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CFB CHAMPIONSHIP WEEK IS HERE CHAMPIONSHIP PICKS INSIDE

NCAA Landscape

In the first seven years of the College Football Playoff, four teams have gobbled up 17 of the 28 available spots: Alabama, Clemson, Ohio State and Oklahoma. After a crazy rivalry week, the sport is close to having a playoff featuring none of the above.

For years, critics of the four-team playoff have argued that expanding the field will be good for the game and get more programs involved. Instead, football's middle class decided to rise up and defeat the programs that have lorded over the sport since the playoff era started in 2014.

No. 10 Oklahoma was edged by No. 7 Oklahoma State in its first Bedlam loss since 2014 and just third since Mike Gundy took over the Cowboys in 2005. Not to be outdone, No. 2 Ohio State physically collapsed against No. 5 Michigan for its first loss in The Game since 2011. No. 3 Alabama survived -- barely -- against rival Auburn, but is limping at best and prepares to face No. 1 Georgia.

Right now, most pundits project No. 1 Georgia, No. 2 Michigan, No. 3 Cincinnati and No. 4 Oklahoma State as the likely playoff field. The Wolverines boast the most recent crown, a split national championship in 1997 that ushered in the BCS. Georgia comes next with a title in 1980. Oklahoma State claims a dubious (sorry, Pokes) Sagarin ratings national championship in 1945, while Cincinnati has no title -- or even top-five finish -- to claim.

Point is, some fanbase is about to be historically happy. And when that happens, seeing some new blood compete and win at the sport's highest level is only going to show why expanding the playoff field is a no brainer.

Few, if any, would have expected teams that rank No. 15, No. 47 and No. 54 to have beaten teams that rank No. 3, No. 6 and No. 12, respectively, in championship-defining situations. When everything is on the line, there are enough good players and coaches throughout the sport to produce mayhem. And with Oklahoma, Ohio State and Clemson now going to "regular" bowl games, there will be more opportunities than ever for the middle class to show that on any given day, they can compete with the best.

Here are the winners and losers in college football after last week's games.

Winners

Michigan: Finally, Jim Harbaugh's moment has come. After losing his first five matchups against Ohio State, his Wolverines put together the biggest win since he arrived in Ann Arbor. Michigan rushed for

nearly 300 yards and made the Buckeyes look soft in one of the most physical displays of the season. Suddenly, it's Ohio State having to answer existential questions about competing for national championships. In many ways, this is the team that was promised when Harbaugh took over the program in 2015. The Wolverines win with efficient quarterback play, stifling defense and a powerful run game that has become far more multiple under offensive coordinator Josh Gattis. There might not be a bigger winner in college football this season ... assuming the Wolverines can top Iowa next week and capture their first Big Ten Championship since 2004.

Ed Orgeron: Coach O has had quite the life on the Bayou. First he led LSU to a national championship with Heisman winner Joe Burrow in one of the greatest runs of all time. Then, after his touted assistants left for other jobs, he earned a sizable golden parachute and left to raucous applause as he beat -- who else? -- reported LSU coaching target Jimbo Fisher and his No. 15 Texas A&M squad 27-24 in his final game as Tigers head coach. Despite the way it ended, Orgeron will be a Louisiana legend forever.

Oklahoma State: Like Michigan, Oklahoma State's struggles against its rival have defined the program for the last decade. The only two wins for the Cowboys came when they fielded the best team in program history in 2011 and then in 2014. This one was different. Oklahoma State didn't catch Oklahoma in an off season; playoff hopes were on the line for both programs as the Sooners wind down their time in the Big 12. Down by two scores entering the fourth quarter, it was Oklahoma State emerging as the more physically and mentally strong team, outscoring the Sooners 14-0 and not allowing a single offensive point in the second half. If this is the final moment of Bedlam in Stillwater for years, Oklahoma State fans can rest easy.

Washington State: Few programs have faced the adversity the Cougars have in the last year. Former head coach Nick Rolovich had a very public feud with administration over the COVID-19 vaccine, and he was ultimately fired because of the statewide mandate. Young assistant Jake Dickert was handed the reins to the program midway through the year. However, the Cougars bounced back and won three of their last four Pac-12 games, including a 40-13 victory over rival Washington for their first Apple Cup win since 2012. For his efforts, Wazzu named Dickert the full-time head coach.

Losers

Nebraska: I don't believe in jinxes or curses, but Cornhuskers, what did you do to anger the football gods? Nebraska capped off one of the most unbelievably unlucky seasons in college football history with a record ninth loss by single-digits, a 28-21 decision against No. 16 Iowa. The 'Huskers held a 21-6 lead with 5:54 remaining in the third quarter, but allowed 22 unanswered points down the stretch, including a two-yard run by Iowa quarterback Spencer Petras to capture the game. Nebraska coach Scott Frost is back for another season in 2022, but for his sake, he had better perform an exorcism on Memorial Stadium before that campaign begins.

