

Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

Dennis Stagliano's Gridiron Gold Sheet
An Award Winning Football Newsletter Since 1981



For the first time ever a sports service went the entire season without a single losing week. Ron Sataloff, President Sports Features Syndicate

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WHAT A WEEK NFL & NCAA FOOTBALL PREAKNESS STAKES NBA & MLB PLAYOFFS

COLLEGE FOOTBALL RECAP

College football made what felt like an official return in Week 4, with upsets, poor performances, odd coaching decisions, faulty special teams, conference-wide flops and more amounting to, well, a normal Saturday with or without a global pandemic. You can thank the SEC for most of that. The league returned after spending much of September on the sidelines and immediately ratcheted up the level of interest in what had been a sleepy start to the regular season. There were laughs: LSU lost to Mississippi State. There were tears: Georgia was losing at halftime to Arkansas. There were skeptical wins (Auburn over Kentucky) and not-so-pretty wins (Florida against Mississippi). The SEC's return was almost enough to overshadow another awful weekend for the Big 12. But not quite. After Oklahoma lost to Kansas State, the Big 12 has brought itself to the verge of College Football Playoff elimination before the end of the first month. The league's toe-stubbing Saturday is the biggest story to come out of Week 4 — even more so than LSU's loss, which seems shocking but is more the predictable result of the program's massive upheaval since the end of last season. Let's take a closer look.

Auburn and Mississippi State - Auburn struggled getting its running game going against Kentucky but rode opportunistic plays on defense and a solid game from sophomore quarterback Bo Nix to a 29-15 win. Are the Tigers a legitimate contender, while Kentucky will be a tough out in the East division should the offense protect the football. Mississippi State's win marks an epic debut for new coach Mike Leach and for quarterback K.J. Costello, who rewrote the program's single-game passing records after transferring from Stanford. While it took Leach's offense a year to get going during his previous stint at Washington State, the Bulldogs' offense looks ready to roll.

Louisiana - For the second week in a row, it wasn't the prettiest win: Louisiana fell behind 18-17 to Georgia Southern with 54 seconds left before driving 39 yards to set up the game-winning 53-yard field goal as time expired. It doesn't matter. As more teams slip and flop, including conference rival Appalachian State, the Ragin' Cajuns remain unbeaten and in the thick of the New Year's Six bowl race.

Pittsburgh - Only the smartest pundits saw this coming: Pitt at home in the Top 25 and a contender for a New Year's Six bowl. While moving ahead of Notre Dame into second place in the ACC (behind Clemson, obviously) is a tall task, the Panthers are now 3-0 overall and 2-0 in the ACC after a 23-20 win against Louisville. They're not flawless as a team by any means, but the Panthers' blend of experience and aggressiveness on defense gives them a shot at winning eight games during the regular season.

Cincinnati - Moving ahead of the best teams in the American might be too much for Louisiana, however. Cincinnati deserves to be placed alongside Central Florida after a 24-10 win against Army, which had been dominant through its first two games. The Bearcats held Army to 182 yards rushing on 4.2 yards per carry.

Kansas State - After losing its opener to Arkansas State, the Wildcats pulled off a second upset in as many years against Oklahoma by riding quarterback Skyler Thompson, who finished with 334 yards passing and four total touchdowns, and by forcing four turnovers, three via interceptions from Oklahoma quarterback Spencer Rattler. Given the program's physical approach under second-year coach Chris Klieman, it's remarkable the Wildcats were able to win despite gaining only 66 yards on the ground.

Arkansas - Arkansas' SEC losing streak has now hit 20 games. There's nothing good about that. But this is a positive worth highlighting: Arkansas led Georgia 7-5 at halftime. That's progress. (The final score was 37-10.)

LSU - Expecting another title run was an unfair goal to place on LSU, which has experienced far too much turnover since beating Clemson in January to survive a tough road of games through the SEC. Of course, expecting a win at home against Mississippi State seemed fair. The Tigers' loss revealed just how different the offense will look without Joe Burrow and former coordinator Joe Brady, while the new Bo Pelini-led defense allowed K.J. Costello to throw for more than 600 yards.

Georgia Tech - The positive vibes that came out of a season-opening upset of Florida State has evaporated in back-to-back losses. The first, to Central Florida, was understandable and not unexpected. Saturday's 37-20 loss at Syracuse was an ugly reminder of why Georgia Tech was picked to finish last in the ACC in the preseason poll. True freshman quarterback Jeff Sims tossed four interceptions and the Yellow Jackets committed 15 penalties.

Florida State - Miami's a clear winner after rolling over FSU 52-10, but a Miami win wasn't a surprise. Even with the caveat that new coach Mike Norvell wasn't at the game after testing positive for COVID-19, it's obvious the gap between these two rivals is wide and growing wider while the Hurricanes climb in the Coaches Poll and the Seminoles resemble one of the worst teams in the Power Five.

