

Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

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



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

Volume 41 Issue 5

September 21, 2022



**NCAA MAJOR MATCHUP GAMES: MINNY @ MICH ST
ARKANSAS @ TAM - WISCONSIN @ OHIO ST
KANSAS ST @ OKLAHOMA - USC @ OREGON ST.**

College Football Landscape

Last Saturday was not a day for the Big Ten to champion the depth of the conference.

Sure, Penn State got a convincing road win over Auburn and Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin did what they were supposed to do against overmatched opponents. But the teams below them in the conference pecking order didn't cover themselves in glory.

We'll start in Lincoln, where Nebraska gave up 49 points to Oklahoma in its first game after Scott Frost's firing. Interim coach Mickey Joseph's tenure started perfectly; Oklahoma went three-and-out to start the game and Nebraska immediately responded with a touchdown. But Oklahoma woke Nebraska up from its dream on the next drive and scored five first-half touchdowns to seal the game before the third quarter even began.

And while Nebraska falls to 1-3 on the season, including a loss to Northwestern in Ireland, it can at least say that it took care of business against an FCS opponent, North Dakota.

Northwestern paid over \$500,000 to FCS Southern Illinois on Saturday and lost 31-24 to the Salukis. The Wildcats turned the ball over four times and fumbled on consecutive drives in the fourth quarter after Southern Illinois took a 24-17 lead.

SIU is far from an FCS powerhouse, too. The Salukis opened the season with a 64-29 loss to Incarnate Word and lost 34-31 to Southeast Missouri State in Week 2. Northwestern should have covered the 13.5-point spread. Instead, it's now turned the ball over seven times over its last two games after beating the Huskers in Week 0.

Purdue added to the Big Ten's dismal start to the day with an undisciplined collapse in a 32-29 loss to Syracuse. The Boilermakers took the lead with less than a minute left but committed 50 yards of penalties to boost Syracuse's chances of a game-winning TD. And that's what happened as Garrett Shrader hit Oronde Gadsden II — yes, he's the son of the former Miami Dolphins receiver — for the game-winning score.

And while Indiana and Rutgers got wins early Saturday afternoon, they weren't victories to brag about. The Hoosiers needed a 51-yard field goal in overtime to beat Western Kentucky a week after

having to come back to beat Idaho. And Rutgers beat Temple 16-14 just two weeks after the Owls were shut out by 30 in a season-opening loss to Duke.

The lethargic football even extended to teams not in the Big Ten yet. Future Big Ten member UCLA needed a field goal as time expired to beat South Alabama 32-31 at home. The Jaguars had the lead for most of the fourth quarter and a boneheaded decision with six minutes to go (more on that below) helped UCLA's hopes of a comeback.

The brand and reach of the Big Ten is a big reason why Fox, CBS and NBC are ponying up billions to televise the conference's football games when UCLA and USC join the conference in 2024. Lots of people watch Big Ten football games, especially when teams like Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State are playing.

And if Saturday is any indication, it's the Big Ten's name brands that are going to be providing the quality among the growing quantity of Big Ten football in the coming years. While the football might have been entertaining among the teams at the bottom of the conference, it wasn't exactly very good.

WINNERS LAST WEEK

Georgia: UGA continues to make everything look easy. The top-ranked Bulldogs had their SEC opener on Saturday at South Carolina and cruised to a 48-7 victory. Brock Bowers was the star of the show. The sophomore tight end accounted for three touchdowns, including a catch-and-run 78-yarder early in the third quarter. Bowers also had a rushing touchdown in the first quarter and went up high for another TD catch in the second quarter. Defensively, it looked like the Bulldogs would make it three straight games without allowing a touchdown, but the Gamecocks managed to find the end zone with a pity TD with 53 seconds remaining.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma looks like the class of the Big 12 so far this season. The Sooners trounced a reeling Nebraska squad on the road, 49-14. Nebraska actually scored first in the game, but the Sooners responded with 35 consecutive points before halftime. In the third quarter, Oklahoma made it 49 unanswered points in a dominant showing. While Dillon Gabriel threw for 230 yards and two TDs in the win, the Sooners also added a whopping 312 rushing yards. OU opens Big 12 play next weekend at home vs. Kansas State.

