

# Associated Press Football Polls at 81 years

The 2016 season ended with Clemson claiming their second AP National Championship , a 35-31 win over Alabama in the National Championship game at Tampa, FL. Formally, since the 1936 season, 1,119 polls have been taken to determine college football's best teams. The first poll of the season was taken in mid-October after a few games had been played. Starting in 1950, a preseason poll now exists, usually with several teams getting first place votes (fpv). The Final Poll of each season usually occurred in late November or the first weeks of December. This format resulted in five "National Champions" losing in postseason Bowl games. In the 1965 season, after #1, 2 and 3 all lost in bowl games, a "Final Poll" gave previously #4 Alabama, a 39-28 victor over #3 Nebraska in the Orange Bowl, the National Championship. Since the 1968 season, the Final Poll has been taken after the bowl games. Initially, the Top 20 teams were ranked but the 1962 to 1967 seasons ranked only the Top 10 and since 1989, the Top 25 teams have been ranked. Other teams receiving votes result in some polls having 40 or more teams listed and over the many weeks of the season, typically 70 or more teams would receive at least one vote.

The polls have been compiled from sportswriters and broadcasters across the country. Since 1936, the number of voters has varied. In the early years the number of voters was less than 50 compared to over 350 in the 1950s when the voter bias was apparent. In the 1953 Final Poll, the 20<sup>th</sup> ranked Michigan team, with a 6-3 record, received a fpv. The bias prevailed until the number of voters was reduced (there were no unanimous #1s between 1945 and 1967). Now the number of voters per state is determined by the number of Division I-A teams in that state. From 2003 to 2008 the number was 65. Since 2015, the number is 61.

There have been only 68 polls with unanimous #1s and 14 occurred in the Final Poll of the season. In the 2003 season, Oklahoma had 5 consecutive weeks with all fpv before losing 35-7 to #13 Kansas State in the Big 12 Conference championship game. Alabama had all fpv in 13 polls, leading the fourteen colleges achieving that distinction.

Notre Dame had led with the most cumulative weekly #1s from 1947 to the 2002 season, then tied with Oklahoma from 2003 to 2007, each with 95. Ohio State's run since the the 2006 season gives them the current lead with 105. Southern California had a record 33 consecutive #1s in the 2003-2005 seasons.

Bobby Bowden at Florida State achieved sixty #1s, the most of any coach. Woody Hayes at Ohio State (54) and Tom Osborne at Nebraska (44) rank #2 and #3. Of the forty-nine coaches who have won AP National Championships, Howard Scellenberger at Miami-Fla and Gene

Stallings at Alabama have just one, the Final Poll. Paul "Bear" Bryant (Texas A&M and Alabama), Ara Parseghian (Northwestern and Notre Dame) and Dan Devine (Missouri and Notre Dame) had #1s at both schools. Carl Snavely (Cornell and North Carolina) and Lynn "Pappy" Waldorf (Northwestern and California) also achieved this feat but were not AP National Champion coaches.

Coach "Jock" Sutherland at Pittsburgh coached only three years (1936-1938) when the polls began at the end of his career. Nonetheless, his record is outstanding: ranked in every poll, 86.3 % in the Top 5 and all in the Top 10. Joe Paterno in his 45 years at Penn State had his teams ranked in 516 (72.9 %) of the 713 polls during that time. Tom Osborne (Nebraska) has the most Top 10s (331) while Bowden has the most Top 5s (206). Following Sutherland, coaches Osborne, Switzer, Carr and Tressel had their teams ranked over 90 % of the time. Frank Leahy has the best percentage for #1 rankings at one college (36.2 % at Notre Dame).

Alabama has the most AP Championships (10) with Notre Dame (8) and Oklahoma at seven. Overall, 11 colleges have won 57 of the 81 AP National Championships. The closest finish occurred in 1991 when Miami-Fla (32 fpv) edged Washington (28 fpv) by 4 points but the Huskies were the USA TODAY-CNN coaches poll national champion.

Ohio State is the leader of most weekly polls at 870 with Michigan (823), Oklahoma (795) and Notre Dame (770) trailing. In addition to having the most #1s, Ohio State most Top Tens (591). Oklahoma has the most Top Fives (395). Nebraska has the record for consecutive weeks at an amazing 348 from 1981 to the 2002 season.

Currently, there are 21 Division I-A teams that have never appeared in an AP weekly poll. During WWII years of 1943 and 1944, fifteen service teams, composed of former college stars, dominated the polls. It was a Great Lakes Naval Training Station team that beat the 1943 AP Champion Notre Dame team and an Iowa Pre-Flight team that finished #2, their only loss a narrow 14-13 defeat to the Irish.