Big 12 - You can't sugarcoat or find any silver linings behind the Sooners' loss. Nor is there too much of a positive sort to take from Texas surviving in overtime at Texas Tech, 63-56, to remain unbeaten; while winning in Lubbock is never easy, needing every second of regulation and then some to do so is concerning. The big takeaway is this: The Big 12 did significant harm to its playoff hopes and will spend the next month scrambling to regain some footing before the Big Ten returns and joins the SEC as the top conferences in the country.

This Week's Notable Team Numbers Most Yards: BYU vs. Troy, 676 yards Most Takeaways: Virginia vs. Duke, 7 takeaways Most Combined Yards: Florida (642) vs. Ole Miss (613), 1255 combined yards Most Points: Louisiana Tech vs. Houston Baptist, 66 points Biggest Margin of Victory: SMU (50) vs. Stephen F. Austin (7), 43 points Most Combined Points: Texas (63) vs. Texas Tech (56), 119 points	This Week's Passing Leaders Cmp/Att Yds TD K.J. Costello (MSST) 36/60, 623 yds, 5TD Kyle Trask (FLA) 30/42, 416 yds, 6TD Dillon Gabriel (UCF) 32/47, 408 yds, 4TD Matt Corral (MISS) 22/31, 395 yds, 3TD Zach Wilson (BYU) 23/29, 392 yds, 2TD
This Week's Rushing Leaders Att/Yds/TD Daetrich Harrington (APP) 32 att 211 yds, 4TD Cameron Carroll (TULN) 15 att 163 yds, 3TD Breece Hall (ISU) 18 att 154 yds, 3TD D'Vonte Price (FIU) 13 att 148 yds, 2TD Nate Noel (APP) 14 att 131 yds, 1TD	This Week's Receiving Leaders Rec/Yds/TD Elijah Moore (MISS) 10 rec 227 yds, 0TD Osirus Mitchell (MSST) 7 rec 183 yds, 2TD Austin Watkins (UAB) 7 rec 183 yds, 1TD Kyle Pitts (FLA) 8 rec 170 yds, 4TD Kylin Hill (MSST) 8 rec 158 yds, 1TD

AP Top 25 - September 27, 2020					
Rk	School (1st Votes)	Pts			
1	Clemson 2-0 (55)	1542	13	Texas A&M 1-0	705
2	Alabama 1-0 (3)	1473	14	Oregon 0-0	651
3	Florida 1-0	1324	15	Cincinnati 2-0	646
4	Georgia 1-0	1310	16	Mississippi State 1-0	590
5	Notre Dame 2-0	1231	17	Oklahoma State 2-0	555
6	Ohio State 0-0 (4)	1169	18	Oklahoma 1-1	535
7	Auburn 1-0	1133	19	Wisconsin 0-0	510
8	Miami (FL) 3-0	1045	20	LSU 0-1	401
9	Texas 2-0	862	21	Tennessee 1-0	377
10	Penn State 0-0	840	22	BYU 2-0	295
11	UCF 2-0	743	23	Michigan 0-0	277
12	North Carolina 1-0	734	24	Pitt 3-0	248
			25	Memphis 1-0	196

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

B.Y.U. - 24 Over Louisiana Tech by 10

The Louisiana Tech Bulldogs look for their second road victory to improve to 3-0 on the season. The Louisiana Tech Bulldogs have won four of their last six road games. Luke Anthony is completing 58.8 percent of his passes for 463 yards, eight touchdowns and one interception. Anthony and Aaron Allen have combined for nine touchdown passes and two interceptions. Adrian Hardy and Griffin Hebert have combined for 243 receiving yards and three touchdowns while Wayne Toussant has three receptions. The Louisiana Tech Bulldogs ground game is averaging 172.5 yards per contest, and Justin Henderson leads the way with 146 yards and one touchdown. Defensively, Louisiana Tech is allowing 34 points and 447 yards per game. Tyler Grubbs leads the Louisiana Tech Bulldogs with 28 tackles, Milton Williams has two sacks and Bee Jay Williamson has one interception.

The BYU Cougars look for their second home victory to improve to 3-0 on the season. The BYU Cougars have won four straight home games. Zach Wilson is completing 78.3 percent of his passes for 624 yards, four touchdowns and one interception. Wilson has two or more touchdown passes in five of his last seven games. Gunner Romney and Dax Milne have combined for 447 receiving yards and two touchdowns while Lopini Katoa has seven receptions. The BYU Cougars ground game is averaging 246.5 yards per contest, and Tyler Allgeier leads the way with 182 yards and two touchdowns. Defensively, BYU is allowing five points and 165 yards per game. Keenan Pili leads the BYU Cougars with 13 tackles, Isaiah Kaufusi has two sacks and Drew Jensen has one forced fumble.