UTSA: The good news is that UTSA still hosts Western Kentucky in the Conference USA Championship Game. Going 11-1 is an unprecedented moment for one of the nation's youngest programs and head coach Jeff Traylor has made a commitment to the program for the long term. The bad news is that the Roadrunners followed up an emotional win over UAB with an incredible 45-23 letdown at North Texas that ended their perfect season and allowed the Mean Green to earn bowl eligibility. UTSA may not finish the season ranked in the top 25 after the loss, and the likelihood of quality bowls taking interest in a now one-loss Conference USA squad has diminished greatly.

Wisconsin: Heading into rivalry week, Wisconsin's season could be broken up into two parts: Pre-Braylon Allen and post-Braylon Allen. But in a 23-13 loss to Minnesota, the No. 14 Badgers proved that the second-half renaissance had much more to do with competition level than the introduction of a talented freshman running back alone. The Gophers held Wisconsin to just 62 yards rushing and 233 total yards in the loss as the Badgers blew their chances to make the Big Ten Championship Game.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Western Kentucky Over UTSA by 10 & Over 72 by 8

The Conference USA Championship is set for Friday night when the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers (8-4, 7-1) take on the UTSA Roadrunners (11-1, 7-1). UTSA is making their first appearance in the championship game while Western Kentucky is looking for their third title, first since 2016. The Western Kentucky Hilltoppers and the UTSA Roadrunners meet Friday in Conference USA Championship college football action from the Alamodome. This game will air live on CBS Sports Network.

Through the regular season, the WKU offense is averaging 42.4 points per game and 528.7 yards per game, 431.4 through the air and 97.4 on the ground. Defensively, the Hilltoppers are allowing 27.5 points and 419.2 yards, 267.6 passing and 151.5 rushing.

The UTSA offense is averaging 38.2 points per game and 439.6 yards per game, 263.0 through the air and 176.6 on the ground. Defensively, the Roadrunners are allowing 20.1 points and 336.8 yards, 235.1 passing and 101.7 rushing.

Western Kentucky Trends: Western Kentucky are 5-0 ATS in their last 5 games. The total has gone OVER in 11 of Western Kentucky's last 15 games. Western Kentucky are 7-0 SU in their last 7 games. Western Kentucky are 4-1 SU in their last 5 games on the road. Western Kentucky are 5-0 SU in their last 5 games this season. Western Kentucky are 5-0 ATS in their last 5 games against an opponent in the Conference USA conference. The total has gone OVER in 5 of Western Kentucky's last 7 games played in December. The total has gone OVER in 5 of Western Kentucky's last 6 games played in week 14.

UTSA Trends: Texas-San Antonio are 10-4 ATS in their last 14 games. The total has gone OVER in 4 of Texas-San Antonio's last 5 games. Texas-San Antonio are 11-1 SU in their last 12 games. Texas-San Antonio are 9-0 SU in their last 9 games at home. Texas-San Antonio are 9-1 SU in their last 10 games this season. The total has gone OVER in 4 of Texas-San Antonio's last 5 games against an opponent in the Conference USA conference. The total has gone OVER in 4 of Texas-San Antonio's last 5 games when playing as the favorite.

Last time out, WKU overcame a slow first half to win 53-21 at the Marshall Thundering Herd. WKU trailed 14-6 at the half, but went off in the second half and scored 30 unanswered points to take control of the game. Bailey Zappe went 25/48 for 328 yards, four touchdowns, and zero interceptions on the day. Daewood Davis hauled in three balls for 105 yards and two touchdowns in this one. Defensively, the Hilltoppers allowed 325 total yards and forced two Marshall turnovers, one interception and one fumble.

The UTSA perfect season came to an end with a 45-23 road loss to the North Texas Green Mean. This game was 17-13, North Texas, midway through the second quarter, but the Mean Green scored the next 28 points to take and commanding lead and pull off the upset. Three different UTSA passers went a combined 21/27 for 161 yards, one touchdown, zero interceptions, and combined for 72 rushing yards and one touchdown. Defensively, the Roadrunners allowed 456 total yards and recovered two North Texas lost fumbles.

UTSA won the regular season meeting earlier this season to tie the all-time series up at one win a piece. That matchup (on October 9) was pretty epic, with both teams scoring in every quarter on the way to a 52-46 Roadrunners win. Neither defense could stop the high scoring offensive units.

WKU is on a great run since then and the Roadrunners are coming off a down game. This one should be another competitive matchup. Roadrunners were shocked last week and sometimes that lingers into the next game. **I'm going with WKU on the money line -115 and betting the total over 72. Projected Score: Western Kentucky 45, UTSA 35**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Utah - 2½ Over Oregon by 10

The Pac-12 Championship game is set for Friday night when the Oregon Ducks (10-2, 7-2) face-off against the Utah Utes (9-3, 8-1). Oregon has won the past two conference titles and are looking for their share of their 14th conference championship. Utah is looking for their first Pac-12 championship in their third championship game appearance and win their 25th conference title in school history. This game will air live on ABC from Allegiant Stadium.

