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UTAH TAKES DOWN ARIZONA ST. BOSTON COLLEGE BEATS NC ST. FALCONS FLY OVER BOISE STATE

NCAA Landscape

Alabama's stumble caps off chaotic college football Saturday

Amid his deep exhales of frustration, Nick Saban captured our elation. Amid his pointed messaging to his team, Saban spoke to all of us. Amid his motivational machinations, he captured the essence of a searingly delightful day of college football. "Everyone needs to remember how they feel and not forget it," Saban said.

That's easy, of course, if you didn't have an emotional investment in any of the results. For those unencumbered by coaching duties, alma mater loyalties and financial ties to the results, it was a day of chaos we'll never forget. It is very rare that I go 0-3 in my college football selections, but I did, and I do remember how I feel every time I have an 0 for day.

Saban is right. We'll all remember watching No. 1 Alabama look like Keystone Cops in the waning minutes of a 41-38 loss at unranked Texas A&M. We'll remember a critical dropped pass by 'Bama tight end Jahleel Billingsley, and the Tide bumbling through a final defensive drive with defenders crashing into one another and a critical pass interference penalty by DeMarcco Hellams. That enabled a 28-yard chip-shot game winner, which unleashed the Kyle Field denizens to pour out onto the field.

And that feeling, of course, provided the crescendo of a wild day highlighted by extremes — Alabama's 19-game winning streak ending and UMass' 16-game losing streak ending. All around, insanity ruled the day: Iowa punted to win; Arkansas gambled and lost; Oklahoma erased a historic 21-point deficit; and Michigan ripped loose both the ball — and likely the Scott Frost era — in the waning moments of a gutty win.

There was more, so much more. Coach O's LSU tenure has nosedived past the point of potential recovery, Cincinnati has further positioned itself for the College Football Playoff and No. 10 BYU bowed out of the College Football Playoff race. The Big Ten's banner season could feature five teams ranked in the top 10 for the first time in the league's history. The quarterback who began the year as a Heisman favorite, OU's Spencer Rattler, will likely lose his job to transcendent freshman Caleb Williams. Heck, USC lost its third consecutive Pac-12 game at home and no one even noticed.

But Saturday's feelings — the one Saban and we all can't forget — started in College Station. Consider all that crumbled with the loss.

Alabama lost for the first time since 2019, and it snapped a string of historic streaks. The Tide lost to an unranked opponent for the first time in 100 games and became the first No. 1 team to lose to an unranked opponent since 2008 when Oregon State beat USC. Nick Saban also lost for the first time to a former

assistant, snapping a string of 24 victories over the young Jedis he taught the Force.

What do we make of all this chaos? For Alabama, the loss is a sign of the Tide's mortality. This Alabama team isn't nearly the crew we've seen in recent seasons — inexperienced at quarterback, relatively pedestrian at tailback and the wide receiving crew is solid but lacking the multiple first rounders who left opposing coordinators so helpless in recent years.

Amid Saban's disappointment and the roll calls of mistakes, he also cut to the core of what this day of craziness could end up meaning: "We still can accomplish everything we want to accomplish."

Saban is right, of course. It's more unusual for college football national champions to go undefeated than it is for them to have a loss. And here's an idea that will make leadership squirm in the Pac-12, Big Ten, Big 12 and AAC offices: We have to at least ponder the possibility of two-loss Alabama reaching the College Football Playoff.

We compare this gleefully unpredictable season to 2007, and it's worth noting that LSU lost two regular-season games before being one of two teams to reach the Bowl Championship Series title game. Imagine two-loss 'Bama — assuming they win out thru the SEC title game against Georgia — going up against one-loss Iowa, undefeated Cincinnati or one-loss Oregon. Considering the brand bias that the College Football Playoff has shown, don't be surprised if that's at least a heavy conversation, if not an overt reality.

The mistakes for Alabama appeared correctable. They moved the ball well against Mike Elko's defense, but sputtered in the red zone. Three times in the red zone, Alabama settled for a field goal. Another drive ended when Bryce Young got picked off by Texas A&M's Demani Richardson, who deftly tipped the ball to himself.

That left Saban with this blunt message to clear out any lingering rat poison: "Think about two things — how you feel when you lose and what did you do to contribute to losing."

Texas A&M's win came after an inexplicable loss to Mississippi State last week and amid a generally sluggish run of play for the Aggies. They'd lost to Arkansas the week before, and reserve quarterback Zach Calzada transformed from a limited liability to a dynamic giant killer. He finished with 285 passing yards, and the final of his three touchdown passes — a 25-yard lob to Ainius Smith — tied the game. He also emerged from the injury tent after appearing to injure his knee to seal the game late in the fourth quarter, which will certainly live on in Texas A&M lore.

That all fueled to the wondrous insanity of a day that no other sport can match for its noon-to-last-call intensity and unpredictability in the regular season.

And while Saban wants his team to remember as fuel, we'll hold onto the day as an appreciation of the potential of what can happen on a college football Saturday.

LSU's spiral continues

LSU's free fall under Ed Orgeron is looming as an inevitability that this will be his final season in Baton Rouge. Athletic director Scott Woodward's coaching search research will go into overdrive this week, as LSU got waxed at Kentucky, 42-21.

Orgeron's answers for the program's issues in the wake of a 5-5 season have begged only more questions, as he appears to have flopped with his coordinator hires on both sides of the ball. The tenor of this one will haunt LSU fans, as No. 16 Kentucky pushed around LSU on both sides of the ball. Kentucky physically dominated the lines of scrimmage, which speaks to an effort issue as much as a scheme issue. That shouldn't happen to LSU against anyone, never mind Kentucky.

Kentucky also showed that it made the savvy off season offensive coordinator hire; Liam Coen looked a step ahead of the LSU defense. Meanwhile, LSU got shut out in the first half and needed a pair of fourth-quarter touchdowns to avoid complete embarrassment.

