

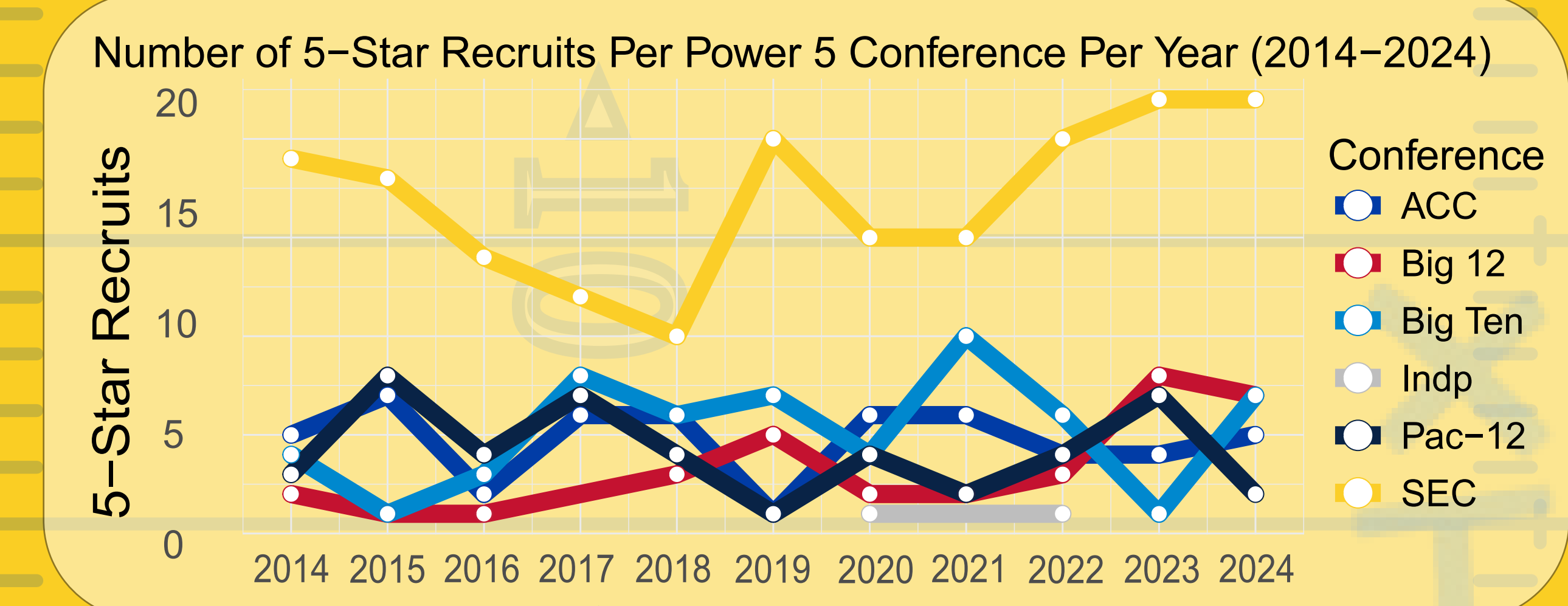
Why the SEC is the Best Football Conference



