

It is the start of February, and we are over two full months into the magazine process. It starts every year on the Sunday after Thanksgiving when some team's seasons are complete.

Now, your first question is "Phil there is so much that changes between the end of the year and post spring, why do you do a first write through?" Great question, but I will now explain the why and how's of doing it and why it is so beneficial.

There are now 136 teams in the FBS and they all get two full pages in my magazine. Each team has nine different position write ups in the Quarterback, Running Back, Receivers (WR & TE), Offensive Line, Linebacker, Defensive Back, Special Teams and Coach. That is 1,224 individual units that I must write and I want each one of those position writeups to tell me three things.

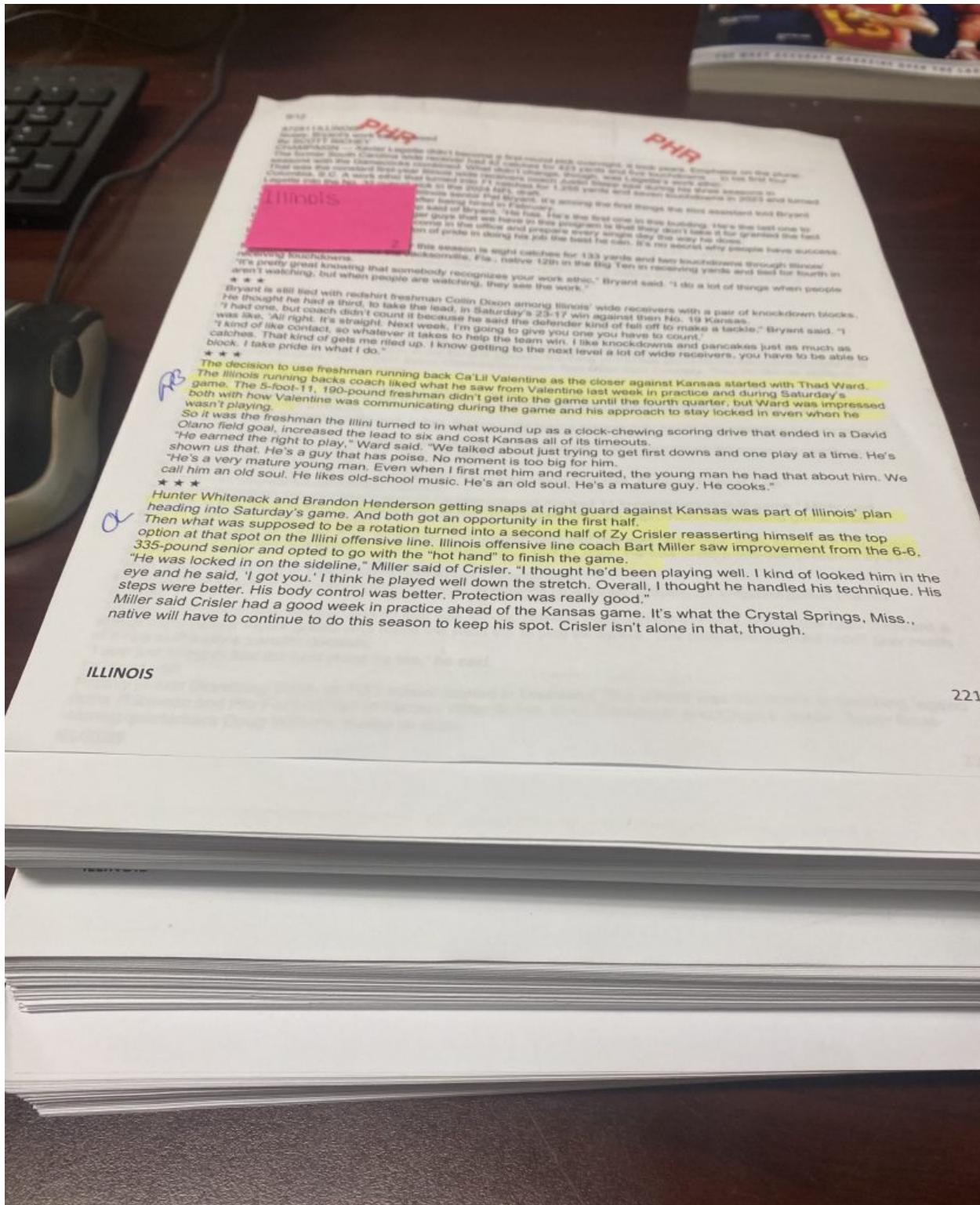
1. What shape was the unit heading into last year?
2. What happened to the unit last year how did it perform?
3. What kind of shape are they heading into this year?