LSU is 3-3 and could well finish last in the hyper-competitive SEC West. LSU's upcoming schedule is a home game with Florida followed by road trips to No. 17 Ole Miss and then a bye week before playing at Alabama.

The bad news for LSU is there's no obvious interim on staff if LSU were to make a midyear move on Orgeron. The good news for Woodward is he'll have plenty of time to vet candidates, as the result is even more apparent than after the meltdown against Auburn last week.

Another big day for Cincinnati

Fickell was bracing for another historic week at Cincinnati, as the Bearcats were a strong candidate to host ESPN's "Gameday" program for the first time in school history. Cincinnati will host UCF on ABC next week, a craftily scheduled game on a quiet week in the sport. But alas, "Gameday" will return to Athens for UK's visit to Georgia, the second trip there in three weeks.

So with the upset of Notre Dame in their rear view and a new level of attention on the potential College Football Playoff crashers, Fickell spent his off day thrilled with how No. 5 Cincinnati has handled the rare air the program has climbed to.

No. 5 Cincinnati blasted Temple, 52-3, on Friday night. Nippert Stadium jumped for the arrival of an ACC cellar dweller the same way it would have greeted a top-10 foe. Fickell marveled at both the enthusiasm of the crowd — "definitely a buzz" — and how his team didn't flinch at its new heights.

"That was the big thing this past week," Fickell said by phone on Saturday. "To see what kind of maturity that we had. To be able to handle all the things going on and still do our job. That's what I was worried about all week. Our guys did a really good job."

The Temple blowout (a loser for us) showcased a program that's evolved to the point where it's distanced itself from being branded as solely having a defensive identity. Cincinnati is averaging 41 points per game, good for the No. 8 offense in college football. The Bearcats have allowed 12.2 points per game, the No. 4 scoring defense.

Fickell attributes the offensive evolution to the staff's ability to find and develop players around star quarterback Desmond Ridder. On Friday, that manifested with Jerome Ford rushing for 149 yards, Alec Pierce catching six passes for 93 yards and 6-foot-7 tight end Josh Whyle snaring two passes for 30 yards.

"I don't know we had the pieces to help the QB grow," Fickell said, comparing this home matchup with UCF to two years ago. "That to me is as much of the growth of Desmond Ridder is the growth of being able to put some of those pieces around him. That has been really key. Guys who can make things happen and make big plays and make quarterback look better."

On Saturday, Cincinnati will enter a game against UCF with a stage to show just how explosive the offense has become. We learned our lesson that Cincinnati has no let down in them and are focused for bigger things.

Punt on the Nittany Lions

Iowa's 23-20 victory over Penn State formally announced the Hawkeyes as a favorite to reach the College Football Playoff. The Hawkeyes won with a familiar formula: ball control; field position; and a salty defense that changed the game when star linebacker Jack Campbell knocked quarterback Sean Clifford out of the game.

Iowa proceeded to erase a 17-3 deficit, with perhaps the day's most consistent play coming from punter Tory Taylor. He pinned Penn State inside the 10-yard line five times, which set up three interceptions, a three-and-out and a four-and-out to end the game in the final minute.

Iowa clawed back into the game after quarterback Spencer Petras shook off a tough start. He finished 17 for 31 with two touchdowns, including a 44-yard strike to Nico Ragaini on a nifty play-action, rollout-throwback call by coordinator Brian Ferentz.

Iowa's formula of ball control and exploiting the opposition's mistakes may not be sexy, but it's hard to argue the effectiveness. Penn State coaches accelerated the Iowa comeback by failing to adjust to the crowd noise, as the Nittany Lions offense retreated all night until it finally figured out a silent count solution.

It's almost as if Penn State didn't expect Kinnick Stadium to be loud. PSU finished with 10 penalties for 59 yards, including four false starts in the second quarter and four in the fourth quarter. At one point in the second quarter, Penn State suffered false starts on a mind-bending three consecutive snaps.

Iowa was sound, prepared and stayed defiant to its Ferentzian ideology. And that leaves the Hawkeyes as the best of the rest in college football, the top-performing non-SEC team so far in the 2021 season.

Red River shootout

No. 6 Oklahoma became the first team to ever come back from 21 points down and beat Texas. They've been playing football at Texas since 1902, and there's been plenty of heartbreak in the century since then.

But that wasn't the most remarkable development of the day. OU quarterback Spencer Rattler, the presumptive Heisman favorite, projected (by some) No. 1 draft pick and one of the off season NIL champions appears in danger of losing his starting job for good. Oklahoma's Caleb Williams provided such a memorable relief appearance to lead the three-touchdown comeback that his emergence as Oklahoma's quarterback of the future may end up overshadowing the magnitude of OU's historic comeback.

Williams' first snap of the game — on a fourth-and-1 play to start the second quarter — ended with a 66-yard touchdown run. The image of him sprinting down the field may be a defining one in OU lore, as he appeared to be running away from Rattler and into a new paradigm for the program. Or, perhaps, an old one considering the lineage of high-end quarterbacks under Lincoln Riley.

Rattler got benched for the second consecutive Red River game, and this time he doesn't appear likely to get up. Williams threw for 212 yards and two touchdowns, including a step-up-in-the-pocket 52-yard beauty to Marvin Mims. He also flashed a poise that belies his age, which is something Rattler hasn't shown consistently. Williams arrived at OU as the No. 1 quarterback prospect in the class, and it's more likely he unseats Rattler and sends him to the Transfer Portal than him retreating back to the bench.

The parlor game of where Rattler could transfer already began on Saturday afternoon. Georgia? UCLA? Washington? Arizona State? Arizona? Miami? Notre Dame? Texas A&M? Tennessee? Penn State? (It's hard to imagine the high-end NFL interest still being pronounced.)

This is a microcosm of where football is heading. Find a stage, stake your spot and then move on if you lose it.

After Williams entered the game down 28-7 and delivered a historic comeback, it's up to Rattler to author a comeback of his own. And that's a bigger deal than OU upstaging Texas on the Red River stage.