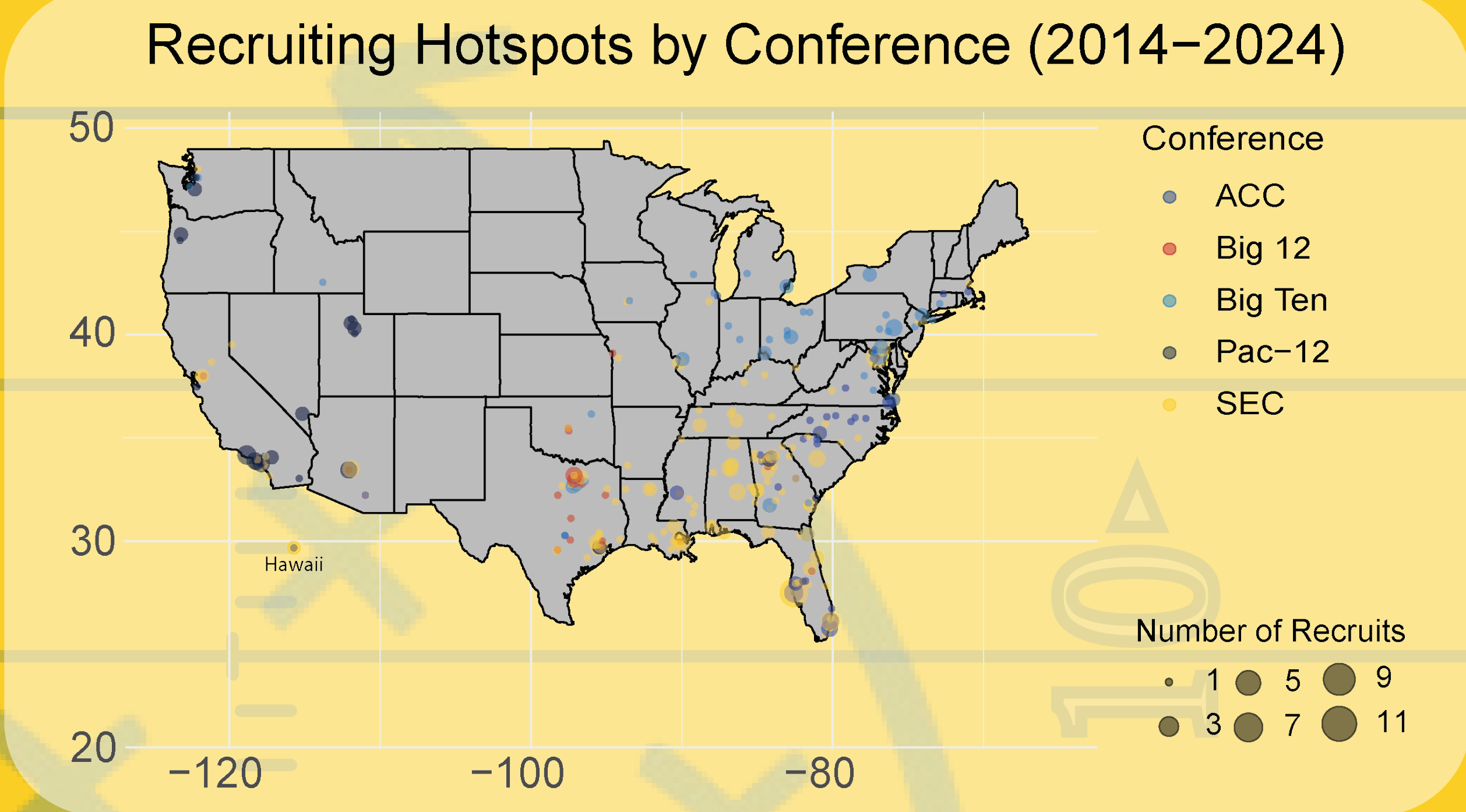
Before I begin, I want to say that I made this project out of my love for the sport of college football. I truly believe college football is one of the greatest spectacles on this planet. We have young men who play for the love of the game, knowing they aren't playing professionally—these are our Davids. Then, we have the demigod quarterbacks, wide receivers with Hermes-esque speed, and running backs with Samson's strength—these are our Goliaths, most of whom will go pro. Our Davids fight with everything they have—every inch, every yard—to play this beautiful game one last time.

What makes college football such an amazing game is its unpredictability. An unranked school can upset a top-6 team in the nation, or an unlikely competitor can go eight overtimes toe-to-toe against a football school titan. These young athletes play for the love of the game, for passion, for glory, and to be etched in history.