The BYU Cougars have the best defense in the country through two games and while their two games came against Navy and Troy, it's an impressive start no matter how you slice it. The Louisiana Tech Bulldogs are coming off wins over Southern Mississippi and Houston Baptist, and while neither of those victories are moving the needle much, they've looked great offensively and have had success on the road dating back to last season. The cougars are going to score, so the question is can the Bulldogs score. Bulldogs way up in class and way up in altitude. This is a lot of points to leave on the table. I was going to go with the over here, but I fear the Cougar defense. **I'll take my chances with the Louisiana Tech Bulldogs and the 24 points** and hold my they can run the ball enough to keep it closer than the generous number.

Projected Score: B.Y.U. 34, LA Tech 24

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Texas at T.C.U. Over 59 by 14

The TCU Horned Frogs come into this one looking to rebound from a 37-34 loss to Iowa State to kick off their season. Max Duggan threw for 241 yards, 3 touchdowns and an interception on 16 of 19 passing while Matthew Downing had a touchdown grab on 11 of 21 passing for 159 yards. Emari Demercado added a team-high 39 rushing yards while Taye Barber had a team-high 5 catches for 82 yards and a touchdown. Blair Cornwright had 74 receiving yards and a score while Artayvious Lynn and Quentin Johnson each had 62 and 50 receiving yards respectively, with both logging a receiving TD as well. Defensively, Garret Wallow had a team-high 9 total tackles along with a sack and two tackles for a loss while Dee Winters had 8 total tackles.

The Texas Longhorns will look to build off of a thrilling 63-56 OT win over Texas Tech in their conference opener to improve to 2-0 this season. Sam Ehlinger has thrown for 688 yards, 10 touchdowns and an interception on 71.2% passing while Keyontae Ingram has a team-leading 133 rushing yards and Roschon Johnson has 82 rushing yards and a pair of touchdowns. Joshua Moore leads Texas in receiving with 11 grabs for 200 yards and 4 touchdowns while Brendan Schooler has 9 catches for 123 yards and a pair of touchdowns. Defensively, Chris Adimora has a team-high 11 total tackles including a team-leading 7 solo tackles this season.

The Longhorns defense was absolutely shredded by a Texas Tech team that narrowly scraped by Houston Baptist, and while TCU's loss to Iowa State was frustrating for Horned Frogs backers, you have to be at least somewhat happy with how they performed with no previous game action before that one against an Iowa State team that already had a game under their belt. I'm not predicting a side play in this game. I'm going with what I saw last week. Texas gave up 56 points to Texas Tech, so TCU should be able to score frequently. TCU gave up 37 points to Iowa State. Now we have Ehlinger & Duggan tossing the pigskin. That's a total of 93 points. The totals line looks to be bit low. **I'll put my hard earned money on over 59.**

Projected Score: Texas 43, TCU 30

Navy - 6 Over Air Force by 14

The Navy Midshipmen look for back-to-back road victories to get a game above a .500 record. The Navy Midshipmen have won four of their last five road games. Dalen Morris is completing 53.3 percent of his passes for 155 yards, one touchdown and zero interceptions. Morris enters this game with 15 career pass attempts. Mark Walker and Mychal Cooper have combined for 149 receiving yards and one touchdown while Chance Warren has one reception. The Navy Midshipmen ground game is averaging 161.5 yards per contest, and Jamale Carothers leads the way with 155 yards on 34 carries. Defensively, Navy is allowing 39.5 points and 476.5 yards per game. Diego Fagot leads the Navy Midshipmen with 22 tackles, Ian Blake has 1.5 tackles for loss and Evan Fochtman has one interception.

The Air Force Falcons will make their season debut after producing an 11-2 record last year. The Air Force Falcons have won 10 of their last 12 home games. Donald Hammond III was expected to return at quarterback, but there were reports back in July that he's no longer in good standing and is likely to miss the entire 2020 season. Hammond passed for 13 touchdowns and rushed for 13 touchdowns, so it's safe to say that's a massive blow to this Air Force offense. Air Force loses its top-three receivers from last year but does have an experienced tight end in Ben Peterson and gets its leading rusher back in Kadin Remsberg, who is fresh off a 1,000-yard season. Defensively, Demonte Meeks returns after leading Air Force with 98 tackles, Jordan Jackson had 3.5 sacks and Milton Bugg III had three interceptions. With no Hammond at quarterback, defense is likely going to lead the way early for Air Force and there could certainly be some early growing pains with this club.