A likely story

Perhaps the highest compliment we can pay to Coastal Carolina is that it's turned winning into an expectation. The Chanticleers haven't lost in the regular season since November of 2019, when they fell at Louisiana-Monroe while sputtering through a forgettable 5-7 season.

Coastal Carolina has coasted to a 6-0 start this weekend, and the surprise team of 2020 hasn't surprised anyone with the success. They've blended into the sport's elite and seamlessly as a mullet resting amid shoulder pads.

After blasting Arkansas State in Jonesboro on Thursday, No. 15 Coastal heads into a bye week with a chance to be near Top 10 when it plays at Appalachian State (4-1) on Oct. 20 for a Wednesday showcase game that could well be the Sun Belt's biggest stage of the regular season. Especially if Appalachian State beats Louisiana on Tuesday, October 12th.

Coastal entered the weekend with the country's No. 2 scoring offense (48.8), the nation's most efficient passing offense and DC Chad Staggs' defense ranks No. 9 in scoring defense (15.0). Coach Jamey Chadwell said it's rewarding that his team is now an accepted part of the college football mainstream.

Chadwell doesn't have any illusions of Coastal Carolina crashing the four-team College Football Playoff. And he acknowledges that Cincinnati has outflanked them again in the conversation for the New Year's Six Bowl.

Chadwell acknowledged that early this season he felt his team pressing for the perfection that would be required of such lofty goals. Coastal struggled for portions of wins against Kansas and Buffalo. But since the Buffalo road trip, the Chanticleers have found a groove and won three consecutive games by an average of 45 points per game.

"I thought we were trying to live up to some of the expectations and outside noise instead of just playing," Chadwell said. "After the Buffalo game, we're trying to get back to not worrying about this or that – worrying about a ranking and worrying about winning by this much. I like where we're at."

On Thursday night, Chadwell liked what he saw from his star tight end, Isaiah Likely. He caught eight passes for 232 yards, an astounding total for a tight end. He also caught four touchdown passes, including a 99-yarder from star quarterback Grayson McCall.

Likely flashing to that caliber was a boon to his NFL draft stock, as evaluators had already tabbed him as one of the country's top tight ends. Chadwell marveled at his versatility, as the highlights for the coaching staff transcended the four touchdowns.

"He's a true combo guy," Chadwell said. "He's a blocker and physical. We had some long runs on Thursday, and a lot of those were him lead blocking on them. He's such a great mix of that. He's hard to match up with."

A Big 12 revival

One of the season's most under-appreciated stories comes thanks to one of the most understated coaches. Baylor's Dave Aranda's 2020 debut as a head coach underwhelmed, as Baylor went 2-7, Aranda fired offensive coordinator Larry Fedora and Aranda essentially admitted after the season that he endured a steep learning curve as a head coach.

With a blowout of West Virginia in Waco on Saturday, Aranda has quietly authored one of the sport's most impressive turnarounds. Baylor is 5-1 and with home games against BYU and Texas the next two contests on the schedule, the Bears have a chance to plant themselves firmly in the Top 25. (They should get there this week after the WVU win.)

Aranda is a genuinely thoughtful soul who transcends cliché, which made the lack of personal connection taking a job just before the start to the pandemic such a challenge.

"I was very much a stepdad," Aranda said. "I wanted to be a dad. I was following a really strong coach and leader in Matt Rhule, who did a great job here. And me coming in, [seeking] one-on-one conversations with guys and relationships with guys. Getting to know the person who drives the player, and really having a personal relationship. That was difficult at times trying to do off phone or Zoom."

Aranda found it much easier to connect with his team when he could get to know the players in person. He also learned a lot about hiring staff, and the revelation this season has been Jeff Grimes installing the RVO – Reliable Violent Offense. (He also complimented he and offensive line coach Eric Mateos for coming and not thinking that Baylor could be a "trainwreck" after the tough opening year.)

"It's easier to hire a coach when you are hiring them for what he does," Aranda said, speaking generally. "It's difficult when you're hiring for who he is. That's the major difference."

It has emerged on the field. Baylor has gone from No. 118 in total offense to No. 28, averaging 448.6 yards per game.

And it's earned them a big stage on Saturday, despite No. 10 BYU getting upset by Boise State. Aranda said he's happy for players like starting quarterback Gerry Bohanon, who has 11 touchdown passes and no interceptions after throwing for four against WVU on Saturday.

"I think of a guy who had a chance to leave and didn't and fought for a job at a school that he loves," Aranda said. "He fought so hard in the dark for a chance to be in the light."

The light will come this weekend for 5-1 Baylor. As the darkness of the early part of Aranda's tenure appears to be a distant memory.

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

UTAH + 1½ Over Arizona State by 10

The Arizona State Sun Devils look to build on their three-game winning streak. The Utah Utes look for a win after splitting their last four games.

The Arizona State Sun Devils have won three of their last four road games. Jayden Daniels is completing 70.1 percent of his passes for 1,269 yards, four touchdowns and three interceptions. Curtis Hodges and Ricky Pearsall have combined for 512 receiving yards and two touchdowns, while LV Bunkley-Shelton has 18 receptions. The Arizona State Sun Devils ground game is averaging 214.3 yards per contest, and Rachaad White leads the way with 421 yards and nine touchdowns. Defensively, Arizona State is allowing 16.2 points and 302 yards per game. Kyle Soelle leads the Arizona State Sun Devils with 39 tackles, Anthonie Cooper has 3.5 sacks and Darien Butler has two interceptions.

The Utah Utes have won four straight home games. Cameron Rising is completing 65.9 percent of his passes for 625 yards, seven touchdowns and zero interceptions. Brant Kuithe and Dalton Kincaid have combined for 380 receiving yards and four touchdowns, while Solomon Enis has 13 receptions. The Utah Utes ground game is averaging 169.2 yards per contest, and Micah Bernard leads the way with 265 yards and one touchdown. Defensively, Utah is allowing 23 points and 340.4 yards per game. Devin Lloyd leads the Utah Utes with 54 tackles, Mika Tafua has 4.5 sacks and Karene Reid has one interception.