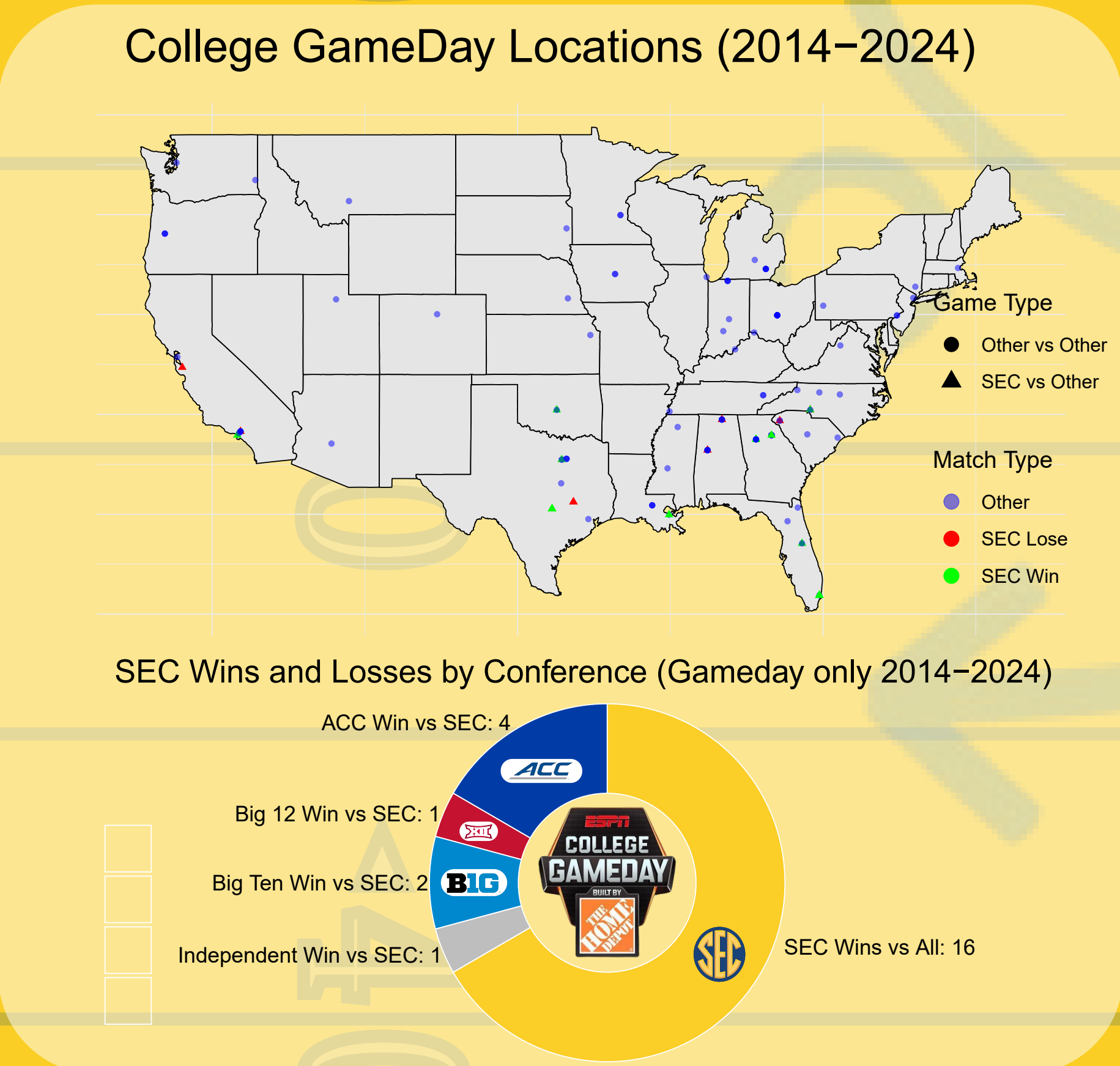
The college football championship is the hardest title to win in football. There is only a short window of time before your opportunity is gone—just like in life. But there is one conference that stands above the rest, the Southeastern Conference SEC, a name synonymous to football pedigree, tradition and excellence. The SEC was founded in 1929 and has been widely regarded as the premier football conference.



This graph highlights the number of 5-star recruits across the Power 5 conferences and independents from 2014 to 2024, showcasing the SEC's dominance in attracting elite talent. Represented by the yellow line, the SEC consistently leads in recruiting, with a noticeable upward trend culminating in 2024, solidifying its reputation as the strongest conference in college football. In contrast, other conferences such as the ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and Pac-12 show relatively flat or fluctuating trends, indicating a more competitive and less dominant recruiting landscape. The disparity emphasizes the SEC's unparalleled success in securing top-tier recruits.



This map visualizes recruiting hotspots across the United States for Power 5 college football conferences from 2014 to 2024, with the size of the circles indicating the number of recruits from each area. The three largest hotspots are Sarasota, Florida; Austin, Texas; and New Orleans, Louisiana, which stand out for producing the most high-profile recruits during this period. The distribution shows a concentration of talent in the Southeastern United States, particularly in states like Florida, Texas, and Louisiana, aligning with the dominance of the SEC. Other regions, such as California and the Midwest, also contribute notable recruits, highlighting their importance to conferences like the Pac-12 and Big Ten. This data underscores the geographical influence on recruiting and the regional strengths of each conference.



This visualization highlights the locations of College GameDay broadcasts from 2014 to 2024, alongside the performance of SEC teams in these marquee matchups. College GameDay is a weekly ESPN program that spotlights the biggest and most important college football game of the week. It serves as a stage for high-stakes matchups, rivalries, and games with significant implications for rankings and championships, often drawing nationwide attention and massive fan engagement.

The map categorizes games by match type and outcome, distinguishing between SEC wins (green triangles), SEC losses (red triangles), and other non-SEC matchups (blue circles). The majority of College GameDay locations are concentrated in the Southeast and Midwest, reflecting the prominence of SEC and Big Ten schools in college football.

The pie chart provides further insights into SEC performance in these featured games. The SEC has 16 wins against all opponents, dominating the spotlight. Losses are distributed across conferences, with four losses to the ACC, one to the Big 12, one to the Big Ten, and one to an Independent. This data underscores the SEC's consistent strength on the biggest stages, solidifying its position as a dominant force in college football over the past decade.