Oregon: Oregon put that Week 1 loss to Georgia in the past and turned in an impressive performance in a 41-20 win over BYU. BYU was coming off a big win over Baylor, but the Ducks jumped on the Cougars early. Oregon's lead was 10-0 after the first quarter and 24-7 by halftime with Bo Nix leading the way. Nix has been a polarizing player over the course of his career but he had things rolling in this one. Nix threw for 222 yards and two touchdowns while adding 35 yards and three scores on the ground. Oregon still has the talent to make some noise in the Pac-12.

Penn State: For the first time in a while, PSU has a running game. Freshman Nick Singleton is a big reason for that. Singleton needed just 10 carries to explode for 124 yards and two touchdowns in a 41-12 road victory over Auburn. Kaytron Allen also added 52 yards and two scores for the Nittany Lions, who totaled 245 yards on the ground in the win. Meanwhile, the attacking PSU defense forced four Auburn turnovers and were constantly pressuring the quarterback. The Big Ten East is loaded with Michigan and Ohio State, but PSU looks like a team that could have a say in that division race.

LSU: Brian Kelly's Tigers have rebounded nicely from the Week 1 loss to Florida State. After a blowout win over Southern last week, LSU came from behind to beat a good Mississippi State team 31-16 at home on Saturday. LSU trailed 13-0 late in the first half before battling back and pulling

away with three fourth-quarter touchdowns. Jayden Daniels threw for 210 yards, rushed for 93 yards and had two total TDs in the win. The defense limited the Bulldogs to just 289 yards of offense.

Kansas: The Jayhawks have eclipsed their preseason win total. Kansas' total was 2.5 wins ahead of the season and KU is 3-0 after easily beating Houston 48-30 on Saturday. Yes, the Jayhawks are one of the best stories of September and it's not too early to think that KU could end up going to a bowl game in 2022. More pressing, however, is the location of ESPN's "College Game Day" for Week 4. And Kansas is already pushing to host the pregame show as 3-0 Duke comes to town.

Syracuse: Improbably, Syracuse is 3-0. The Orange beat Purdue 32-29 when Garrett Shrader hit Oronde Gadsen II for a 25-yard touchdown with just seven seconds remaining, capping off a wild fourth quarter. Purdue had previously gone ahead with a touchdown with just 51 seconds left in regulation, but the Orange — thanks to two Purdue unsportsmanlike conduct penalties — didn't need to go too far to respond and ultimately win the game. Syracuse had a 10-win season in 2018 but combined for 11 wins in the three seasons that followed. It felt like a pivotal year for Dino Babers, and now he's got his Orange off to an excellent start.

Florida State: Things did not look good for Florida State when QB Jordan Travis went down with an injury late in the first half vs. Louisville on Friday night. Tate Rodemaker, Travis' backup, threw an ugly interception and went into halftime down 21-14. Rodemaker, however, regathered himself and came out firing in the second half. Johnny Wilson was his main target. Rodemaker hit Wilson for a 69-yard connection early in the fourth and the two later connected on touchdowns from 10 and two yards. The two-yarder proved to be the game-winner. The Seminoles are off to a 3-0 start for the first time since 2015.

Wyoming: There was a big upset in the Mountain West on Friday night as Wyoming knocked off Air Force 17-14 in Laramie. Air Force, considered by many to be the MWC favorite, was a 16.5-point favorite in this one. But Wyoming gave the Falcons a taste of their own medicine with a heavy dose of ball control early on. The Cowboys jumped out to a 10-0 halftime lead, fell behind 14-10 in the fourth quarter and then went on an impressive 75-yard touchdown drive late to win the game. Titus Swen rushed for 102 yards and the game-winning TD for Wyoming. Wyoming was hit hard by transfers, but is now 3-1 to start the season.

