

## Michigan State Excluded From Athlon Sports Bowl Predictions

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Michigan State University's football program was left out of Athlon Sports' early bowl game projections for the upcoming season, signaling tempered expectations as the Spartans look to rebuild under new leadership.

Athlon Sports bowl projections for the 2025 season did not include Michigan State among the teams expected to qualify, continuing a trend of Spartans missing postseason play for a third consecutive year following their last bowl appearance in 2021.

Under first-year head coach Jonathan Smith, Michigan State started 3-0 in 2024 but finished the season 5-7, losing seven of their final nine games and failing to reach bowl eligibility. Athlon Sports projected Michigan State's bowl-slot possibilities went to Rutgers in the GameAbove Sports Bowl and Minnesota in the Rate Bowl in place of teams with stronger metrics, highlighting skepticism about MSU's readiness for postseason.

Despite the current skepticism from national outlets like Athlon Sports, there remains cautious optimism among supporters who hope Smith's second season will bring a turnaround. Michigan State opens its 2025 season at home against Western Michigan on August 30, with the kickoff time and broadcast network pending official confirmation. Michigan State now faces the challenge of proving that it can rise above recent disappointments and reestablish itself as a credible contender within the Big Ten Conference. Whether Smith can leverage returning talent and fresh recruits to defy these low expectations remains to be seen as the season approaches.

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