Through the regular season, the Oregon offense is averaging 32.7 points per game and 427.9 yards per game, 215.5 through the air and 212.5 on the ground. Defensively, the Ducks are allowing 24.0 points and 325.9 yards, 199.3 passing and 126.6 rushing.

The Utah offense is averaging 35.3 points per game and 434.3 yards per game, 216.1 through the air and 218.2 on the ground. Defensively, the Utes are allowing 21.5 points and 325.9 yards, 199.3 passing and 126.6 rushing.

Oregon trends: Oregon are 4-2 ATS in their last 6 games. The total has gone OVER in 4 of Oregon's last 6 games. Oregon are 6-1 SU in their last 7 games. Oregon are 8-4 SU in their last 12 games against Utah. Oregon are 10-2 SU in their last 12 games this season. Oregon are 6-1 SU in their last 7 games against an opponent in the Pac-12 conference. The total has gone OVER in 4 of Oregon's last 6 games against an opponent in the South Division division. The total has gone UNDER in 5 of Oregon's last 7 games played in December. Oregon are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games played in week 14.

Utah trends: The total has gone OVER in 6 of Utah's last 8 games. Utah are 5-0 SU in their last 5 games. The total has gone OVER in 7 of Utah's last 9 games against Oregon. Utah are 8-1 SU in their last 9 games this season. Utah are 5-0 SU in their last 5 games against an opponent in the Pac-12 conference. The total has gone OVER in 4 of Utah's last 6 games against an opponent in the North Division division. The total has gone OVER in 5 of Utah's last 6 games played in December. Utah are 1-7 ATS in their last 8 games played in week 14. Utah are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games played on a Friday.

Last time out, Oregon won the Civil War with a 38-29 win over the Oregon State Beavers. Oregon took a 34-3 lead into the half, but Oregon State fought back a bit to make the final score a bit more respectable. Anthony Brown went 23/28 for 275 yards, two touchdowns, zero interceptions, and added 83 yards and one touchdown on the ground. Travis Dye had 99 rushing yards and two touchdowns and Devon Williams hauled in six balls for 110 yards and one touchdown. Defensively, the Ducks allowed 393 total yards and forced one Oregon State interception.

Utah hosted the Colorado Buffaloes and came away with a comfortable 28-13 win. Colorado made this a one-point game in the third quarter, but Utah scored the final 14 points to get the two-touchdown win. Cameron Rising went 14/23 for 179 yards, three touchdowns, and one interception. Tavion Thomas had a big day with 142 rushing yards and one touchdown, and TJ Pledger also added 103 yards on the ground. Defensively, the Utes allowed just 148 total yards and did not force any Colorado turnovers.

Oregon still leads the all-time series 23-11. We just saw the Utes beat up on the Ducks a couple of weeks ago, but this time they won't have that nasty home crowd at Rice-Eccles Stadium. Utah is the more balanced team here and is playing the better football down the home stretch, but the Ducks are better offensively than what they showed in the first meeting, and they'll certainly have revenge on their mind with the Utes knocking them out of the playoffs. While I respect the Oregon program, I also believe Utah is a better coached and tougher team. I find value with the Utes in this matchup.

Give me the Utes - 2½.

Projected Score: Utah 34, Oregon 24

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Michigan - 10½ Over Iowa by 21

The Big Ten title game has big playoff implications when the Michigan Wolverines (11-1, 8-1) and Iowa Hawkeyes (10-2, 7-2) battle it out Saturday night from Lucas Oil Stadium. A win will see Michigan make the playoffs for the first time. Iowa has appeared in one previous Big Ten Championship game, losing in 2015, while this will be Michigan's first trip to Indy. This game will air live on FOX.

The Michigan offense is averaging 37.3 points per game and 451.2 yards per game, 226.3 through the air and 224.9 on the ground. Defensively, the Wolverines are allowing 17.2 points and 319.4 yards, 196.3 passing and 123.1 rushing.

Iowa is averaging 25.7 points per game and 299.1 yards per game, 177.9 through the air and 121.2 on the ground. Defensively, the Hawkeyes are allowing 17.3 points and 315.8 yards, 210.0 passing and 105.8 rushing.

Michigan trends: Michigan are 7-1 ATS in their last 8 games. Michigan are 11-1 SU in their last 12 games. Michigan are 6-3 ATS in their last 9 games against Iowa. Michigan are 2-5 SU in their last 7 games against Iowa. Michigan are 9-1 SU in their last 10 games this season. Michigan are 8-1 SU in their last 9 games against an opponent in the Big Ten conference. Michigan are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games against an opponent in the West Division division. Michigan are 0-5 ATS in their last 5 games played in December. The total has gone OVER in 5 of Michigan's last 6 games played in week 14.