This is a rivalry game, so getting Air Force and the free points at home is tempting, but I have no idea what QB they will be starting. Whoever it is, they have very little if no game time experience. Unless Hammond is reinstated as a cadet I see no reason to back Air Force. Navy hasn't looked great through two games and nearly blew a game against Tulane, but the Midshipmen have also had a pair of games to knockoff the rust and kind of get in the swing of things. Air Force is coming into this game cold and is without its star quarterback. I have no reason not to lay the TD with Navy on the road. Note that Navy is 87-47 ATS (+35.3 Units) in road games since 1992. **Take the road warriors. Middies is my bet.**

Projected Score: Navy 27, Air Force 13

Southern Mississippi at North Texas Over 72 by 9

The Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles need a feel good victory here to rebound from a rough 0-3 start. The Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles have split their last six road games. Jack Abraham is completing 67.6 percent of his passes for 877 yards, five touchdowns and two interceptions. Abraham has two or more touchdown passes in four of his last eight games. Tim Jones and Jason Brownlee have combined for 490 receiving yards and four touchdowns while Demarcus Jones has 17 receptions. The Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles ground game is averaging 98 yards per contest, and Kevin Perkins leads the way with 82 yards and two touchdowns. Malik Shorts leads the Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles with 28 tackles, Tahj Sykes has one sack and Eric Scott Jr. has one interception.

The North Texas Mean Green look for their second home victory to get a game above a .500 record. The North Texas Mean Green have won five of their last eight home games. Austin Aune is completing 52.8 percent of his passes for 387 yards, three touchdowns and one interception. Aune and Jason Bean have combined for seven touchdown passes and two interceptions. Jaelon Darden and Greg White have combined for 241 receiving yards and six touchdowns while Jyaire Shorter has four receptions. The North Texas Mean Green ground game is averaging 286 yards per contest, and Oscar Adaway III leads the way with 222 yards and two touchdowns. Kevin Wood leads the North Texas Mean Green with 18 tackles, Larry Nixon III has one sack and Jaxon Gibbs has one pass deflection.

This is a massive total but for good reason. The Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles are fresh off a game where they allowed 66 points against Tulane, and they're 69th in college football out of 72 teams in rush defense. The North Texas Mean Green allowed 31 points to Houston Baptist and 65 points against SMU. North Texas is 68th in pass defense and 62nd in rush defense. Instead of trying to pick a side in what feels like a toss up game, expect constant scoring.

Huge number doesn't look that bad when you look note the following. Defensively, Southern Mississippi is allowing 43 points and 493 yards per game. Defensively, North Texas is allowing 48 points and 639.5 yards per game. Should be cool at night in Denton, so the scoreboard shouldn't overheat. **Take over 72 points.**

Projected Score: North Texas 41, So Miss U 40

Troy - 5 Over South Alabama by 14

The Trojans opened with a nice effort versus Middle Tennessee in the win. Troy QB Gunnar Watson had 248 yards, two touchdowns and an interception in that one, and BJ Smith led the rush on 10 carries and 81 yards. Khalil McClain had six catches in that one with 75 yards and two TDs.

The BYU game was tougher for Troy, as the Trojans couldn't get anything going on offense. The Cougars literally bullied the Trojans. Watson had 162 yards on 21-of-33 passing in that one, and Tray Eafford had two catches for 59 yards to lead the receivers. Kimandi Vidal was the top rusher for Troy with just 23 yards on four carries.

Over on the Jaguars' side, they've managed a paltry 34 combined points in their last two games. In the three-point loss to Tulane, South Alabama QB Chance Lortich had 247 yards and two touchdowns, and Carlos Davis led the rush with 82 yards and a TD. Kawaan Baker added seven receptions for 129 yards and a TD.

Things were even worse in the 32-point loss to UAB. Lortich gave the Jaguars 168 yards, one TD and an INT while Jalen Tolbert had the lone receiving score with 59 yards. Davis turned in a solid rushing day on 17 carries for 105 yards.

Troy got hammered by a much better BYU team. This week they drop way down in class facing USA. Troy will find the going much easier this week. The Trojans offense is better than USA and they'll bounce back in this spot. Troy is 2-0 against the spread versus USA over the last 3 seasons. **I'll back the Trojans to cover here.**

Projected Score: Troy 38, USA 24

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NFL BEST BETS 3-1 LAST WEEK NFL GUARANTEED PICKS ON A HOT STREAK PATRIOTS at CHIEFS BATTLE

NFL Football Recap

If you were holding an under ticket in the Cincinnati Bengals-Philadelphia Eagles battle, congrats. If you were holding an over ticket, my condolences. The Bengals were leading 23-16 before QB Carson Wentz desperately scrambled for the right corner of the end zone, diving for the pylon with 21 seconds left in regulation to tie the game 23-23. We, personally, had a Bengals + pick in our Gridiron Gold Sheet, so all of a sudden our smile disappeared, as a potential touchdown in overtime by Philadelphia would sink the pick after we'd been on the correct side most of the day. Thankfully that scenario didn't play out. Anyway, neither team did much of anything in the overtime session, never really threatening to score. The Eagles did drive down the field late, and PK Jake Elliott was about to trot out for the 59-yard field goal to win it. However, a false start penalty caused the Eagles to back it up five yards and head coach Doug Pederson elected to punt the ball away and accept the tie. Oddly enough, these teams who meet every four years have played to a tie in two of the previous four meetings. Remember when Donovan McNabb didn't know that overtime ended in a tie? That was a game on Nov. 16, 2008 in Cincinnati.