The Sun Devils are 5-1 ATS in their last 6 road games and 5-12 ATS in their last 17 games as a favorite. The Utes are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 home games and 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games overall. The over is 4-1 in Sun Devils last 5 conference games. The over is 6-2 in Utes last 8 games overall.

The Arizona State Sun Devils have been the more balanced team this season and does have a quality road win under their belt over UCLA. However, the Utah Utes have had a tough schedule, and it seems like they're starting to make good progress with back-to-back wins, including a win last week on the road against USC. Utah is one of the more well coached teams in the country, and it's not easy to beat the Utes at home. The Ute fans will be fired up for sure. **Take Utah plus the points. I also recommend you consider hitting the money line.**

Projected Score: Utah 31, Arizona St. 21

Alabama - 17½ Over MISSISSIPPI ST. by 7

The Alabama Crimson Tide look for a rebound win to build on their 5-1 record. The Mississippi State Bulldogs look for a win a signature win after splitting their last four games.

Alabama's QB Bryce Young is completing 69.4 percent of his passes for 1,734 yards, 20 touchdowns and three interceptions. Jameson Williams and John Metchie III have combined for 873 receiving yards and seven touchdowns while Jahleel Billingsley has 10 receptions. The Alabama Crimson Tide ground game is averaging 161.7 yards per contest, and Brian Robinson Jr. leads the way with 526 yards and six touchdowns. Defensively, Alabama is allowing 22 points and 300.8 yards per game. Henry To'oTo'o leads the Alabama Crimson Tide with 41 tackles, Phidarian Mathis has 3.5 sacks and DeMarcco Hellams has two interceptions.

Mississippi State QB Will Rogers is completing 75.7 percent of his passes for 1,862 yards, 14 touchdowns and two interceptions. Makai Polk and Austin Williams have combined for 779 receiving yards and five touchdowns while Jaden Walley has 19 receptions. The Mississippi State Bulldogs ground game is averaging 56.2 yards per contest, and Dillon Johnson leads the way with 149 yards and one touchdown. Defensively, Mississippi State is allowing 25 points and 318.4 yards per game. Jett Johnson leads the Mississippi State Bulldogs with 37 tackles, Randy Charlton has two sacks and Emmanuel Forbes has two interceptions.

The Crimson Tide are 8-3 ATS in their last 11 conference games and 11-5 ATS in their last 16 games overall. The Bulldogs are 5-2 ATS in their last 7 games as an underdog and 1-7 ATS in their last 8 games in October. The over is 4-1 in Crimson Tide last 5 games overall. The under is 11-3 in Bulldogs last 14 home games. The Crimson Tide are 5-1 ATS in their last 6 meetings. The Alabama Crimson Tide have won six of their last seven road games. The Mississippi State Bulldogs have won four of their last six home games.

The Alabama Crimson Tide didn't look good last week, mainly on the defensive side, and now they have to play back-to-back road games. The Mississippi State Bulldogs are a one dimensional style offense with a rushing attack that's ranked 130th in CFB. "Remember how you feel now", Saban said to his team after last weeks loss to Texas A&M. So we're going to see a ticked off Bama team. Nevertheless, the Bulldogs QB Mr Rogers can fling it. He's completing 75% of his passes this year and they beat the same Texas A&M team that just beat Bama. Also, take note that Mississippi State has had an extra week to prepare for this contest. Am I crazy bucking a ticked of Bama squad?

I'm backing the home dog here, or should I say home Bulldogs.

Projected Score: Alabama 34, Mississippi St. 27

BOSTON COLLEGE + 3½ Over N Carolina St. by 7

The NC State Wolfpack look to build on their three-game winning streak. The Boston College Eagles look for a win to build on their solid 4-1 record.

Wolfpack QB Devin Leary is completing 67.4 percent of his passes for 1,283 yards, 12 touchdowns and two interceptions. Emeka Emezie and Devin Carter have combined for 628 receiving yards and three touchdowns, while Thayer Thomas has 23 receptions. The NC State Wolfpack ground game is averaging 172 yards per contest, and Zonovan Knight leads the way with 462 yards and three touchdowns. Defensively, NC State is allowing 15.8 points and 295.6 yards per game. Drake Thomas leads the NC State Wolfpack with 37 tackles, Davin Vann has 1.5 sacks and Cyrus Fagan has one interception.

BC QB Dennis Grosel is completing 61.5 percent of his passes for 788 yards, four touchdowns and four interceptions. Zay Flowers and Trae Barry have combined for 586 receiving yards and four touchdowns while CJ Lewis has nine receptions. The Boston College Eagles ground game is averaging 189.8 yards per contest, and Patrick Garwo leads the way with 469 yards and five touchdowns. Defensively, Boston College is allowing 16.8 points and 319.6 yards per game. Isaiah Graham-Mobley leads the Boston College Eagles with 36 tackles, Khrist Banks has 1.5 sacks and Jahmin Muse has one interception.

The Wolfpack are 5-2 ATS in their last 7 games overall. The over is 6-2 in Wolfpack last 8 road games. The over is 5-1 in Eagles last 6 home games. The NC State Wolfpack have split their last six road games.

The NC State Wolfpack are getting more respect because of their win over Clemson, but Boston College took that same Clemson team down to the wire a couple of weeks ago. The bottom line here is both of these teams have similar styles, as NC State and BC are both defensive minded and want to dominate the trenches.