This bar chart represents the total points accumulated by each conference during the College Football Playoff (CFP) era, spanning from 2014 to 2024. Points are weighted with 2 points for a championship and 1 point for a runner-up finish. The SEC dominates with 6 championships, underscoring its unparalleled success during the CFP era. The ACC and Big Ten follow, each securing 2 championships, showcasing occasional competitiveness but far less consistency compared to the SEC. The Pac-12, while present, lags significantly behind in performance. This visualization highlights the SEC's supremacy in the CFP era, solidifying its position as the dominant force in college football over the past decade.

Total Points by Conference

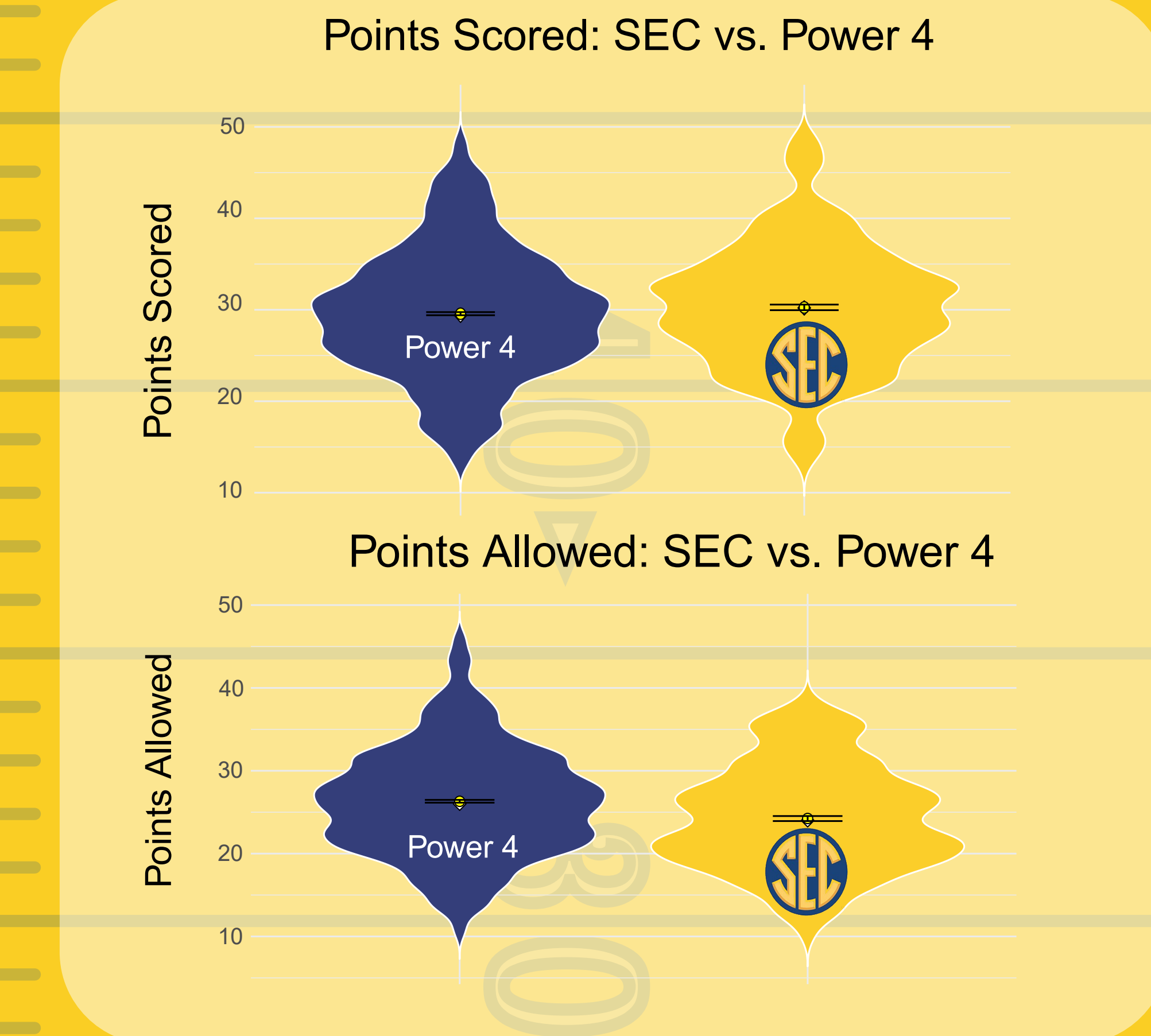
(Weighted: Champion=2, Runner-Up=1)



SEC Win Rates Against Power 4 (2014-2024)