The Biggest Disappointment for Dennis was the Atlanta Falcons (-2.5) were leading 26-10 heading to the fourth quarter over the Chicago Bears. It looked like Atlanta was going to avenge last week's disgusting collapse on the road against the Dallas Cowboys when they blew a 39-24 lead to fall 40-39. They allowed 20 unanswered points in the fourth quarter on their home field, becoming the first team in NFL history to lose consecutive games when leading by 15 or + points in the final quarter.

The lowest total on the board was in the Buccaneers-Broncos (42.5) game, one which saw future Hall of Fame QB Tom Brady squaring off against backup QB Jeff Driskel, with QB Drew Lock sidelined due to injury. The game looked like it was going to be a slam-dunk over, as the Bucs led 23-10 at halftime. Over bettors rejoiced. Then we saw a total of five points in the second half, including a scoreless fourth quarter. Ouch.

The second-lowest total (43.5) was in both the San Francisco 49ers-New York Giants game and the battle between the Carolina Panthers-Los Angeles Chargers. The 49ers led the Giants 29-9 late in the fourth quarter before RB Jeff Wilson Jr. punched one in from two yards out to push the total over, 36-9.

The highest total on the board Sunday didn't disappoint. The Cowboys and Seahawks (57) saw the line rise from 55.5 to 57 during the week. The teams were tied 9-9 after the first quarter, and Seattle led 23-15 at halftime. The scoring continued in the second half, as the Seahawks won 38-31, hanging on to the end similar to their Week 2 SNF win. The teams combined for at least 14 points in every quarter in this one.

The first two prime time games saw the total go 1-1, with the MNF game between the Chiefs and Ravens (55) pending. The Dolphins routed their Sunshine State neighbors, the Jaguars, 31-13. The over was on pace at halftime, with a total of 28 points on the board, but a low-scoring second half sent under bettors to the window with a win. The shootout between the Packers and Saints (52) lived up to the hype despite the fact both WRs Davante Adams and Michael Thomas were sidelined for their respective teams.

So far this season the over is 5-4 (55.5%) across nine prime time games. In 2019, the 'over' was just 17-31-1 (35.4%) during prime time games. Ya think maybe it has to do with offenses being ahead of defenses due to covid-19 practice and preseason limitations.

Looking Ahead to Week 4: Marquee Game - Patriots at Chiefs (Sunday, 4:25 ET). The Patriots square off with the defending champs, who have had a brutal schedule to date. The Chiefs already faced Houston, Baltimore and now the Pats in 3 of the first 4 games. The Pats came up just short in a Week 2 SNF battle in Seattle, losing 35-30 as QB Cam Newton was stuffed at the goal line to end the game. They could've been 3-0 SU. Falcons at Packers (MNF): If you plan on betting the over, do it now! The line will rise like the sun during the week. Green Bay has hit over by at least 12 points in all 2020 games & Matty rings the bell often.

This Week's Top Performers (minus MNF)

Alvin Kamara* (NOR): 13 rec, 139 yds, 2 TD
 Russell Wilson* (SEA): 27/40, 315 yds, 5 TD
 Tyler Lockett* (SEA): 9 rec, 100 yds, 3 TD
 Rex Burkhead* (NWE): 98 yds from scrim, 3 TD
 Josh Allen* (BUF): 24/33, 311 yds, 4 TD; 1 rush TD
 James Robinson (JAX): 129 yds from scrim, 2 TD
 Dak Prescott (DAL): 37/57, 472 yds, 3 TD
 Jared Goff (LAR): 23/32, 321 yds, 2 TD; rush TD
 Justin Jefferson (MIN): 7 rec, 175 yds, 1 TD
 Derrick Henry (TEN): 26 rush, 119 yds, 2 TD

Week 3 Passing Leaders (minus MNF)

