

## The 2012 Tigers don't look like one of the great LSU football teams

Written by Jerry Byrd

Friday, 30 November 2012 09:08 -

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The LSU Tigers, No. 7 in BCS standings, are one of six Southeastern Conference football teams in the national Top Ten. That's why most people consider the SEC the toughest conference in the country.

The top two SEC teams, No. 2 Alabama and No. 3 Georgia, go head-to-head at Atlanta, Ga., Saturday. The winner will play No. 1 Notre Dame in the BCS championship game.

Las Vegas oddsmakers favor Alabama over Georgia by 7-1/2 points. That sounds about right to me.

But Georgia coach Mark Richt doesn't want his Bulldogs to be thinking about the importance of Saturday's game.

"If you think about what the game means, this, that and the other, it doesn't really help you win the game," Richt told the Bulldogs. "The only thing that helps you win the game is preparation, and getting your mind ready to go to battle. That's what you've got to do."

Last week, LSU was barely good enough to beat Arkansas, which is not one of the six SEC teams in the BCS Top Ten. Based on that performance, I wouldn't give the Tigers much of a shot against any of the top contenders, although they have managed to beat Texas A&M 24-19 and South Carolina 23-21.

I've covered some great LSU football teams, starting with the 1958 national champions. Based on what I've seen of the 2012 Tigers on television screens, this team isn't a member of that group.

The latest news from LSU is a story in which Les Miles apologizes for using the F-word when he spoke to the media after a wild win over Ole Miss.

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To say the least, it was a stupid thing to do. "Bear" Bryant and Charlie McClendon were country boys from Southern Arkansas who might throw in a "hell" or "damn" once in a while, but I've never heard any other football coach at any level (high school, college or pro) use that word in a press conference. And if he uses it talking to a bunch of sports writers and other media types, there isn't much doubt that he uses it talking to his players.

Major-college football coaches aren't fired for using filthy language. They are fired because their teams lose too many games. That number varies at different schools, but Miles may have reached his limit for this season. It would be a super season at many places, but expectations are a bit higher in Baton Rouge.

After a recent lack-luster performance by the Tigers, I considered borrowing the old Grantland Rice lead paragraph about the Four Horsemen. You know them — Famine, Pestilence, Death and Mettenberger.

But quarterback Zach Mettenberger isn't one of the Tigers' major problems. He's probably the best quarterback they've had in a long time. But that isn't saying a lot, because I would have a hard time selecting No. 2 on that list. The Tigers' success hasn't been due to the play of their quarterbacks.

Quarterback Warren Rabb passed for the only touchdown in the 1958 national champs' closest game, a 7-6 squeaker past Mississippi State on a rainy night at Jackson, one of the two LSU games I covered that season. But his Number 12 was not retired, and nobody wrote a song about Rabb.

They wrote a song about the Chinese Bandits, and filled Tiger Stadium on Saturday nights to watch No. 20, Billy Cannon. But LSU doesn't need a national championship and a Heisman Trophy winner to fill the stadium. They generally manage to do that regardless of the won-loss record.

**Jerry Byrd is the former sports editor of the Bossier Press-Tribune and an award-winning columnist. Check out a few hundred of his columns on [www.jerrybyrd.com](http://www.jerrybyrd.com). You can contact him by E-mail at [jbsportswriter@comcast.net](mailto:jbsportswriter@comcast.net)**