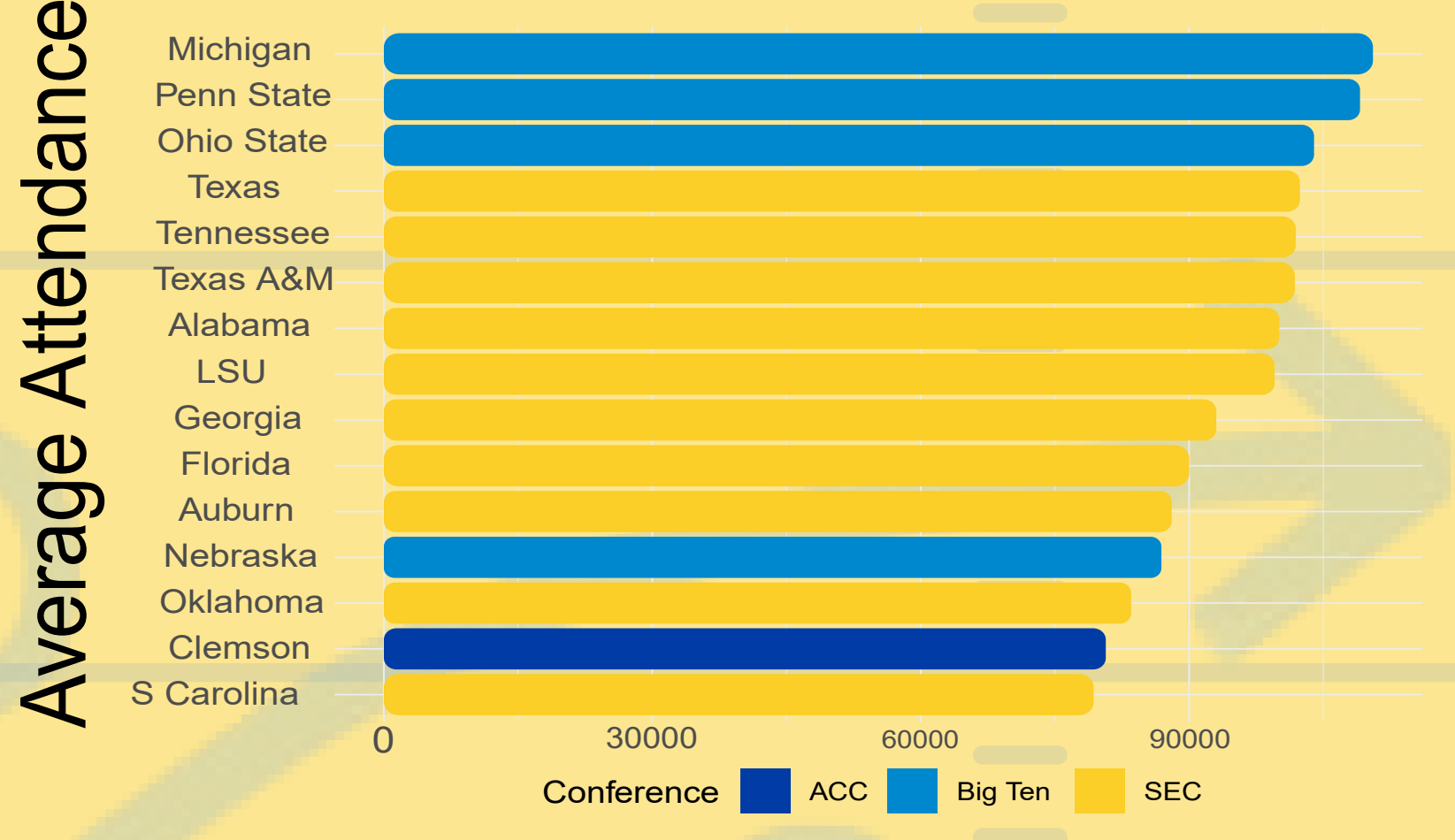


This heatmap highlights the SEC's win rates against the Power 4 conferences (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and Pac-12) during the College Football Playoff (CFP) era from 2014 to 2024, categorized by game location (home, bowl, and away). The SEC demonstrates consistent dominance, particularly in bowl games, where it boasts a 70% win rate against the ACC (28-12) and favorable records against other conferences. At home, the SEC performs well against the Pac-12 (8-2) and the ACC (23-20), though it struggles against the Big Ten (2-5). In away games, the SEC continues to excel against the ACC (22-16) but faces tighter competition against the Big 12 (3-3) and Pac-12 (4-5). Overall, this visualization underscores the SEC's strong performance during the CFP era, particularly in high-stakes bowl games, while revealing some vulnerabilities against specific conferences.