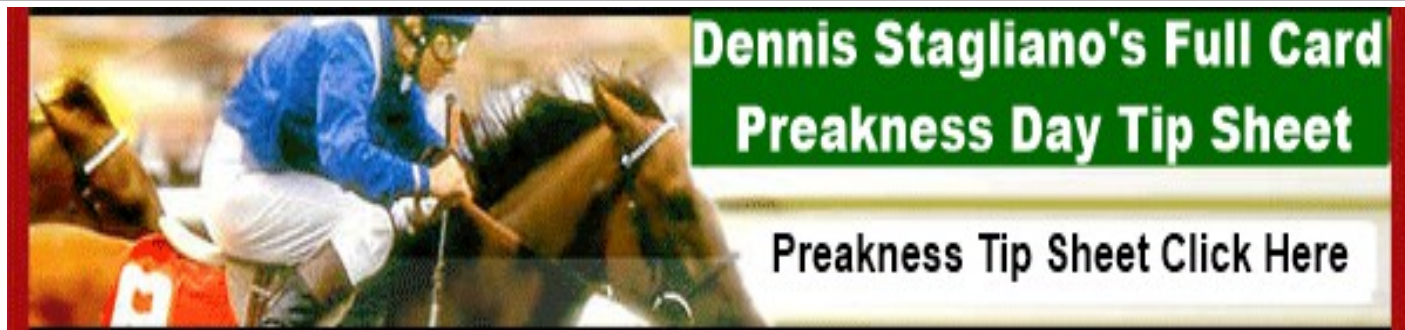
Cmp/Att Yds TD

Dak Prescott (DAL) 37/57 472 yds, 3TD
 Nick Mullens (SFO) 25/36 343 yds, 1TD
 Justin Herbert (LAC) 35/49 330 yds, 1TD
 Ryan Tannehill (TEN) 23/37 321 yds, 0TD
 Jared Goff (LAR) 23/32 321 yds, 2TD

Week 3 Rushing Leaders (minus MNF)

Att/Yds/TD

Dalvin Cook (MIN) 22 att 181 yds, 1TD
 Derrick Henry (TEN) 26 att 119 yds, 2TD
 Sony Michel (NWE) 9 att 117 yds, 0TD
 Darrell Henderson (LAR) 20 att 114 yds, 1TD
 James Conner (PIT) 18 att 109 yds, 1TD



PREAKNESS STAKES SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2020



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PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Carolina +4½ Over Arizona by 3

Kyler Murray was in MVP consideration entering last week's game, but that campaign came to an abrupt halt. Murray struggled in the game, as we all were reminded that Murray is just a second-year quarterback who still has room for improvement. Murray threw three interceptions in this game, though the first one wasn't quite his fault. The initial pick occurred because Murray was hit as he released the ball. However, the other two interceptions were all on Murray. The second one was a result of Jamie Collins jumping the route, as he read Murray's eyes perfectly. Jeff Okudah then did the same thing as Collins on the third interception, taking advantage of Murray making a mistake by throwing late across his body. Okudah stepped in front of DeAndre Hopkins and snatched the pick. Murray nearly committed a fourth pick when he stared down his receiver, but safety Duron Harmon dropped an easy interception. Murray went 23-of-35 for 270 yards, two touchdowns and the trio of picks. He scored a third touchdown on the ground, gaining 29 yards on five scrambles in the process. Despite the rough game for Murray, Hopkins still posted terrific numbers. He caught 10 of his 12 targets for 137 yards. He also drew a defensive holding penalty. Hopkins didn't score a touchdown, as Murray's two touchdowns were thrown to Andy Isabella (4-47), who was on the field more because of Christian Kirk's injury. Kenyan Drake rushed for 73 yards on 18 carries.

The Panthers didn't have much success on the ground last week. Mike Davis handled the majority of the workload in Christian McCaffrey's absence, and he rushed for just 46 yards on 13 carries. However, he did his best McCaffrey impression as a receiver out of the backfield, catching eight balls for 45 receiving yards and a touchdown, which came after a Charger penalty on special teams gave Carolina a fresh set of downs in the red zone. Davis was behind just D.J. Moore (2-65) and Robby Anderson (5-55) on the receiving list. Curtis Samuel was also involved, as he caught four balls for 45 yards. Teddy Bridgewater did a great job of managing his game, as he was very efficient despite the difficult matchup. The Chargers put the clamps on Patrick Mahomes, but seemed more lethargic in this contest. This allowed Bridgewater to complete 22-of-28 passes for 235 yards and a touchdown. One of his incompletions was a drop by tight end Ian Thomas.

I like how Teddy Bridgewater manages the offense. He obviously learned a lot from Drew Brees. Panthers showed great energy last week and Arizona was off with Murray faltering. Panthers are 7-3 ATS in their last 10 games as an underdog of 0.5-3.0. Cardinals are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games as a favorite of 3.5-10. **I'm taking the home underdog Panthers.**