Appalachian State: App State only plays in dramatic games in 2022. The Mountaineers lost 63-61 to North Carolina in Week 1 despite scoring 40 points in the fourth quarter. In Week 2, App State went on the road and upset Texas A&M, which was then ranked No. 6 in the country. Last Saturday, College Game Day was in town for the Mountaineers' home game vs. Troy. This one came down to the final play, and what a play it was. Chase Brice found Christian Horn for a Hail Mary as time expired to pull out a 32-28 win. It was a wild unbelievable ending.

Vanderbilt: Vanderbilt has surpassed its preseason win total and it's not even October yet. The over/under for the Commodores was a measly 2.5 wins, but with a 38-28 road win over Northern Illinois they are now 3-1 so far in 2022. Vandy already had wins over Hawaii and Elon before losing to Wake Forest last week. On the road in DeKalb, Vandy fell behind NIU 28-14 early in the second half before closing out the game with 24 unanswered points. Freshman QB AJ Swann threw four touchdown passes in the win.

LOSERS LAST WEEK

Kansas State: The Wildcats seemed primed to be 3-0 heading into a big game against Oklahoma in Week 4. Oops. A week after a dominating win over Missouri, the Wildcats lost 17-10 at home to Tulane. The Green Wave won despite going 1-of-12 on third downs and turning it over twice because

Kansas State was 2-of-15 on third downs itself. The Wildcats haven't gotten much from Nebraska transfer QB Adrian Martinez in 2022 and Martinez was 21-of-31 passing for just 150 yards. Take away a 19-yard completion to Malik Knowles and a 21-yarder to Kade Warner and Martinez's 19 other completions went for just 110 yards. That's putrid. KSU needs to figure out something on offense quickly to complement a very good defense to keep up with Oklahoma.

Louisville: The Cardinals defense gave up 455 yards to Florida State on Friday night in a 35-31 loss. Florida State stars Jared Verse and Jordan Travis both were injured in the game and FSU's second-half comeback was led by backup QB Tate Rodemaker. He threw two fourth quarter TDs to Johnny Wilson and completed six of his 10 passing attempts for 109 yards. We're still not sure what to make of the Cardinals after they beat UCF in Week 2 following a blowout loss to Syracuse to open the season. Maybe that game said more about UCF's passing attack than it did about Louisville.

South Alabama: South Alabama got tricky and it proved costly. The Jaguars were on the verge of a big upset over UCLA but faced a fourth-and-2 from the UCLA 22-yard line. Leading 31-29 with about three minutes to play, South Alabama first lined up for a field goal but then quickly changed course. The kicker lined up as a receiver and the ball was snapped to the holder. He looked for anybody to throw to, but was sacked for a big loss. That gave the ball back to UCLA, which promptly marched down the field and won 32-31 with a field goal as time expired.

Northwestern: Maybe Northwestern needs to relocate to Europe? The Wildcats opened the season with a win over Nebraska in Ireland but have now dropped back-to-back home games. First was a loss to Duke. That's barely defensible. A loss to an 0-2 FCS team? Yeah, that can't happen. Northwestern lost 31-24 to Southern Illinois on Saturday, turning it over four times in the process. SIU's final two touchdowns came directly after Northwestern fumbles. Before Saturday, SIU lost to Incarnate Word and Southeast Missouri State so of course SIU's first win of the year came on the road over a Big Ten team. Of course.

Georgia Tech: The Yellow Jackets put up little fight in a 42-0 loss at home to No. 20 Ole Miss on Saturday. Georgia Tech had just 53 yards rushing on 34 carries and allowed Ole Miss to rush for 316 yards as Zach Evans, Quinshon Judkins and Ulysses Bentley IV each had two rushing touchdowns. No one expected Georgia Tech to beat either Clemson or Ole Miss over the first three weeks of the season, but not being overmatched should have been an accomplishable goal. Instead, it's hard to see what the path is to a bowl for the Yellow Jackets with a game at UCF coming up in Week 4 before ACC play begins in earnest.