Iowa trends: Iowa are 12-6 ATS in their last 18 games. Iowa are 16-2 SU in their last 18 games. The total has gone UNDER in 4 of Iowa's last 5 games against Michigan. Iowa are 10-2 SU in their last 12 games this season. Iowa are 13-2 SU in their last 15 games against an opponent in the Big Ten conference. Iowa are 5-0 ATS in their last 5 games against an opponent in the East Division division. Iowa are 4-0-1 ATS in their last 5 games played in December. The total has gone OVER in 5 of Iowa's last 6 games played in week 14. The total has gone UNDER in 8 of Iowa's last 11 games played on a Saturday.

Last time out, Michigan hosted the Ohio State Buckeyes and finally got the better of their big rivals, winning 42-27. This was a tight game at the half, but Michigan imposed their will and came away with the two touchdown win. Hassan Haskins had an all-time day with 28 carries for 169 yards, a 6.0 average, and five (!) touchdowns. Michigan ran the ball 41 times for 297 yards, a 7.2 average, and six touchdowns as a team. Defensively, the Wolverines allowed 458 total yards and did not force any Ohio State turnovers.

Iowa used a big second half comeback to win 28-21 at the Nebraska Cornhuskers. The Hawkeyes were trailing 21-6 late in the third quarter, but went on to score the final 22 points, thanks in large part to a Nebraska implosion, to get the win. The two Iowa QBs combined to go 13/27 for 178 yards, zero touchdowns, zero interceptions, and one rushing touchdown. Tyler Goodson ran the ball 23 times for 156 yards, a 6.8 average. Defensively, the Hawkeyes allowed 327 total yards and forced two Nebraska turnovers, one interception and one fumble.

Michigan was outgunned in passing yards 394-190 but controlled the game on the ground with 297 rushing yards. The Wolverines kept the ball moving when they had it, going 6-of-9 on third- and fourth-down tries. As for Iowa, they benefited from a fourth-quarter meltdown by Nebraska. The Hawkeyes have had three of their last four games decided by seven points or fewer which makes ten and a half points look very enticing. My hypothesis is that Iowa will not be able to produce enough offense to threaten the Wolverines. The Wolverines are riding high after their upset victory over Ohio St. After beating the Buckeyes, HC Harbaugh will not let them be denied their shot at a national championship final four appearance. **Take Michigan to cover handily and march into the playoffs. Projected Score: Michigan 31, Iowa 10**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

CINCINNATI – 10½ Over Houston by 2

Nippert Stadium will be the scene of the American Athletic Conference Championship Game between the No.16 Houston Cougars and No. 3 Cincinnati Bearcats. An AAC Championship with major playoff implications is set for Saturday afternoon when the Houston Cougars (11-1, 8-0) visit the Cincinnati Bearcats (12-0, 8-0). Cincy is finally ranked in a playoff spot and a win Saturday will make it very hard for the committee to leave them out. The Bearcats won last season and will be appearing in their third AAC title game. Houston will be making their second appearance and will look to improve to 2-0, winning the title in 2015. This game will air live on ABC.

The Houston offense is averaging 38.8 points per game and 421.7 yards per game, 272.4 through the air and 149.3 on the ground. Defensively, the Cougars are allowing 19.8 points and 289.5 yards, 191.6 passing and 97.9 rushing. Cincinnati is averaging 39.6 points per game and 430.4 yards per game, 253.6 through the air and 176.8 on the ground. Defensively, the Bearcats are allowing just 15.8 points and 303.3 yards, 161.5 passing and 141.8 rushing.

Houston trends: The total has gone OVER in 6 of Houston's last 9 games. Houston are 10-0 SU in their last 10 games. Houston are 2-8-1 ATS in their last 11 games against Cincinnati. Houston are 2-7 SU in their last 9 games against Cincinnati. Houston are 6-0 SU in their last 6 games on the road. Houston are 1-6 SU in their last 7 games when playing on the road against Cincinnati. Houston are 5-2 ATS in their last 7 games against an opponent in the American Athletic Conference conference. The total has gone UNDER in 4 of Houston's last 6 games against an opponent in the East Division division. Houston are 0-5 ATS in their last 5 games played in December.

Cincinnati trends: Cincinnati are 2-4 ATS in their last 6 games. The total has gone UNDER in 5 of Cincinnati's last 6 games. Cincinnati are 10-0 SU in their last 10 games. The total has gone UNDER in 4 of Cincinnati's last 6 games against Houston. Cincinnati are 10-0 SU in their last 10 games at home. Cincinnati are 6-1 SU in their last 7 games when playing at home against Houston. The total has gone UNDER in 4 of Cincinnati's last 5 games this season. The total has gone UNDER in 5 of Cincinnati's last 6 games against an opponent in the American Athletic Conference conference. Cincinnati are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games against an opponent in the West Division division. Cincinnati are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games played in December.