I expect a physical game going down to the wire in the fourth quarter. The Wolfpack are 1-6-1 ATS in their last 8 meetings in Boston College and 0-3-1 ATS in their last 4 meetings. The Boston College Eagles have won five of their last six home games. NC St is 3-11 ATS in their last 14 road games and The Eagles are 6-1 ATS in their last 7 home games and 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games overall. The NC State Wolfpack have been rough against the spread on the road. Conversely, **Boston College is a tough out at home. Eagles upset the Wolfpack, but give me the points too.**

Projected Score: Boston College 27, North Carolina St. 20

TCU at OKLAHOMA Over 65 by 9

The TCU Horned Frogs will look to add to their 52-31 win over Texas Tech last time out. Max Duggan has thrown for 1,003 yards, 9 touchdowns and 2 picks on 64.7% passing while Zach Evans leads TCU in rushing with 586 rushing yards and Kendre Miller has 302 rushing yards with the two combining for 11 rushing TDs. Taye Barber has 205 receiving yards for the Horned Frogs while four other Horned Frogs have at least 100 receiving yards this season. Defensively, Dee Winters leads TCU with 32 total tackles while Dylan Horton has a pair of sacks this season.

The Oklahoma Sooners will look to build on their 55-48 win in a thriller over Texas last time out. Spencer Rattler's thrown for 1,371 yards, 10 touchdowns and 5 interceptions while Caleb Williams has 314 passing yards with a pair of scores. Kennedy Brooks leads the Sooners with 535 rushing yards and 6 scores while Eric Gray has 282 rushing yards. Marvin Mims leads Oklahoma's receiving unit with 19 catches for 400 yards while Michael Woods II and Mario Williams each have 200+ receiving yards. Four other Sooners have at least 100 receiving yards this season. Defensively, Pat Fields leads the Sooners with 34 total tackles while Perrion Winfrey has a team-high 4.5 sacks. Nik Bonitto has 4 sacks and Isaiah Thomas has 3.5 sacks this season.

TCU is 1-3-1 ATS in their last 5 games overall and 5-1 ATS in their last 6 road games. Oklahoma is 7-3 ATS in their last 10 conference games and 9-3 ATS in their last 12 home games against a team with a winning road record while the over is 38-18 in their last 56 games in October.

Oklahoma has two capable quarterbacks and the case that could be made for either one as a starter. But both can be successful against an Horned Frog defense not as it used to be in past years. These are two teams have serious defensive issues this season, but they're also two teams that can hang points on the board in bunches. I could easily see this being a game that hits north of 70 points. Roll on Sooner Schooner. Leap over Horned Frogs. Take over 65.

Projected Score: Oklahoma 43, TCU 31

Air Force + 6 Over BOISE ST. by 3

The Air Force Falcons look to build on their three-game winning streak. The Boise State Broncos look for a win to get a game above a .500 record.

The Air Force Falcons QB Haaziq Daniels is completing 51.2 percent of his passes for 494 yards, two touchdowns and one interception. Micah Davis and Brandon Lewis have combined for 377 receiving yards and two touchdowns, while Kyle Patterson has three receptions. The Air Force Falcons ground game is averaging 341.3 yards per contest, and Brad Roberts leads the way with 680 yards and six touchdowns. Defensively, Air Force is allowing 16.2 points and 280.8 yards per game. Vince Sanford leads the Air Force Falcons with 31 tackles, Demonte Meeks has 3.5 sacks and Corvan Taylor has three interceptions.

The Boise State Broncos have split their last six home games. Hank Bachmeier is completing 65.1 percent of his passes for 1,692 yards, 11 touchdowns and four interceptions. Khalil Shakir and Stefan Cobbs have combined for 844 receiving yards and seven touchdowns, while Octavius Evans has 20 receptions. The Boise State Broncos ground game is averaging 92 yards per contest, and Cyrus Habibi-Likio leads the way with 181 yards and two touchdowns. Defensively, Boise State is allowing 21.8 points and 414.3 yards per game. JL Skinner leads the Boise State Broncos with 53 tackles, Isaiah Bagnah has five sacks and Tyric LeBeauf has three interceptions.

The Falcons are 17-8-1 ATS in their last 26 games as an underdog and 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games overall. The Broncos are 2-5 ATS in their last 7 games as a favorite and 5-2-2 ATS in their last 9 games in October. The Falcons are 0-3-1 ATS in their last 4 meetings.

The Boise State Broncos have been tough to bet against when at home, but this could be a letdown spot after beating BYU last week on the road. Also, they really didn't look that great against BYU. But, BYU looked way off their game last week. Air Force is an elite defensive team that's also first in rushing offense. Boise State is 98th in rush defense and 91st in total defense. Air Force should be able to give Boise State all it can handle and have a chance to steal this game in the end. Give me the road dog. **No give me the road Falcons who have won three of their last four road games.**
Projected Score: Air Force 27, Boise St. 24



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DENNIS & DJ 7-1 LAST WEEK

DJ 14-10 58%, DENNIS 19-5

79% SAM 10-6 62% NFL YTD

NFL Landscape

Justin Herbert Continues to Be Incredible: His physical traits allow the Chargers to design and call, basically, whatever they want. Constantly under duress against the Browns' front four on Sunday, Herbert was utterly spectacular. And to beat an elite opponent on short rest, in which the offense needed to put up 40-plus points, is the sign of a franchise-defining player. He's definitely in the class of Mahomes and Allen and may even be better at this time.

The Cowboys' Hog Mollies Are Hog Mollier Than the Giants' Hog Mollies: Dallas could breathe easy once Mike Glennon was in the game, but they controlled this one throughout, especially up front (and in spite of center Tyler Biadasz's continued struggles). The Cowboys went for 201 rushing yards on 39 carries against a very good Giants front.

Steelers Offense, Better: It was the best performance they've had from the offensive line in two years, and while Ben Roethlisberger will still spark his share of nervous moments—he's a bottom-10 starting quarterback but still a starting-caliber quarterback—a day like Sunday will more than do. They got a long touchdown early, took a lead, then let the run game (35 rushes, 147 yards) and defense carry the load. Roethlisberger only dropped back 26 times in the win over Denver. One of our guaranteed pick winners.

