WHAT EXACTLY IS A... PS#?

One very important part of my College Football Preview Magazine is an individual player's "PS#". You will see them on almost every page and I find them vital in my analysis of a team. If you have purchased my magazine before, I am sure you are very familiar with what each player's PS# stands for. This article is for those of you picking up my magazine for the first time and are asking the question listed at the top of the page.

A simple definition for a PS# is my ranking of the players at their positions coming out of high school or from a Junior College (JC or JUCO). The PS naturally stands for Phil Steele with the number representing a players rank at that position. I personally do not scout high school games or rate players. Covering college football as I do takes 52 weeks of the year as it is. I compile my PS#'s based on the many different recruiting services across the country. I not only use all of the biggest but use regional reports as well. On the bottom left of this page, I list the top recruiting services from which I compile information.

When we receive a recruiting magazine, we translate each player's ranking into a point system from 1-100. Adam Jones then logs each and every player into the computer and give them a point total from each source. This is a very time-consuming process. This year's 2015 Freshmen List has over 10,000 players on it!!! Many players are listed by just one or two sources. The higher ranked recruits are mentioned by almost every source. The more they are mentioned and the higher they are rated in each publication, the more total points they accrue. After months of entering all of this information, I sort the list by each position and by total points. Naturally, the QB with the most total points then becomes PS#1QB for that year. If a player is PS#99QB, that means he ranks 99th in total points of all QB's coming out of high school that year.

Some positions simply do not have as many players as others. For example, this year's PS#100TE totaled just 271.3 points in my system, while this year's PS#100OL has 449.5 points!! The reason is simple. There are FIVE offensive linemen and just one TE on the field. Naturally, there are 5 times as many OL's to choose from as TE's, making it much more competitive. A player with 271.3 points on the offensive line is rated as a PS#326OL this year. The PS# is not their overall rank in the freshmen class, but their overall rank AT THAT POSITION in the freshmen class.

I also track JUCO's. A JUCO is a player who went to a Junior College (JC) after high school and played football there. They use up a year of their college eligibility for every year they play and most come in as juniors. They are older, more seasoned players, and usually can make an immediate impact. A players' PS number out of a JUCO are not separated by positions but instead all players at all positions get a JC number.

So what is the big deal about where they are ranked out of high school? I equate it to where a player ranks in the NFL draft. Obviously, there are some outstanding players in the NFL who were low-round draft picks or even signed as undrafted free agents. However, the majority of the all-stars in the NFL are higher round draft picks and 1st round picks usually make an impact much quicker.

Colleges are much the same. There are plenty of players without a high PS# who end up making it big. For example, Eric Fisher was a 250 lb tackle who only had one year of experience on the OL in high school when he joined Central Michigan. Lightly scouted he was a PS#498OL in 2009. Fisher then grew to 6-8 306 lbs, had an impressive 116 inch broad jump and a blazing 4.44 20 yard shuttle time to showcase his agility at the combine. Fisher was then selected as the first pick in the 2013 draft (highest ever for a MAC player). Some kids enter college at 17 or 18, undersized and not yet matured, but then grow into big, strong, fast players and make all-conference teams. Just like the NFL, there are a good number of these types of stories. For example, 2000 MVP Kurt Warner was not drafted and played in NFL Europe and the Arena Football League. Other notable UFA's are QB Tony Romo (Dallas), RB Arian Foster (Houston) and WR Wes Welker (Denver). Also, just like the NFL, there are MORE cases of those players who come in highly ranked out of high school, becoming stars and making an immediate impact.

Here are some examples of the previously mentioned highly ranked high school players that made an immediate impact in the NFL: In 2012 Andrew Luck was selected as the top pick in the draft after serving four years with Stanford as a PS#8QB. In 2010, Cam

WR AJ Green was a PS#3WR in 2008. He was selected as the #4 overall pick in 2011 by Cincinnati and has caught more passes (260) than any other player in NFL history during their first three seasons while amassing 3,833 yards and 29 td's.

Newton was a PS#2JC and after just one year at Auburn, he was selected as the #1 overall pick to Carolina and would set an NFL rookie record with 4,051 pass yds and added 706 (5.6) rushing. In 2007, Eric Berry was a PS#1DB and was taken as the #5 overall pick in 2010 and finished his rookie year with 92 tkls and 4 int's. In 2006, Percy Harvin was a PS#1WR. In 2009, he was the #1DC (22nd pick) of Minnesota and was named the NFL Rookie of the Year with 790 yds (13.2). These are just some examples but as you can see, the stronger the PS#, the better chance the player has of making a big impact in college.

Many times after players graduate, the talent behind them is unknown because they have not played a lot of college ball. You would expect a 1st or 2nd round draft pick in the NFL to be able to step into an open starting spot quickly and the higher-rated players can usually do just that in college as well. That is the value of a PS#.

On each individual right hand team page we list the Top Newcomers which includes both freshmen and JUCO's. These are ranked by each player's combined frosh rating (not by PS#'s) so therefore the top player listed earned the highest ranking in the combined frosh rating (which does take into account total points).

Who is a VHT and who is a HT? To the right you will find a chart simplifying our distinctions between these categories. To use the QB's as an example: any QB from PS#1 thru PS#30 I consider a VHT (Very Highly Touted). QB's from PS#31 thru PS#100 are HT's (Highly Touted). Many recruiting publications do not distinguish between OT, OG and C for their OL. As a general rule, we put them into the OL category so that position has, by far, the largest amount of players.

Also included on every Top Newcomers list is the number of VHT's and HT's that each team brings in this year. For example, Alabama signed the most number of VHT's (25). This is also a nice quick way to compare how your favorite team did in the recruiting wars vs other conf foes. For example, back in the 1970's the Big 10 was referred to as the Big 2 and the Little 8 as Michigan and Ohio St dominated the conference. This past year the Wolverines and Buckeyes combined to sign 33 VHT's while the other 12 schools in the conference signed a total of 55 VHT players combined! Could we be in store for similar run in the near future?

A quick note about the players in my write-ups. Sometimes on the offensive line I will mention that a player was a top-notch wrestler in high school. To me, a top wrestler has very good body control and athleticism which makes for a quality lineman. I also list when a player is from Canada. I do this because not all of the recruiting services cover Canada so those players are generally rated lower in the PS#'s than their U.S. counterparts. Many times the top player out of Canada is an NFL prospect but only has a PS# around 150 or 200. Therefore, they are often more talented than their PS# would give them credit for.

On page 322 are all of this year's top freshmen and JUCO's. By the end of the year, many will have played and some will already be stars.

If you like this type of information, you will love my.....

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PHIL STEELE'S '15 PS RANKINGS		
POS	**VHT**	**HT**
QB	30	100
RB	40	125
WR	60	150
TE	15	75
OL	100	250
DL	75	250
LB	75	200
DB	75	250
K	10	35
LS	3	10
JC	100	200