Last time out, Houston ended their season with a 45-17 thumping at the UConn Huskies. This game was never in question and Houston was able to go into cruise control in the fourth quarter. Clayton Tune went 21/30 for 301 yards, four touchdowns, and zero interceptions. Nathaniel Dell hauled in six balls for 62 yards and two touchdowns in this one. Defensively, the Cougars allowed 238 total yards and recovered one UConn fumble.

Cincinnati concluded their perfect regular season with a 35-13 road win over the East Carolina Pirates. The Bearcats used a big second quarter to take control of the game and were never in doubt of winning. Desmond Ridder went 17/28 for 301 yards, two touchdowns, and two interceptions on the night. Cincy ran the ball 36 times for 143 yards, a 4.0 average, and two touchdowns. Defensively, the Bearcats allowed 282 total yards and forced two ECU turnovers, one interception and one fumble.

Cincy has won the past two meetings, but Houston leads the all-time series 15-12. Houston won't be without a chance in this game. They do rank in the Top-10 in offensive PPG and points per play. Their defense is seventh in the nation and allows 307.5 yards per game off 4.6 yards per play.

This is a tough game for the Bearcats. Playing to make history but the Cougars match up pretty well against them. Home field is big! I don't doubt that Cincinnati makes it out of this game alive, but it won't be without a fight with the feisty Cougars. **I'm going to side with the Cougars and take that generous juicy double-digit spread.**

Projected Score: Cincinnati 28, Houston 26

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

LOUISIANA + 3 Over Appalachian St by 4

The Sun Belt has a great conference championship game set for Saturday afternoon when the Appalachian State Mountaineers (10-2, 7-1) visit the Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns (11-1, 8-0). App State is set to make their third conference championship game and are looking to go to 3-0 in those games. Louisiana is heading to their fourth conference championship game and are hoping to get their first win. This game will air live on ESPN.

The App State offense is averaging 35.8 points per game and 439.8 yards per game, 250.8 through the air and 189.0 on the ground. Defensively, the Mountaineers are allowing 18.9 points and 319.8 yards, 205.9 passing and 113.9 rushing.

Louisiana is averaging 31.3 points per game and 374.8 yards per game, 196.3 through the air and 178.5 on the ground. Defensively, the Ragin' Cajuns are allowing 18.7 points and 351.9 yards, 209.9 passing and 142.0 rushing.

Appalachian State trends: Appalachian State are 5-1 ATS in their last 6 games. The total has gone UNDER in 5 of Appalachian State's last 7 games. Appalachian State are 6-0 SU in their last 6 games. Appalachian State are 2-4 ATS in their last 6 games against Louisiana-Lafayette. Appalachian State are 8-2 SU in their last 10 games against Louisiana-Lafayette. Appalachian State are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games on the road. Appalachian State are 5-0 SU in their last 5 games this season. Appalachian State are 6-0 SU in their last 6 games against an opponent in the Sun Belt conference. The total has gone UNDER in 7 of Appalachian State's last 8 games against an opponent in the West Division division. The total has gone OVER in 5 of Appalachian State's last 6 games played in December.

Louisiana trends: The total has gone UNDER in 7 of Louisiana-Lafayette's last 9 games. Louisiana-Lafayette are 10-0 SU in their last 10 games. The total has gone UNDER in 5 of Louisiana-Lafayette's last 6 games against Appalachian State. Louisiana-Lafayette are 8-0 SU in their last 8 games at home. Louisiana-Lafayette are 11-0 SU in their last 11 games this season. The total has gone UNDER in 8 of Louisiana-Lafayette's last 9 games against an opponent in the Sun Belt conference. The total has gone UNDER in 6 of Louisiana-Lafayette's last 7 games against an opponent in the East Division division. Louisiana-Lafayette are 2-5 ATS in their last 7 games played in December. Louisiana-Lafayette is 6-12 ATS in their last 18 games played on a Saturday.

Last time out, App State concluded their regular season with a 27-3 home win over the Georgia Southern Eagles. App State never trailed in this game and led by double-digits the majority of the game. Chase Brice went 12/24 for 235 yards, two touchdowns, and zero interceptions. Thomas Hennigan hauled in three balls for 111 yards and one touchdown on the night. Defensively, App State allowed 200 total yards and recovered one Georgia Southern fumble.

Louisiana finished off their unbeaten conference schedule with a 21-16 win over the UL Monroe Warhawks. The Ragin' Cajuns looked sleepy in this game, but were able to hold off their rivals and conclude their perfect Sun Belt season. Louisiana ran the ball 34 times for 174 yards, a 5.1 average, and two touchdowns on the night. Defensively, the Ragin' Cajuns allowed 325 total yards and recovered one Monroe fumble.

The Mountaineers are going to need to play better than they did the last time these teams met up. Appalachian State lost that one (October 12) 41-13, posting just 211 total yards to Louisiana's 455. The Mountaineers came up empty 0-for-11 on third downs and had four turnovers. Since that ugly game App State has shown much improvement and they should be ready for the rematch. Louisiana has won the past two meetings. They say things come in 3's and I think they have the wrong favorite.