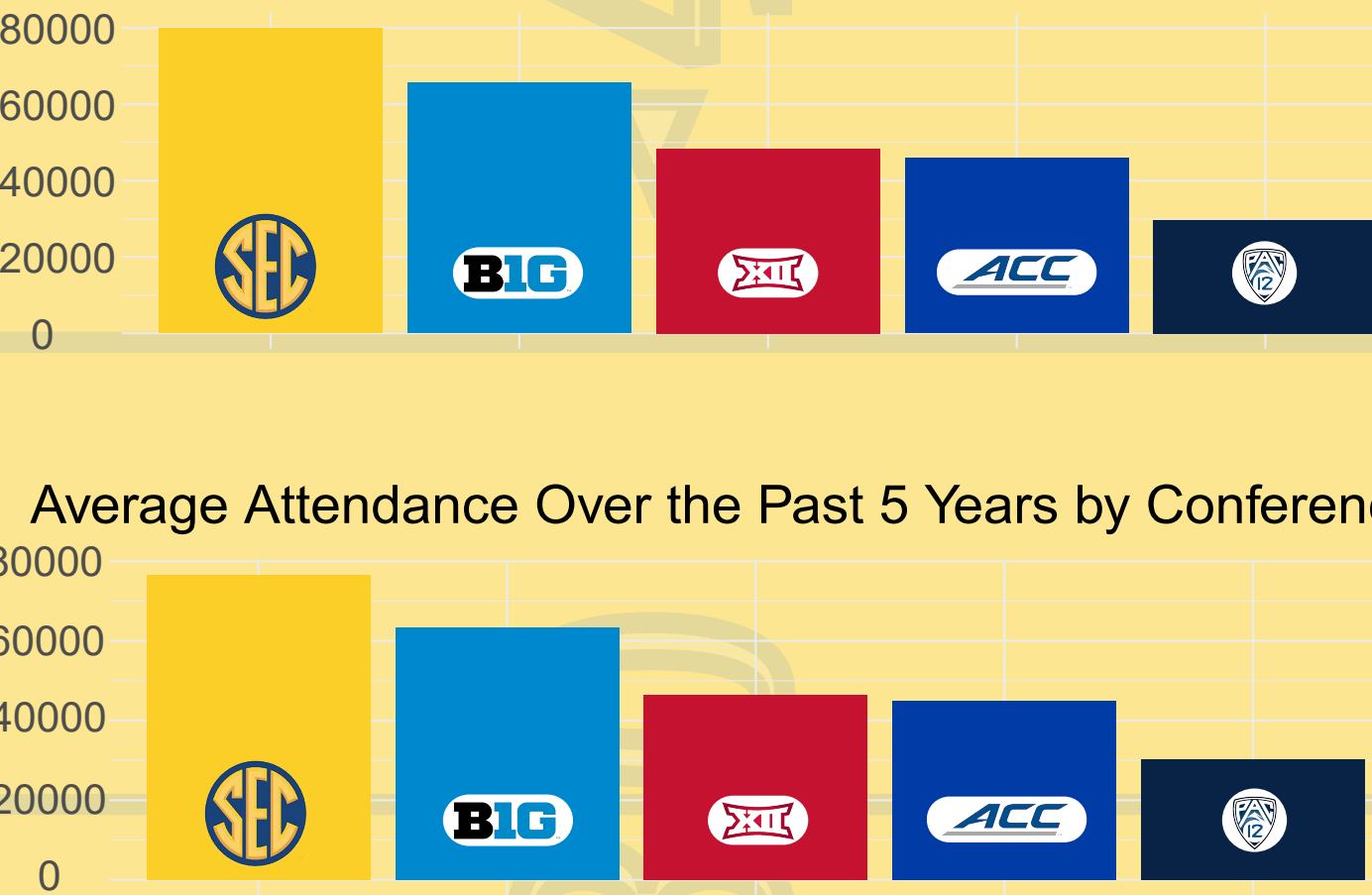


This visualization compares the SEC's performance against the Power 4 conferences (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, and Pac-12) in terms of points scored and points allowed during the College Football Playoff (CFP) era from 2014 to 2024. The top violin plot shows that the SEC consistently outperforms the Power 4 in scoring, with a higher median and a wider distribution of high-scoring games, reflecting their offensive dominance. The bottom plot highlights the SEC's defensive strength, as they allow fewer points on average compared to their counterparts. Together, these plots illustrate the SEC's ability to excel on both sides of the ball, showcasing their superior balance of offense and defense. This all-around performance underscores the SEC's dominance during the CFP era and their reputation as the strongest conference in college football.

Top 15 Schools by Attendance (2024)



