. Ball State threw the ball more than 37 times against six FBS opponents this season. In those games, Ball State threw 12 TD's and 7 INT's.

SPECIAL TEAMS- In a close contest, special teams can decide the outcome. Senior A-State kicker Brian Davis was a Lou Groza Award semi-finalist. He made 12 of 14 FG's this season, including a 50-yarder. Junior Ball State kicker Scott Secor made 17 of 21 FG's this year. He was 3 of 6 from 40 yards or more. Neither team has allowed a kickoff/punt to be returned for a TD, but A-State has returned one of each for a TD this year. (One of those was the deciding score in a close game.)

Therefore, the special teams advantage goes to A-State.

WEATHER: There is a 50-60% chance of rain during the game and, notably, the wind is supposed to be significant and increase as the game progresses. Windy conditions (detrimentally) affect the passing game more than any other weather condition. Therefore, Ball State stands to be affected more by the weather in Mobile during this game since they throw the ball 36.62% more than Arkansas State does (on average).

ABOUT THE BETTING LINE:

As this is being written, Ball State is getting around 70% of the public betting, and that is a bad sign for their side. Over the past 11 Bowl seasons, teams getting at least 70% of the betting action have beaten the spread just 40.68% of the time. What is more, since this line opened at Ball State -8 and is now down to Ball State -7 AND the Ball State side has received the clear majority of the betting action, this betting line has experienced reverse line movement (RLM). Over the past 11 Bowl seasons, the side benefitting from that RLM (in this case, Arkansas State) has beaten the spread at a rate of 58.67%.

This season, Ball State was 7-3 ATS when favorites, while ASU was 4-1 ATS as underdogs. In games where the spread was less than 10 points (in any direction, i.e. the supposedly competitive games), Ball State was 3-2 ATS while ASU was 5-2 ATS.

While this is definitely NOT a Formula Pick, at CollegeFootballWinning.com, we have our own unique sets of power ratings and algorithms. One of our metrics that detects lines that are likely to be “traps” has indicated that the Ball State side could be a trap. Our “trap detector” has been correct 56.52% of the time for this season, including being correct in two out of three Bowl games (so far) this Bowl Season. (And it will be even more accurate next year, since we will be adding another “filter” this off-season.)

BETTING CONCLUSION:

If Ball State gets their passing game going early (before the wind really whips up), A-State, as a running team, could struggle to climb back. However, if Ball State has to pass more and more to catch an A-State lead, that could be trouble for Ball State for both interception and weather-related reasons. A-State’s mobility at QB is still a bit of a question mark, but the betting data really favors Arkansas State in this one.

Consequently: **1) TAKE ARKANSAS STATE +7 (OR BETTER) FOR 1 UNIT, AND 2) TAKE ARKANSAS STATE ON THE MONEY LINE (+220) FOR THE EQUIVALENT OF WINNING 1 UNIT (at +220, a \$45 bet would win \$99).**

Making those two bets means that (as an example) wagering \$110 on the spread (+7) and \$45 on the money line (+220) would win \$199 (+2 units), while risking just \$155. If we beat the spread (+\$100) but lose the money line wager (-\$45), we still profit \$45 (essentially half a unit). If we lose them both, essentially, we would lose 1.5 units.