Take ULL to win and capture the Sun Belt crown and we cash our winning ticket.

Projected Score: Louisiana 28, Appalachian St. 24

NFL Landscape

Last Week:

The largest underdogs to win straight up:

Raiders +7 (ML +260) at Cowboys, 36-33
Giants +4 (ML +175) vs. Eagles, 13-7
Jets +3 (ML +125) at Texans, 21-14
Broncos +2.5 (ML +130) vs. Chargers, 28-13

The largest favorites to cover

Bills (-7) at Saints, 31-6
Patriots (-7) vs. Titans, 36-13
49ers (-4) vs. Vikings, 34-26
Bengals (-3.5) vs. Steelers, 41-10

The Biggest Disappointment of the Week

The Carolina Panthers-Miami Dolphins (40.5) saw a total of 31 points scored in the first half, and OVER bettors probably thought they were on the way to easy street. However, we saw a total of just six points in the third quarter, and a missed extra point. With 10:58 to go in the final quarter, the Dolphins saw a 46-yard field goal from Jason Sanders to make it 30-10 in favor of the home side. The Panthers elected to bench QB Cam Newton in the fourth quarter, after he completed just 5-of-21 passes for 92 yards, no touchdowns and two interceptions. The 23.8 completion percentage was the worst by an NFL player with at least 20 attempts in a single game since 2004. It looked like the scoring was done, as we didn't have any points until 3:41 in regulation. UNDER bettors thought they were going to get a miracle result, but another Sanders field goal, this time from 33 yards out, did them in, as the Dolphins put a bow on the scoring at 33-10, hitting the OVER on a meaningless field goal in terms of the overall result.

The Biggest Disappointment of the Week - Part II

The Cleveland Browns (+3, +140 ML)-Baltimore Ravens game was a bummer if you were a side bettor and/or a money line bettor. Things were going tremendously well for Cleveland side bettors, as Baltimore held a 6-3 advantage at halftime. It probably should have been 6-6, too, but Chase McLaughlin missed a field goal in the first quarter for the visitors. But those who backed the Browns saw the defense pick off QB Lamar Jackson three times in the first 30 minutes. In the third quarter, Jackson hit TE Mark Andrews for a 13-yard touchdown, opening the biggest lead of the game at 13-3, but the Browns came right back. Near the end of the third, QB Baker Mayfield hit TE David Njoku on a sliding catch into the end zone to slice the lead to 13-10. The Browns picked off Jackson a fourth time in the second half, and the Ravens were only able to muster three points in the fourth quarter. Unfortunately for those backing the Browns, they got nothing. With 70 seconds left in regulation, Justin Tucker banged home a 49-yard field goal to make it 16-10, giving Baltimore the cover. Mayfield and the offense had a chance, but they turned it over on downs.

Going Streaking

-- The Green Bay Packers picked up a 36-28 win over the Los Angeles Rams, improving to 10-1 ATS across the past 11 games overall. They're also an impressive 5-0 SU/ATS in five games at Lambeau Field.

-- The Jacksonville Jaguars have cashed the UNDER in six consecutive games, including 3-0 in the past three at home.

-- The Denver Broncos have hit the UNDER in five straight outings, while going 9-2 overall in 11 games this season.

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

TAMPA BAY - 11 Over Atlanta by 21

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers beat the Atlanta Falcons convincingly in their first matchup earlier this season. Now they face off again in Atlanta, with the Falcons hoping to make things more competitive this time around and the Bucs hoping for a similar outcome. This game will be played at Mercedes-Benz Stadium at 1:00 PM ET on Sunday, December 5, 2021.

Atlanta's offense has been sputtering in recent weeks, which will cause them problems against a Bucs team that regularly puts big numbers on the scoreboard. The Falcons have scored 24 points combined in their last three games, with 21 of those 24 points coming against the Jaguars last week. The Bucs will put up more resistance than the Jags and will hold down Atlanta in this contest.

Tampa Bay is averaging a full yard per play more than the Falcons this season, and they have performed better on defense this year as well. Atlanta has a bottom-five point differential in the NFL this season, meaning that when they lose they lose convincingly. That will be the case here, as the Bucs should roll as a double-digit favorite.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers won their second straight game this week, beating the Indianapolis Colts by a touchdown to move to 8-3 on the season. It was the offense of the Buccaneers that took center stage in their Week 12 win, putting up 38 points to make up for a defensive performance that left a lot to be desired. Here, the Bucs are heavy favorites, but they will have to avoid overlooking one of three sub-.500 teams in their division.

After the Falcons, the Buccaneers have games against the Buffalo Bills and New Orleans Saints to look forward to. While the Bucs shouldn't overlook a game against a division opponent here, it is never impossible that a team overlooks a game against a team with a losing record when a marquee game awaits just a week after.