Arizona Stays Perfect: And now they have wins over the Rams and 49ers, with the Seahawks facing a lengthy sans-Russell Wilson period. One of our guaranteed pick winners.

The Bucs Offense With Their (Almost) Full Complement of Weapons: Now that Tom Brady is essentially coordinating the offense himself, there's not much reason to believe anything besides inclement weather or an elite opponent will slow down the Bucs. Tampa rolled up 558 yards of offense and went 8-for-10 on third down against the Dolphins.

Kirk Cousins Gets It Done Again: This Vikings have had three games decided by a game-ending field-goal attempt. They're getting used to having to mount late drives to win games or force overtime, and Cousins has now done so three times (including setting up Greg Joseph for the chip-shot he missed at Arizona) in four opportunities this season. Against the Lions on Sunday, he drove the Vikings 46 yards in 30 seconds and three plays with two timeouts to set up Joseph's game-winner.

Tim Kelly Just Humiliated the Entire Belichick Family: And the Texans offensive coordinator did it with a rookie third-round QB throwing to the likes of the Chris Moore (fresh off the practice squad) and Conley.

Mason Crosby, Eventually: Three straight misses on potential game-winners before finally connecting at the end of overtime (a chance he only got because Evan McPherson's would-be game-winner drifted just wide). As Meatloaf once sang, 1 out of 4 ain't bad.

Bears Do It Their Way: The offense is ugly as ever, but they went into Vegas and dominated with the pass rush and coverage that for the most part didn't give up anything downfield (and when they did allow something downfield, the Raiders tended to drop it).

Trey Lance Shows Some Flashes: Kyle Shanahan called a lot of designed runs for him, and he was clearly instructed to look to take off if his first two reads weren't there. He made a couple of impressive, tight-window throws and made plays with his legs. He needs to reach a point where he's actually taking some checkdown opportunities, which were there. Ultimately, coming up short on a fourth-and-goal (and three other fourth-down attempts) did this offense in.

Hey, a Nathan Peterman Cameo!: That always adds a little spice to the weekend. He ran three plays while Derek Carr was banged up, one a hand-off, one a third-down scramble just short of the line-to-gain, and a fourth-down QB sneak to convert the first down.

Terrence Mitchell Punchout: As for the Texans' veteran DB, he had a touchdown-saving forced fumble on Damien Harris as Harris was on the verge of crossing the goal line.

Matt Nagy's Indecision Pays Off: Well, except for the fact that when Justin Fields had to leave the game after tweaking his knee, Andy Dalton didn't even have his rib-protector on on the sideline, so the backup quarterback was literally unprepared to enter the game.

This Kicker Will Be the Death of Mike Zimmer: Greg Joseph is three weeks removed from pushing a chip-shot would-be game-winner against the Cardinals. In the fourth quarter of Sunday's back-and-forth win over Detroit, Joseph hit from 55, was short from 49, and then connected from 54 to walk it off.

This 33-Yard, Fourth-Down Defensive Pass Interference Flag: The Browns' Final Drive: If not for an injury to Chargers linebacker Drue Tranquill stopping the clock, it would have been a complete disaster. In need of a 75-yard touchdown drive with 91 seconds left and no timeouts, Baker Mayfield checked down twice on the first three plays, moving the Browns 12 yards and taking 50 of those 91 seconds off the clock and forcing Cleveland into chucking two end-game Hail Mary's (which fell incomplete).

Daniel Jones's Scary Head Injury: To be clear, he initiated the contact, lowering his head in trying to run through Jabril Cox on a third-and-goal boot from the 1. It's especially disheartening as Jones was absolutely taking off over the past month. By halftime, the Giants had lost Jones, Saquon Barkley and Kenny Golladay in a game they had entered without Sterling Shepard and Darius Slayton. This was enough to make Sammy throw his nerf football at his TV.

An Erratic Sam Darnold: This one got away from the Panthers, who blew a nine-point second-half lead at home to the Eagles despite quality performances from the defense and run game. Darnold, unfortunately, looked every bit like the Jets edition in what was by far his worst performance of 2021. Thanks to him Dennis lost his NFL Guaranteed Private Gold Pick which is at 67% now. By the way, his College Football Guaranteed Private Gold Picks are now at 5-2 71%.

49ers O-Line Adjusting to Trey Lance: One thing about Jimmy Garoppolo: the ball got out, if not always accurately, at least on time. Lance is willing and able to extend plays, and the 49ers' linemen were repeatedly caught holding as a result of simply not having a feel for where their quarterback was, or where he was going.

Urban Meyer Throws Challenge Flag as His Latest Form of Apology to the Locker Room: I don't know how I feel about this. It was a terrible idea to throw the red flag on this play—Meyer is throwing away a challenge and a second-half timeout in a game Jacksonville trailed by two possessions early in the second half. But sometimes, I guess, you just have to give the people what they want (especially when you've repeatedly embarrassed yourself and duffed multiple apologies to those people).

What Did Dan Campbell Ever Do to You, Kickers of the World?: The Lions head coach has now seen a win turn into a loss on walk-off kicks by Justin Tucker from 66 and Greg Joseph from 54.

Veteran Packers Have Helped Right the Ship

The Jaguars and Raiders Hired Coaches They Saw As Saviors: Now They're Stuck

The Bills Are Now the Class of the AFC.

Dan Campbell Has the Same Record as Urban Meyer: Anyone who claims they've ever heard anything more unfair is quite simply a filthy rotten liar.

Josh Norman Needs Help on DeAndre Hopkins: Norman was utterly hopeless against Hopkins on more than a few occasions.

DeMeco Ryans wants to heat up opposing quarterbacks: The results have been awfully good so far (including Sunday; they held the Cardinals to 17 points and 5.1 yards per play on Sunday).

Patriots Running Backs and Their Thousand Fumble Pledge: Damien Harris, whose late fumble cost them a win in the opener, had one punched out as he got near the goal line in Houston, taking a touchdown off the board. Throw in J.J. Taylor's devastating lost fumble last week against Tampa and Rhamondre Stevenson's extended benching after losing one in the opener, and you have a hugely fluky yet hugely worrying trend.