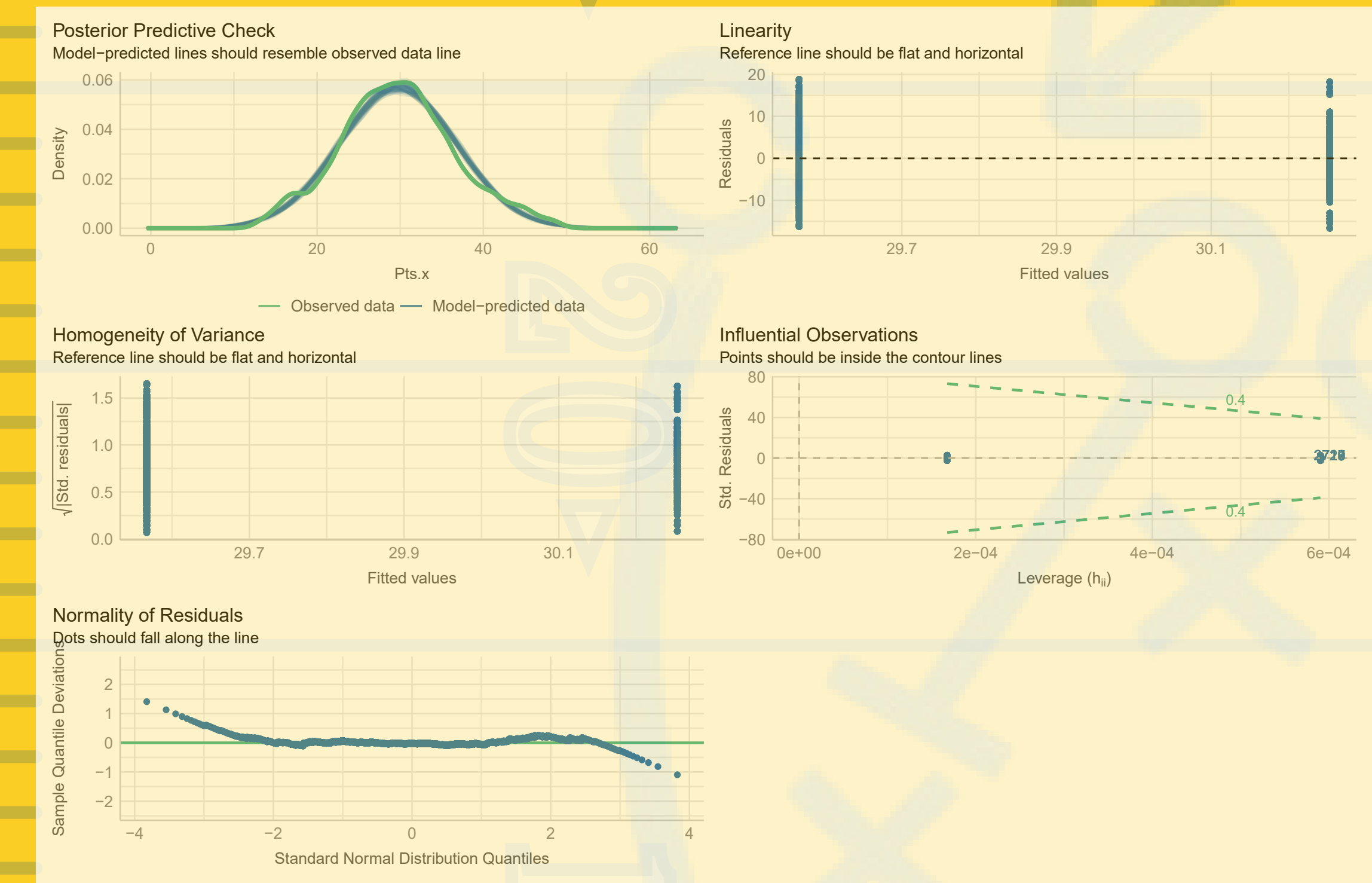
Average Attendance by Conference (2024)



This visualization showcases college football attendance statistics for 2024, emphasizing the prominence of the SEC and Big Ten in driving fan engagement. The left chart lists the top 15 schools by average attendance, where the Big Ten is represented by schools like Michigan, Penn State, and Ohio State, all of which lead the rankings. The SEC dominates the rest of the top 15, with schools like Texas, Tennessee, and Texas A&M boasting impressive attendance figures, reflecting the passionate fan bases in this conference.

On the right, the top bar chart shows the average attendance by conference in 2024, with the SEC leading, followed by the Big Ten, both well ahead of the other Power 5 conferences. The bottom bar chart further highlights the consistency of this trend over the past five years, as the SEC has consistently led in average attendance, reinforcing its reputation as a dominant cultural hub for college football.

These charts underscore the passionate fan culture in the SEC and Big Ten, where large stadiums and fervent support create unmatched atmospheres for college football games.