The Atlanta Falcons snapped a two-game losing streak last week, beating the Jacksonville Jaguars by a touchdown. The offense for the Falcons still wasn't all that impressive, but the Falcons got just enough out of Cordarrelle Patterson in the running game to propel them to a win and avoid an embarrassing loss. This week, the Falcons face a much tougher brand of competition.

Atlanta will need to get something out of Matt Ryan and their passing game if they want to have any shot at beating the Buccaneers. The problem for the Falcons is that their receivers aren't good enough to create separation down the field on a regular basis to put up big numbers. If that doesn't change, the Falcons could be looking at a third loss in four division games on the year.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers put up 48 points against the Atlanta Falcons in their first meeting this season. And while some of those points came on pick sixes late in the second half, the Bucs were clearly the better team there.

Atlanta is in the bottom five for point differential in the NFL this season, meaning that when they lose they lose very convincingly.

Tampa Bay will be the better team again, and should cover this number as they have against bad teams for much of the season. That will be the case once again against the Bucs.

Tampa Tom and the Bucs should roll as a double-digit favorite.

Projected Score: Tampa Bay 35, Atlanta 14

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

Arizona - 7½ Over CHICAGO by 17

The Chicago Bears will host the Arizona Cardinals in Week 13 of the NFL season, as they look to slow down the 9-2 Cardinals at Soldier Field. Both of these teams have been impacted by injury issues at the quarterback position, and will look to overcome those concerns en route to a win on Sunday. This game will be played at Soldier Field at 1:00 PM ET on Sunday, December 5, 2021.

The Chicago Bears won for the first time in six games last week, beating the Detroit Lions on Thanksgiving day. But the Bears were far from convincing in that game, scoring just 16 points against the winless Lions. A similar offensive performance from the Bears against the Cardinals won't be close to good enough to cover the spread here, let alone win the game.

Arizona has been incredible on the road this season, winning all six of their games away from home. All six of those wins have come by double figures, including last week's 10-point win on the road against their division rivals in the Seattle Seahawks.

The Cardinals come into this game at a solid 8-3 against the spread on the season. Chicago, meanwhile, is just 4-7 against the spread on the year. The Cardinals will be looking to beat the number in this game, moving them to 9-3 against the spread in the process for a cover rate of 75% in 2021. That makes them a money maker for bettors.

The Arizona Cardinals moved to 9-2 on the season last week, beating the Seattle Seahawks by 10 points on the road. Kyler Murray and DeAndre Hopkins were both out once again for the Cardinals, but that did not stop Kliff Kingsbury's team from getting the job done once again. This week, Kingsbury has said that he hopes to have Murray and Hopkins back, which would give the Cardinals a huge edge against the struggling Bears. We also hope Murray and Hopkins are back.

The question for the Cardinals in this game, outside of the health of Murray and Hopkins, will be whether they can avoid looking ahead to Week 14 against the Rams. Arizona is scheduled to play a huge NFC West matchup against the Rams on Monday Night Football the week after this game. Arizona will have to stay focused on the Bears to avoid dropping a very winnable game here.

The Chicago Bears saw their five-game losing streak come to an end on Thanksgiving, when they beat the Detroit Lions 16-13. The game was close throughout, with the Bears needing a last-second field goal to secure the victory over their division rivals. Here, the Bears face a much tougher opponent in the Cardinals, and they will need their defense to play their best to have a shot here.

A huge problem for the Bears going into this game is that their defensive line is banged up. Khalil Mack is done for the season and Akiem Hicks could miss another week. Those injuries are especially problematic against a Cardinals team that has been so good at moving the ball through the air all season long.

Matt Nagy said the win over the winless Lions on Thanksgiving day meant a lot to them. That should tell you the state of the Bears team. Both of these teams have a solid pass rush, but the difference is that Arizona has the playmakers to take advantage of the holes left by the opposing defense. I'm not loving the number as a road favorite, but Arizona has been absolute road warriors this year and have played well enough on the road to justify the spread.

Did you forget? The Cardinals have beaten the number on the road without their head coach, without their starting quarterback, and without their top wide receiver. They may all be back for this one and **they will cover the spread again here. Lay the lumber and take Arizona.**

Projected Score: Arizona 31, Chicago 14

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

Philadelphia - 6½ & 45 Over NY JETS by 11 & Under by 8

The New York Jets and Philadelphia Eagles will meet on Sunday as a part of the NFL Week 13 slate. It will be the second straight week that the Eagles play a road game at MetLife Stadium, as the Jets will look to deal Philadelphia their second straight loss in that building. This game will be played at MetLife Stadium at 1:00 PM ET on Sunday, December 5, 2021.

The Eagles have found something offensively lately, even if they faltered last week against the New York Giants. Philadelphia has scored 30 or more points in three of their last five games, scoring into the 40s in two of those games. They have been running Jalen Hurts aggressively, which should keep the Jets defense off-balance throughout.