The 49ers Are Running Too Far Behind: There's not much margin for error in the NFC West, and the 49ers are not only 2–3 but now 0–2 within the division as they head into their bye week.

Spiking the Ball Outside the End Zone Is the Lamest Penalty: But that's what one intrepid official flagged Broncos rookie RB Javonte Williams for after Williams was dragged down two yards short of the end zone at the end of a 49-yard run. It's only a five-yard delay of game penalty, but that was the difference between first-and-goal at the 2 and first-and-goal at the 7. The Broncos ran for a short gain on first down and Teddy Bridgewater was sacked on second down, backing them up to the 17 for third-and-goal. They settled for a field goal, while the official presumably settled for a smug sense of self-satisfaction.

49ers on Fourth Down: They went 1-for-5, including coming up inches short on the goal line in the second quarter, which is how they ended up losing a game in which they absolutely seemed to be on equal footing with Arizona.

Houston's Special Teams: Yeesh. Whether it was the ill-fated fake fake punt that traveled zero yards, the two missed PATs, or having to burn a timeout before a 56-yard field goal attempt that missed while protecting a seven-point fourth-quarter lead, the Texans don't have the kind of margin for error to afford that kind of third-unit nonsense.

Sean Payton Has Issues: Because this Saints offense is very not good, and they might be looking at an extended absence for Taysom Hill and far fewer possible answers to their problems.

Even Tom Brady Sometimes: On a first-quarter snap, Brady had Antonio Brown, the most talented wide receiver in the NFL right now, running uncovered down the right sideline. He instead chose to take a shot for Leonard Fournette, a running back who is almost literally incapable of catching a forward pass, running, well-covered, down the left sideline. (The result was an incompleteness.).

Play the London Game at a Normal Hour: There's no reason the game can't kick off at 6 p.m. local time in London, with the rest of the early slate, to make it a normal body clock game. At some point the NFL has to draw a line between gimmicky money grab and quality of product, right? (Right?).

Poor Evan McPherson: It's one thing to miss the potential game-winning kick by inches, but another to make yourself into a meme while doing so

Stop Saying Lamar Can't Pass From The Pocket: Lamar Jackson's performance in the Monday Night Football game should quiet critics forever. A spectacular record breaking performance of accuracy never seen before in the NFL. An MVP performance to boot. What would the Ravens look like without Lamar? The only offensive thing he doesn't do is kick field goals. Not needed anyway as Justin Tucker is the best ever as shown by his previous 66 yard record breaking, game winning FG.

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

INDIANAPOLIS - 10½ Over Houston by 3 & Over by 10

The Houston Texans need a win to snap a four-game losing streak. The Indianapolis Colts also need a win to rebound from a 1-4 record.

The Houston Texans have lost four straight road games. Davis Mills is completing 61.5 percent of his passes for 669 yards, five touchdowns and five interceptions. Brandin Cooks and Chris Conley have combined for 516 receiving yards and two touchdowns, while David Johnson has 13 receptions. The Houston Texans ground game is averaging 79.8 yards per contest, and Mark Ingram II leads the way with 212 yards and one touchdown. Defensively, Houston is allowing 28.2 points and 391.8 yards per game. Christian Kirksey leads the Houston Texans with 41 tackles, Whitney Mercilus has three sacks and Justin Reid has two interceptions.

The Indianapolis Colts have won six of their last 10 home games. Carson Wentz is completing 65.3 percent of his passes for 1,322 yards, seven touchdowns and one interception. Michael Pittman Jr. and Zach Pascal have combined for 572 receiving yards and four touchdowns, while Jonathan Taylor leads the way with 327 yards and two touchdowns. Defensively, Indianapolis is allowing 25.6 points and 369.2 yards per game. Bobby Okereke leads the Indianapolis Colts with 28 tackles, Kemoko Turay has two sacks and Darius Leonard has one interception.

The Texans are 2-6 ATS in their last 8 games in October and 4-1 ATS in their last 5 vs. AFC. The Colts are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 home games and 7-3 ATS in their last 10 games in October. The over is 5-2 in Texans last 7 games overall. The over is 35-17 in Colts last 52 games in October.

The Indianapolis Colts are the better team and should feel good with them finally coming home after three weeks on the road and taking the Ravens to overtime. However, the Houston Texans are coming off possibly their best performance of the season, where they jumped on the Patriots and probably should have won. The Texans aren't a good football team but their offense has picked up speed the past two weeks and Davis Mills is starting to settle into the offense. No way am I laying double-digit chalk with a Colts team that is inconsistent. Also, if you noticed in the MNF game, the Colts defense is banged up real bad. This is a double play. **Take the Texans with the points and take the Over 42.**

Projected Score: Indianapolis 27, Houston 24

Minnesota + 1½ Over CAROLINA by 7 & Under by 7

The Minnesota Vikings need a win here to get back to a .500 record. The Carolina Panthers need a win to rebound from back-to-back losses.

The Minnesota Vikings have lost four of their last five road games. Kirk Cousins is completing 69.6 percent of his passes for 1,396 yards, 10 touchdowns and two interceptions. Justin Jefferson and Adam Thielen have combined for 729 receiving yards and seven touchdowns, while KJ Osborn has 20 receptions. The Minnesota Vikings ground game is averaging 113.8 yards per contest, and Alexander Mattison leads the way with 258 yards on 65 carries. Defensively, Minnesota is allowing 21.8 points and 368.8 yards per game. Eric Kendricks leads the Minnesota Vikings with 47 tackles, Danielle Hunter has five sacks and Nick Vigil has one interception.