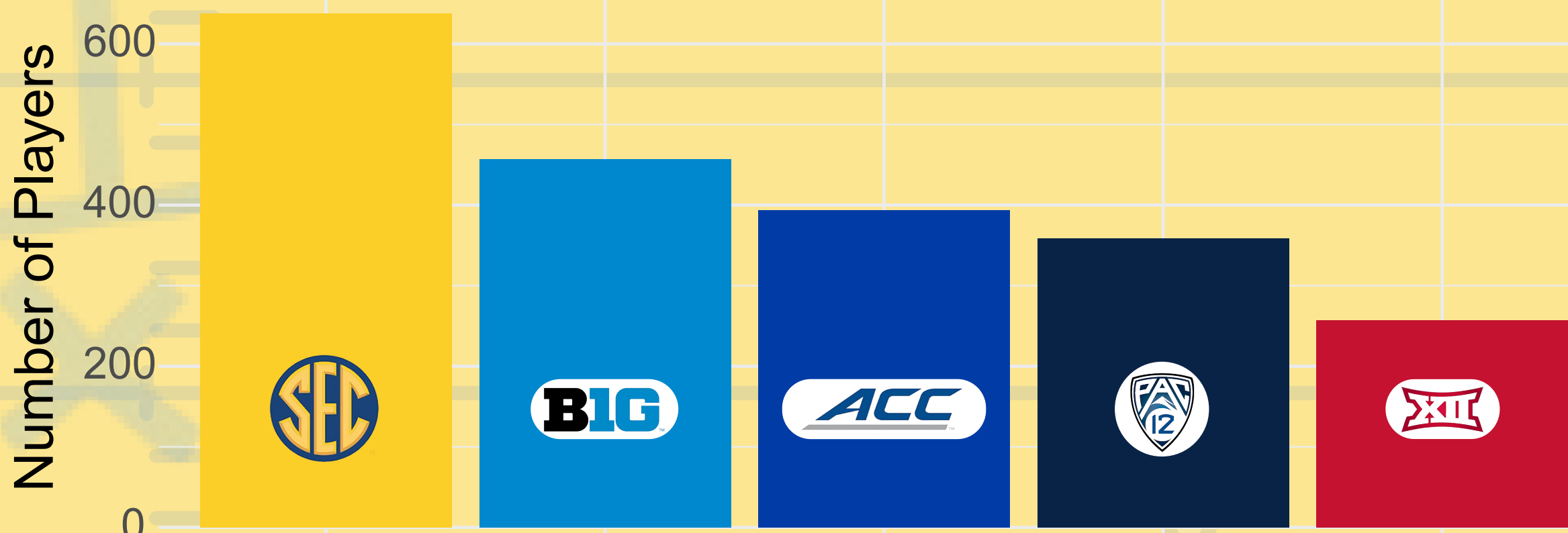
The results from the analysis clearly show that the SEC is the dominant conference in college football, excelling in both offense and defense. The linear regression model analyzing points scored (Pts.x) demonstrates a strong fit, with predicted values closely matching the actual data. This indicates the model effectively captures the key factors driving offensive performance. The residuals are evenly spread and show no curvature, satisfying the assumptions of linearity and homogeneity of variance. Additionally, the model isn't skewed by outliers, which strengthens its reliability. While there are some minor deviations from normality in the residuals, they don't significantly impact the conclusions.

The logistic regression model, used to distinguish SEC teams from other conferences based on performance metrics, also performs strongly. The binned residuals show most points fall within acceptable error bounds, highlighting the model's accuracy. Furthermore, the predictors—such as points scored, points allowed, and rushing yards—contribute independently, as confirmed by low Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. This ensures the model's robustness in explaining the SEC's superiority.

Additional statistical tests back up these findings. A t-test shows that SEC teams, on average, score more points (30.25) than teams from other conferences (29.57), with the difference being statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). On defense, SEC teams allow significantly fewer points (24.24) compared to other teams (26.31, $p < 0.001$). These results highlight the SEC's ability to consistently outperform its competition on both sides of the ball.

In summary, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the SEC's dominance in college football. With superior offensive and defensive performances, SEC teams not only excel in regular-season play but also dominate in critical matchups. These findings reinforce the SEC's reputation as the strongest and most consistent conference in the sport.

Drafted to NFL Power 5 Conferences (2014-2024)



This bar chart highlights the number of players drafted into the NFL from each Power 5 conference during the College Football Playoff (CFP) era, spanning 2014 to 2024. The SEC leads by a significant margin, with over 600 players drafted, showcasing its unmatched ability to produce NFL-caliber talent. The Big Ten follows as the second-highest contributor, emphasizing its strong football programs. The ACC, Pac-12, and Big 12 trail behind, with each contributing significantly fewer players to the NFL compared to the SEC.

The dominance of the SEC in this metric underscores its reputation as the premier conference in developing players for professional success. Its consistent pipeline to the NFL highlights the strength of its programs, coaching, and competitive environment, solidifying the SEC's status as a powerhouse in college football.

In conclusion, the SEC's dominance in college football is evident across all metrics, from on-field performance and attendance to NFL draft representation. Its consistent ability to outperform other conferences in offensive and defensive statistics, draw the largest fan bases, and produce the most NFL-ready players underscores its status as the premier conference in the sport. These findings highlight the SEC's unparalleled success and solidify its reputation as the benchmark of excellence in college football during the CFP era.