Projected Score: Carolina 26, Arizona 23

Jacksonville +3½ Over Cincinnati by 4

Minshew, the mustachioed quarterback played well in the first two weeks, making many wonder if his improved play would deter the Jaguars from selecting Trevor Lawrence. However, Minshew was a major disappointment against a pedestrian Miami defense that was missing one of its star cornerbacks. He had a nice drive in the opening quarter, but that was it. Minshew was especially brutal in the second half, failing to complete a pass longer than 10 yards until a couple of minutes were remaining. Minshew had some misleading stats as a result of garbage time. He finished 30-of-42 for 275 yards and an interception in desperation mode. While the pick was irrelevant because the game was already out of hand, Minshew could have easily thrown several more interceptions. One potential pick nearly occurred when he irresponsibly launched a bomb into triple coverage in the opening half. Minshew then had a possible interception dropped in the red zone. Making matters worse, Minshew lost a fumble on a strip-sack. The verb in that previous sentence would properly describe Minshew in this game: lost. He appeared befuddled by Brian Flores' scheme. The Minshew bandwagon may not be completely derailed in the wake of this defeat, but it certainly blew a tire. It should be noted that Minshew missed top receiver D.J. Chark, but he needed to be better in this game for the Jaguars to improve to 2-1. Like Minshew, fourth-string running back James Robinson impressed in the first two weeks of the season. While Minshew struggled in this contest, Robinson continued to thrive. He didn't get much of an opportunity to carry the ball because of the constant deficit - 11 carries, 46 yards - but he scored twice and was a monster as a receiver out of the backfield. He caught six passes for 83 yards, as he was able to elude defenders with ease. Robinson has shown promise and could be the starting running back heading into 2021.

Joe Burrow, conversely, did some good things last week despite some poor pass protection. He went 31-of-44 for 312 yards and two touchdowns. He led some great drives, but also made some errors, including one

occasion in which he had Auden Tate open for a first down, but didn't throw the ball. Burrow got hurt in the third quarter, but he missed just one play. Burrow had a mixed game overall, but suffered some bad luck. For instance, he completed one 20-yard pass where he spun out of three potential sacks. The play was reversed because of a penalty, but it was still an amazing play. Burrow also found Tee Higgins for a nice gain down the sideline in overtime, but a holding penalty negated it. Burrow was very close to leading an upset on the road. He'll be much better eventually with more experience and presumably an improved offensive line. Of all the skill players, Tyler Boyd was most productive, as he caught 10 of his 13 targets for 125 yards. A.J. Green was a disappointment once again, snatching just five passes for 36 yards. Rookie Tee Higgins (5-40) caught two touchdowns and saw nine targets in the process. Joe Mixon didn't find much running room, gaining only 49 yards on 17 carries.

Minshew is coming off a tough week and I expect him to bounce back this week. The jungle is not as intimidating without the animals around. I like the moxy of Joe Burrow and especially at home where he is more comfortable. Jaguars are 16-6-1 ATS in their last 23 games as a road underdog of 3.5-10. Bengals are 3-12 ATS in their last 15 home games and 8-21-3 ATS in their last 32 games as a home favorite of 0.5-3.5.

Enough said, **I'm backing the mustache with the points.**

Projected Score: Jacksonville 27, Cincinnati 23

Dallas - 4½ Over Cleveland by 11

Last week was a battle of quarterbacks between the Browns and Football Team, who tried to commit the most errors. Dwayne Haskins kicked off the festivities by nearly throwing an interception into double coverage, and then Baker Mayfield nearly did the same on a horrible under throw. It was so bad, in fact, that Odell Beckham Jr. had to bat the pass away from the defensive back. Mayfield was lucky that this wasn't a turnover, while Dwayne Haskins wasn't as fortunate. He heaved an interception on a miserable overthrow, all while staring down his receivers. This set up a touchdown for the Browns on a short field, giving Cleveland a 10-7 lead. The Browns had better luck running the ball, as Nick Chubb rumbled for 108 yards and two touchdowns on only 19 carries. Kareem Hunt didn't do as much on the ground - 16 carries, 46 yards - but he caught two passes for 18 receiving yards and a touchdown. Hunt also made an amazing one-handed reception on a pass thrown behind him. Mayfield finished 16-of-23 for 156 yards and two touchdowns. He was fortunate for two reasons: one, that his horrible pass was batted away by his teammate, and two, Chase Young left the game early with a groin injury. The Browns weren't doing much offensively to start the afternoon, but they had much more success moving the chains when Young was knocked out of the contest. Considering the great matchup, Beckham was a major disappointment with four catches for 59 yards, though he was able to save Mayfield from a sure interception. Jarvis Landry (4-36) also struggled.

Last week Ezekiel Elliott had a rough afternoon. He found the end zone once, but was limited to just 34 yards on 14 carries. He also caught six passes for 24 receiving yards. However, Elliott took a safety and dropped three passes, two of which came on consecutive plays. One drop bounced off Elliott's head, so it's fair to wonder if he was mentally focused for this affair. Dak Prescott made up for Elliott's struggles, though he needed all of Seattle's injuries to thrive. Prescott, stuck in a constant deficit, had to air out the ball 57 times. He completed 37 of those passes to accumulate 472 yards, three touchdowns and a pair of interceptions. One pick wasn't his fault because it occurred at the very end on a desperation throw. That said, Prescott had a sure pick that was dropped. In fact, it popped into the air and into the arms of a Dallas player. With this sort of good luck, it's a wonder that the Cowboys lost this game. Of Prescott's three touchdowns, only one went to Michael Gallup, Amari Cooper, CeeDee Lamb and Dalton Schultz. Gallup caught six passes for 138 yards and a touchdown. Cooper (9-86) had a strong performance, while Lamb (5-65) was just fine.