Now take that 1,224 units and multiply it by the 3 questions that need to be answered and I have 3,672 answers to give you for the positions in the magazine.

The first thing I do is go thru every article that was written about the team from last year. We have a service that sends us articles each day so we keep on top of every team during the year. Naturally I cannot read every article every day of every week during the year, I am trying to keep track of all 136 teams. During the year I have a set up with 12 TV's at work so I watch 12 games at noon and another 12 games at 3:30. I head home where I have 8 Big Screens and watch 8 games at 7 and then whatever games are going on after that. Generally, I watch about 35 games every Saturday. I do not watch the NFL on Sunday instead I watch taped College games. During Saturday I only listen to two games at a time while watching the 35 games. Now I get to listen to these taped games. When the announcers do a game, they get there early and talk to the coaches and give you solid updates during the game as to the latest happenings on both squads.

On Sunday night and Monday, I go thru the play by play of every single game and write my recaps of each game. You would think watching all these games and going through the play by play of each and every one of them that I would know everything about every team but I learn a lot in the first write thru process. Here is what the process involves.

I mentioned reading every article about the team from the end of spring through the end of the season. Some smaller teams do not have many articles. We put all the articles together in one report. A team like ULM may have 80 pages to read through. A team like Ohio St has well over 1,500 pages. I just dive into the team and make notes as I go thru it with highlighters. I give myself 3-6 hours to go thru all the reading. When done with the stack I give it to Tierra and Gena and they put the highlighted notes into a notebook for each team which contains all the important happenings at each position. When doing this I am taken through the ups and downs not only of the team but of each position during the course of the season. Was there a key injury, key newcomer, etc? It is all captured.



At this point I write the team. I am very familiar with what the situation was heading into the year and what happened during the year. I have an idea of who I think is coming back and who is gone and write a position wrap up as well. I also have my notebook page up to date and have gone thru the most time-consuming part of the magazine but also one which really gets me

deep into whatever team I am doing. For those 3-6 hours my focus is one team. This process is repeated 136 times over the months of December and January.

The last couple of years with two transfer portals most of my wrap up sentences would change. As I mentioned in an earlier blog I am (and so are the coaches) thrilled that there is just one transfer portal and things will be much more stable this year! We may even see a return of the Spring Games. Let's get back to my questions.

1. What kind of shape were they at the position heading into last year?

I have this Question ANSWERED after doing the reading and it will not change, 2025 is over and I know what the expectations and experience level was heading into last year and it will not change!

2. What happened last year to each unit?

I have this Question ANSWERED in my writeup. Once again going thru all the reading I have lived thru the ups and downs of each position and it will not change, 2025 is over!

3. What kind of shape are they heading into this year?

Not every position will change. Let's say a unit has a two-year starting QB back along with his backup. My wrap-up sentence will hold true after spring is over. I also have a beginning set of power ratings for each team and my first up downs for each teams grading each position anywhere from +5 to -5. I would say that about 66% of my writeups will change via the portals and what happened in the spring but that means 34% will hold true.

I mentioned 3.672 questions that needed to be answered on the positions and I already have over 70% of them answered after the first write thru process. The second write thru process will begin in March when the spring rosters are complete and all the Freshmen and portal transfers are signed. I will rewrite the wrap ups of each position at that point and update my positional power ratings and uptowns.

The third write thru is done after I talk to the head coaches post spring. These calls average about an hour each as we go over every player and every position. Now I can firmly write my wrap up of the position. The magazine is a 6.5-month process and as I write this Blog we have just 122 days until it goes to press but the first write thru process is complete! The month of February I will be writing my Metrics articles for the magazine like Turnovers equals Turnaround, Close Wins/Close Losses etc. At the end of February, I will put out my projected AP Preseason Top 25. This year it hit 10 of 10 once again. All ten teams that I said would be in the AP Top Preseason Top Ten in August which was 6 months and one transfer portal away ALL made the AP preseason top 10!. I have been doing the projected AP Top 10 for 17 years and have hit 162 of 170 teams 6 months ahead of the poll!

It is magazine season so I will not have a ton of blogs for year during this arduous process but I will try to start putting out at least a blog or two per week.