Dooley will survive another year at UT

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If you are like most college football fans, you take your favorite team's upcoming schedule and go down the list.

You give out wins, losses and tossups and total them up for a best case-worse case scenario for your team. It's a great way to pass the time before that first kickoff and the season starts to roll downhill.

BeyondTheBets.com is one of several on-line sites that provide projections and let you decide.

There has been a lot of chatter among Tennessee fans as to how many wins Coach Derek Dooley needs to save his job.

Certainly current Athletics Director Dave Hart has given no indication as to what that number is, or if he even has a number.

One thing for sure: Dave Hart is looking for improvement in all aspects of the program and winning games is the best defense Dooley has.

Beyond The Bets has Tennessee's line at 7½ wins. Which side of the fence do you see the Vols on?

Let’s play the games on paper, admittedly a risky proposition.

The Vols need to get out of the gate with a win and it won’t come easy against N.C. State in the Georgia Dome. I think this game is a must win if the Vols are going to have a solid season. A tossup.

They have three pastry opponents including Georgia State, coached by Bill Curry. The program is still in its infancy and the Vols won’t stumble here.

Akron and Troy are must wins. I wonder how full Neyland Stadium will be for these three games?

Now, let’s get to the meat of the schedule.

After Georgia State, Florida comes to town. Will Muschamp is feeling the heat in Gainesville. In a Knoxville New-Sentinel poll as to which SEC coach’s seat is the hottest, Dooley gathered 66 percent of more than 2,000 voters. Muschamp was a distant second at 17 percent with Kentucky’s Joker Phillips at 11 percent.

Florida is a swing game, one Dooley has to win to convince Hart there is progress being made. I think the Vols outscore the Gators and keep hope alive.

After Akron, the Vols go Between the Hedges, a place Dooley became most familiar with during the years his father, Vince, coached the Dawgs.

It’s another swing game, one I believe the Vols will lose.

After an open date, the Vols stay on the road at Mississippi State. This is a must win for both programs -- one I think the Vols will find a way to win.

Next up is defending national champion Alabama in Knoxville. Won't be a fun time in K-town. Tide rolls.

A trip to South Carolina is no place to lick your wounds. The Gamecocks won 11 games last year for the first time in school history. Vols lose here.

Now it gets easier. After Troy, the Vols welcome SEC newcomer Missouri. Vols show the Tigers what it's all about.

A trip to Vanderbilt should be a pivotal game for both programs and how long has it been since anyone said that? The Commodores couldn't find a way to beat what was arguably the worst Tennessee team they will play, but this one is a tossup.

The Vols finish with a win against Kentucky.

I have them winning seven games, with N.C. State and Vanderbilt as tossups.

I predict they will split those games, giving them an 8-4 season and a bowl invitation. Dooley survives.

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