Here's the thing. The Browns have all those wide-out weapons but Mayfield has problems getting the ball to this star receivers. The best weapon for the Browns thus far has been Nick Chubbs. Conversely, Dak has been hot and spreading the pigskin to everyone. Zeke can't be any worse than last week. Browns are 0-7 ATS in their last 7 road games and 0-4 ATS in their last 4 games as an underdog of 3.5-10. Cowboys are 20-7 ATS in their last 27 games after accumulating less than 90 yards rushing in their previous game. Cowboys are 10-4 ATS in their last 14 games after allowing more than 250 yards passing in their previous game. **Take the Boys.**

Projected Score: Dallas 34, Cleveland 23

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Minnesota +4½ Over Houston by 3

Last week, it didn't seem as though the Titans would be improving to 3-0 for most of the afternoon. Ryan Tannehill made mistakes throughout the contest. The Vikings ultimately established a 24-12 lead, but things began unraveling for them. The beleaguered Kirk Cousins should have been pick-sixed on a miscommunication with his receiver, though Jadeveon Clowney's penalty negated the return. Still, it gave the Titans some life. They had one final chance at the end that was nearly ruined by a potential interception that was dropped. This set up a Stephen Gostkowski 55-yard game-winning field goal, which the long-time Patriot converted. Dalvin Cook had a huge performance. Cook out gained Henry, as he accumulated 181 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries. The Titans had no answer for Cook - outside of forcing a fumble in the opening quarter to set up a field goal - which makes it odd that the Vikings blew a double-digit lead in the second half.

Cousins had a nice fantasy day, as he went 16-of-27 for 251 yards, three touchdowns and a pair of interceptions. However, Cousins blew it with the aforementioned pick, though his second interception was a desperation heave at the end of regulation. Cousins always seems to be good for bone-headed plays at inopportune moments, and his near-pick-six was one of them. The silver lining for the Vikings, who are now 0-3, is that they appear to have a huge stud in Justin Jefferson. The first-round rookie had a breakout game after playing behind Olabisi Johnson for the first two weeks. Jefferson led the team in receiving, catching seven of his nine targets for a ridiculous 175 yards and a TD. This includes a 32-yard reception down the sideline in which he made a terrific adjustment to make the catch over the defender. His next deep reception was a 76-yard touchdown bomb in which Jefferson dodged two defenders to run into the end zone. Elsewhere in the receiving corps, Adam Thielen also found the end zone, but he caught just three passes for 29 yards. Kyle Rudolph (2-11) also scored a touchdown.

For a while, it seemed as though the Steelers would suffer an upset at the hands of the Texans last week. Houston moved the ball quite well throughout the opening half, averaging seven yards per play. Deshaun Watson was unstoppable. He made some spectacular plays, including one instance in which he somehow escaped three potential sacks on a third-and-9 and then found a receiver for a first down to set up a first-and-goal. David Johnson scored a touchdown on the very next play to give the Texans a 14-3 lead. It looked like the Texans would run away with this game, but they were outscored 25-7 the rest of the way. Things melted down for Watson in the second half, as Pittsburgh's defense proved to be too much. Watson completed just five passes after intermission. That's right: just five passes. He also threw an interception where he irresponsibly heaved the ball way back across his body. Watson finished 19-of-27 for 264 yards, two touchdowns and the pick. It was a tale of two halves for Watson, but the overall story is the same: Watson's supporting cast and coaching staff mostly sucks. As for Houston's receiving corps, Randall Cobb (4-95) and Will Fuller (4-54) led the team in receiving and also scored touchdowns. They were the only Texans with more than 35 receiving yards, as Brandin Cooks (3-23) did very little. There was hardly any running room for David Johnson in this contest. He mustered only 23 yards on 13 carries. Still, it's a big disappointment, as Bill O'Brien's DeAndre Hopkins trade is not looking too smart.

Texans are 2-8-1 ATS in their last 11 games as a home underdog of 0.5-3.0. Texans are 1-5 ATS in their last 6 games as a home favorite of 3.5-10. Vikings are 13-5 ATS in their last 18 games as an underdog of 3.5-10. Vikings are 5-1 ATS in their last 6 games after allowing more than 30 points in their previous game. Both teams have been struggling this year so I'm taking the points in this spot as Houston doesn't fare well as a home fav. **Projected Score: Minnesota 27, Houston 24**

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	LA Tech + 24	TCU Over 59	Navy - 6	N Texas Over 72	Troy - 5
NFL	Panthers + 4½	Jaguars + 3½	Cowboys - 4½	Vikings + 4½	

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