

Heresy! A Penn State computer (and friends) picks Texas

WISHFUL VISTA — Will Penn State "rattle the cattle"? Who will be foes in Super Bowl VI? Will the Big Eight representative fold in the Orange Bowl again? Can a covey of shrewd, enterprising sportswriters enter head-to-sort-of-head combat with a Penn State computer and live to tell about it?

Only the Shadow knows for sure, of course, but, undaunted by all the forces of the atmosphere, several members of The Mirror sports staff and a pro football expert from Pine Grove Mills have combined intelligence with and against a Penn State computer operated by computer science major Larry Fall.

Fall should be no stranger to Central Pennsylvania sports fans. Last May he flashed to victory in record-smashing time in the third annual Phi Psi 500 marathon race as a representative of the Tavern A.C. He is expected to begin serious training for this year's race under the watchful eye of his coach and dietitian Pat Daugherty some time in January.

In the sweet by and by, however, Fall has programmed his 360 computer with an offensive and defensive power rating for each collegiate game he (or it) picks. For the coming Bowl games he has taken into account the offensive and

defensive performances of each team in every game it has played this season.

Somehow it works out that team A's offensive rating is multiplied with team B's defensive rating and the national scoring average. This produces from the computer the number of points team A should score in its game with team B. Then the same procedure is followed for team B's offensive rating to come up with B's total points. Ergo, a winner.

Fall, who started his computer prognostications as a term project in a computer science course, claims 70.8 per cent accuracy throughout the collegiate season. So far in the Bowl season, he has hit correctly the winners of the Liberty, Sun and Fiesta Bowls.

As far as the Cotton Bowl is concerned, though, it looks as if the Penn State computer has bad news for Penn State football fans. The prediction: Texas 25, Penn State 21.

Fall, a dedicated Nittany Lion fan, feels pretty badly about this. "If I don't include the Tennessee game (a 31-11 whomp job by the Vols), we can beat Texas, 23-20," he says with a grin that fades under the burden of scientific objectivity. Tennessee has to be included, and, as the

computer tells it, Penn State has to lose.

(Fall's computer has been known to go wrong in the past, though: for example, PSU 19, Tennessee 15.)

Here's how Fall's computer sees the Bowl games: Cotton—Texas 25, PSU 21; Sugar—Oklahoma 34, Auburn 31; Rose—Michigan 17, Stanford 11; Orange—Alabama 19, Nebraska 11; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 28, Houston 23; Gator—Georgia 24, North Carolina 20; and Peach—Mississippi 27, Georgia Tech 17.

His computer was not programmed for the pros.

And here's how The Mirror sports staffers see the Bowls and the pros.

Sports editor Bill Greene's picks: Cotton—Texas 24-17; Sugar—Oklahoma 42-21; Rose—Michigan 30-10; Orange—Nebraska 28-24; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 31-27; Gator—Georgia 28-7; Peach—Mississippi 17-10; the pros—Cowboys 28, 49ers 17; Dolphins 24, Colts 21.

Sportswriter Phil Axelrod's picks: Cotton—PSU 28-13; Sugar—Oklahoma 42-27; Rose—Michigan 28-17; Orange—Nebraska 20-14; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 31-28; Gator—Georgia 27-10; Peach—Mississippi 14-12; the pros—49ers 21-20, Dolphins 21-13.

Sportswriter J.D. Andrews' picks: Cotton—Texas 28-21;

Sugar—Oklahoma 49-14; Rose—Michigan 35-7; Orange—Nebraska 35-21; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 21-14; Gator—Georgia 35-21; Peach—Georgia Tech 14-10; the pros—Cowboys 35-27; Colts 17-10.

Sportswriter Dennis Gildea's picks: Cotton—a 24-24 tie (sticking with the cycles of history); Sugar—Oklahoma 38-28; Rose—Michigan 17-10; Orange—Nebraska 28-21; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 28-17; Gator—Georgia 24-21; Peach—Mississippi 17-7; the pros—Cowboys 31-17; Colts 24-9.

Guest expert Jim Rainelli's picks: Cotton—PSU 34-14; Sugar—Oklahoma 38-21; Rose—Michigan 21-14; Orange—Nebraska 28-7; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 21-7; Gator—Georgia 28-14; Peach—Mississippi 21-14; the pros—Cowboys 38-12; Colts 21-14.

Ad hoc member Dave Fay's picks: Cotton—Texas 28-7; Sugar—Oklahoma 45-21; Rose—Stanford 24-21; Orange—Nebraska 35-14; Astro-Bluebonnet—Colorado 28-14; Gator—Georgia 28-0; Peach—Mississippi 21-10; the pros—49ers 17-14, Dolphins 13-10.

There you have it. We will see what we will see.

—dennis gildea