Speaking of the Jets defense, they are one of the worst units in the NFL in 2021. They are allowing 6.1 yards per play on defense, which is tied with the Baltimore Ravens for the worst mark in the NFL on the season. The difference between the Jets and Ravens on defense is that the Jets are the only team in the league allowing 30 points per game, while the Ravens allow nine fewer points per game on that side of the ball.

While the Jets did have a nice run at home, beating the Titans and Bengals earlier in the season, they have lost two straight at home to the Bills and Dolphins.

The Philadelphia Eagles suffered a disappointing loss last week, getting held to seven points in a losing effort to the New York Giants. That was a revenge game for the Giants, who got back at the Eagles for Philadelphia's tanking in Week 17 last season, which kept the Giants out of the playoffs. This week, the Eagles will look to get right in their second straight game in East Rutherford, NJ.

In order for the Eagles to get back on track, they need to continue to use their unorthodox run game to their advantage. Jalen Hurts is no Lamar Jackson, but the way that the Eagles use him with designed runs makes the Eagles tough to figure out for opposing defenses. Given the Jets' struggles on that side of the ball this season, the Eagles should be able to take advantage of an opportunity to win what is more or less a must-win game.

The New York Jets picked up their third win of the NFL season last week, beating the Houston Texans 21-14. New York took advantage of a lackluster Houston offense, which managed to make the Jets look good defensively for the first time in weeks. This week, the Jets face a tougher test defensively against an Eagles team that can move the ball through the air or on the ground.

Concerning for the Jets was the fact that Zach Wilson again failed to deliver a confidence-inspiring performance at quarterback. Wilson threw for under 150 yards and didn't have a touchdown pass against a Texans team that is one of the worst in the NFL. While it's good that he's back healthy, so the Jets can see what they have in him, Wilson is not proving that he is a starter-caliber player in the league.

New York's offense has been an inconsistent mess for much of the year, and they've had 21 or fewer points in each of the last three games. The Jets have been staying in games with defense, but the better-scoring teams haven't had many issues getting past them quite easily.

Philadelphia has had trouble scoring here and there earlier this season, but Philadelphia has scored 30 or more points in three of their last five games, scoring into the 40s in two of those games. The Eagles have hit 21 or more points in nine of their last 10 games. A few good drives here could be all they need to bag a cover. And with Zach Wilson back at quarterback, the Jets offense is set to take a step backward, which the **Eagles will take advantage of for the win and cover.**

Projected Score: Philadelphia 24, NY Jets 13

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

Washington at LAS VEGAS Over 48 by 11

The Washington Football Team and Las Vegas Raiders find themselves in similar positions in their respective playoff races. While both teams are still in contention, they have work to do if they want to claim postseason positions. This game will be played at Allegiant Stadium at 4:00 PM ET on Sunday, December 5, 2021.

Derek Carr should have plenty of time to throw the football in this game, thanks to all of the injuries to the defensive front of the Washington Football Team. Chase Young and Montez Sweat aren't available for Washington of late, which will give Carr some much-needed time to push the ball down the field to his receivers.

Washington's offense will benefit from the availability of Antonio Gibson, who had missed some time earlier in the season for the Football Team. His presence creates a more well-rounded Washington offense, which will make it much more difficult for the Raiders to get stops, which they haven't been great at getting anyway.

The Washington Football Team is coming off of a huge win on Monday Night Football against the Seattle Seahawks to move to 4-6 on the season. Despite the Seahawks' poor record on the year, the presence of Russell Wilson is always a threat for opposing defenses to overcome. And the Washington defense did manage to overcome that threat, holding the Seahawks to just 15 points in a rare defensive gem for Ron Rivera's team.

That win over Seattle was the third straight outright win for the Washington Football Team as an underdog. Prior to that game, the Football Team had beaten the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Carolina Panthers as underdogs, as Washington has at least kept itself in contention in the NFC playoff race with this winning streak.

On Thanksgiving day, the Las Vegas Raiders snapped a three-game losing streak, beating the Dallas Cowboys outright as a touchdown underdog on the road. The Raiders' offense woke up in that game, moving the ball through the air effectively to pick up a much-needed win to get back above .500 on the season. Now, the Raiders sit one game back of the first place Chiefs in the AFC West standings, and the Raiders can move up with another win against an NFC East opponent this week.

Derek Carr threw for 373 yards and one touchdown against the Cowboys last week, not throwing any interceptions in that overtime victory. This week, another mistake-free performance from Carr would be huge for the Raiders, who will enter this game with a few days extra rest over their opponents.

These are two bottom-10 scoring defenses in the NFL this year, as both teams are allowing over 25 points per game on the season. Washington is tied for the fourth-worst defense in the league in yards per play as well, and both teams should be able to move the ball up and down the field throughout this contest. The play in this game is to take over 49 points.

Projected Score: Las Vegas 31, Washington 28

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	W Kentucky - 1	UTSA O72 / ULL+3	Utah - 2½	Michigan - 10½	Houston + 10½
NFL	Buccaneers - 11	Cardinals - 7½	Jets Un 45	Eagles - 6½	WFT Ov 48