The Carolina Panthers have lost six of their last nine home games. Sam Darnold is completing 65.6 percent of his passes for 1,366 yards, six touchdowns and six interceptions. DJ Moore and Robby Anderson have combined for 619 receiving yards and four touchdowns, while Christian McCaffrey has 16 receptions. The Carolina Panthers ground game is averaging 107.8 yards per contest, and Chuba Hubbard leads the way with 220 yards on 56 carries. Defensively, Carolina is allowing 17.4 points and 255.8 yards per game. Shaq Thompson leads the Carolina Panthers with 25 tackles,

Haason Reddick has 6.5 sacks and Jaycee Horn has one interception.

The Panthers are 4-10-1 ATS in their last 15 home games and 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games in October. The under is 7-1 in Panthers last 8 games overall. The underdog is 6-1 ATS in their last 7 meetings. Based on these trends, it favors the under & the Vikings.

The Minnesota Vikings have been in nothing but dog fights this season, but they're showing some progress of finishing games, and the offense has done a good job of moving the ball. The Carolina Panthers are coming off back-to-back losses, and now you have to start questioning how real that 3-0 start was given the lack of quality teams. I'm not convinced with either of these teams, but I do believe the Vikings are better on paper. It also looks like Darnold is reverting back to his Jets days and coming off a terrible game. Both these teams allow a total of 38 points per game. The trend is your friend and give me the Vikings in the underdog role. This is also a double play.

Take the Vikings + 1½ & Under 46½ .

Projected Score: Minnesota 23, Carolina 16

LA Chargers at BALTIMORE Over 51 by 12

The Los Angeles Chargers come into this game looking to build on their 4-1 start after a 47-42 win over the Browns in their last game. Justin Herbert has thrown for 1,576 yards, 13 touchdowns and 3 interceptions on 67.2% passing while Austin Ekeler leads the Chargers in rushing with 349 rushing yards and 4 touchdowns. Mike Williams leads the Chargers with 471 receiving yards and 6 touchdowns coming on 31 receptions while Keenan Allen has a team-high 34 grabs for 369 yards. Jared Cook has 210 receiving yards while Ekeler and Kalen Guyton each have 100+ receiving yards on the year. Defensively, Derwin James Jr. leads the Chargers with 43 total tackles while Joey Bosa has a team-high 2.5 sacks this season.

The Baltimore Ravens will be out to add to their impressive 31-25 win over the Colts on Monday night football. Lamar Jackson has thrown for 1,519 yards, 8 touchdowns and 3 picks on 67.1% passing while also leading the Ravens in rushing with 341 rushing yards. Ty'Son Williams and Latavius Murray each have 100+ rushing yards as well this season. Marquise Brown and Mark Andrews have combined for 57 receptions with each logging 400+ receiving yards this season. Sammy Watkins has 292 receiving yards while James Proche II and Devin Duvernay each have 100+ receiving yards on the year. Defensively, Patrick Queen leads the Ravens with 27 total tackles while Tyus Bowser and Odafe Oweh each have a pair of sacks this season.

Los Angeles is 6-0 ATS in their last 6 games against the AFC and 4-0 ATS in their last 4 road games while the over is 6-2 in their last 8 games against a team with a winning record. Baltimore is 4-0 ATS in their last 4 home games and 9-3 ATS in their last 12 games.

The Chargers just gave up 42 points to the Browns and the defense while having solid pieces like Bosa and James, have still had issues keeping points off of the board. On the other hand, the Ravens' secondary is still banged up and I think Justin Herbert is just the man to take advantage of those deficiencies. Has any team really shut down these two quarterbacks?. The obvious answer is a resounding NO. Should be a high scoring exciting game. **Take Over 51.**

Projected Score: Baltimore 33, LA Chargers 30



Arizona + 2½ Over CLEVELAND by 4

The Arizona Cardinals look for another win to build on their strong 5-0 start to the season. The Cleveland Browns look for a statement win after winning three of their last four games.

Kyler Murray is completing 75.2 percent of his passes for 1,512 yards, 10 touchdowns and four interceptions. DeAndre Hopkins and Christian Kirk have combined for 595 receiving yards and six touchdowns, while Rondale Moore has 21 receptions. The Arizona Cardinals ground game is averaging 128 yards per contest, and Chase Edmonds leads the way with 270 yards on 49 carries. Defensively, Arizona is allowing 19 points and 353.4 yards per game. Budda Baker leads the Arizona Cardinals with 36 tackles, Chandler Jones has five sacks and Byron Murphy Jr. has three interceptions.

The Cleveland Browns have won five of their last six home games. Baker Mayfield is completing 66.9 percent of his passes for 1,240 yards, four touchdowns and two interceptions. David Njoku and Kareem Hunt have combined for 409 receiving yards and one touchdown, while Rashard Higgins has 11 receptions. The Cleveland Browns ground game is averaging 187.6 yards per contest, and Nick Chubb leads the way with 523 yards and four touchdowns. Defensively, Cleveland is allowing 22.8 points and 298.8 yards per game. Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah leads the Cleveland Browns with 21 tackles, Myles Garrett has seven sacks and Malcolm Smith has one interception.

The under is 5-2 in Cardinals last 7 games overall. The under is 7-3 in Browns last 10 games as a favorite. The over is 4-1-1 in the last 6 meetings.

We're getting free points with an undefeated Arizona Cardinals team that's top-10 in every major offensive category and has already won three times on the road this season. The Cleveland Browns have flashed promise this season, and they're first in rushing offense and second in rushing defense. The Browns have the formula to finally turn the corner this season, but it's important to note that the three teams they beat are a combined 6-9 this season. I need a little more convincing before I'm jumping on the Browns bandwagon. The Cardinals are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 road games and 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games overall. The Browns are 2-5 ATS in their last 7 home games.

Take the warrior Cardinals and the free points.

Projected Score: Arizona 27, Cleveland 23

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

CFB	Utah + 1½	Miss St + 17½	B College + 3½	TCU O 65	A Force +6	-----
NFL	Texans +10½	Colts O 42	Vikings + 1 ½	Vikings U 46½	Ravens Ov 51	Cards + 2½

