Exciting opening weekend of college football

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I don’t know about you, but this year’s opening week of college football is the most exciting I can remember.

In the SEC alone, there are a handful of games that will serve as trendsetters for the rest of the season.

Locally you have Vanderbilt hosting No. 9 ranked South Carolina at a Vanderbilt Stadium. The stadium has undergone the most off-season improvements since the early 1980s when Maryland opened the Commodores home schedule. It was an electric night capped by a Vanderbilt win.

Tonight you will see new lights. A state of the art scoreboard. New field turf. It won’t take fans long to notice.

ESPN is televising the 6 p.m. start tonight. A blimp will be hovering overhead.

South Carolina has designs on winning the SEC East. A loss to Vanderbilt tonight will toss the Gamecocks out of the hen house.

Friday night in the Georgia Dome, Tennessee takes on ACC member N.C. State.

If Vols Coach Derek Dooley thinks his seat is hot now, let him lose that game and his seat will be nuclear. Fair or not, the buzzards will begin circling.

If Dooley can't take his team to a bowl game this season, he may not make it to next season. After all, a team only needs six wins to go bowling and Georgia State, Akron and Troy gets them to the half-way point.

They should be favored against Mississippi State, Missouri and Kentucky with swing games against Florida and Vanderbilt. Win enough of those games and everything else is gravy.

It makes Friday night's game against N.C. State a must win for several reasons, primarily to quite the critics and to build confidence in what is still a young team.

Defending national champion Alabama has an intriguing season opener Saturday, as the Crimson Tide tackles Michigan at Jerry's World in Texas.

I want to see what Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson can do against an Alabama defense that lost a lot of starters.

It is harder to stay on top than it is to reach the top and we'll see how Alabama handles that. They should have an edge in team speed and experience playing in a big game. Michigan is still on its way back up in the Big Ten. An upset over Bama would go a long way.

That's not all.

Clemson and Auburn collide in the Georgia Dome Saturday. I predict a lot of orange in the stands for that one, as the neighboring state schools have no love for each other.

This is a critical season for Georgia Coach Mark Richt. His team is preseason favorite to win the SEC East.

Richt has the defense to do just that, but a key is how the Dawgs put up points. They booted their best running back, Isaiah Crowell, who will be playing for Alabama State after an impressive start as a freshman for Georgia last season.

Crowell was set to be the Dawgs' primary weapon on offense, but ironically it was his arrest on weapons charges that prompted the school to dismiss him.

Now that's a pretty fat first week schedule. Sure, you still have Miss Grace's kindergarten on some schedules.

North Texas, Central Arkansas, SE Louisiana are three directional schools are playing SEC teams this week, along with Buffalo, Jacksonville State, Bowling Green, Louisiana Tech and Jackson State.

All in all, I have no complaints on opening week in college football's top conference.

Bring it on.

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