Colorado: The Buffaloes have taken over the dreaded label of being the worst Power Five team in college football. Colorado lost 49-7 at Minnesota on Saturday in a game that was 35-0 at halftime before Minnesota eased up in the second half. Colorado played three quarterbacks and none were effective. After Brendon Lewis and J.T. Shrout got starts this season, Owen McCown came in and threw for 52 yards against the Gophers. And Colorado can't stop anyone on defense, either. Minnesota rushed 52 times for 334 yards after Air Force ran 70 times for 435 yards a week ago. The Buffs have lost to TCU, Air Force and the Gophers by a combined margin of 128-30.

Marshall: The Thundering Herd's high after beating Notre Dame on the road lasted just a week. Marshall was upset 34-31 in overtime by Bowling Green on Saturday night. There might not have been a game that encapsulated college football more than this one either. Marshall entered with a win over one of the biggest brands in college football history while Bowling Green came into the game 0-2 and lost to FCS team Eastern Kentucky a week ago.

South Florida: USF had a chance to beat Florida in Gainesville but was doomed by a bad snap and a botched hold in the final minute. Down 31-28, USF moved to the Florida 19 with 34 seconds

remaining. On the next play, a low snap went past QB Gerry Bohanon. USF recovered the loose ball, but it was a 14-yard loss. The Bulls then had a 48-yard field goal try to tie the game, but the holder struggled to gather the snap and the kick sailed right, allowing Florida to escape with a 3 point win.

Last Week's Top Performers DeWayne McBride (UAB vs. GASO): 28 rush, 223 yds, 4 TD Jalon Daniels (KU vs. HOU): 14/23, 158 yds, 3 TD C.J. Stroud (OSU vs. TOL): 22/27, 367 yds, 5 TD Bijan Robinson (TEX vs. UTSA): 20 rush, 183 yds, 3 TD Caleb Williams (USC vs. FRES): 25/37, 284 yds, 2 TD John Rhys Plumlee (UCF vs. FAU): 25/36, 339 yds, 1 TD Aidan Robbins (UNLV vs. UNT): 29 rush, 227 yds, 3 TD Bo Nix (ORE vs. BYU): 13/18, 222 yds, 2 TD Chance Nolan (ORST vs. MTST): 19/25, 276 yds, 4 TD Doug Brumfield (UNLV vs. UNT): 21/27, 211 yds, 2 TD	Last Week's Passing Leaders <table> <tr> <th></th><th>Cmp/Att Yds TD</th></tr> <tr> <td>Davis Brin (TLSA)</td><td>27/35, 424 yds, 4TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Aidan O'Connell (PUR)</td><td>39/56, 424 yds, 3TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Chris Reynolds (CHAR)</td><td>31/43, 401 yds, 5TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Michael Penix (WASH)</td><td>24/40, 397 yds, 4TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>K.J. Jefferson (ARK)</td><td>19/31, 385 yds, 2TD</td></tr> </table>		Cmp/Att Yds TD	Davis Brin (TLSA)	27/35, 424 yds, 4TD	Aidan O'Connell (PUR)	39/56, 424 yds, 3TD	Chris Reynolds (CHAR)	31/43, 401 yds, 5TD	Michael Penix (WASH)	24/40, 397 yds, 4TD	K.J. Jefferson (ARK)	19/31, 385 yds, 2TD												
	Cmp/Att Yds TD																								
Davis Brin (TLSA)	27/35, 424 yds, 4TD																								
Aidan O'Connell (PUR)	39/56, 424 yds, 3TD																								
Chris Reynolds (CHAR)	31/43, 401 yds, 5TD																								
Michael Penix (WASH)	24/40, 397 yds, 4TD																								
K.J. Jefferson (ARK)	19/31, 385 yds, 2TD																								
Last Week's Rushing Leaders <table> <tr> <th></th><th>Att/Yds/TD</th></tr> <tr> <td>Samson Evans (EMU)</td><td>36 att 258 yds, 1TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Aidan Robbins (UNLV)</td><td>29 att 227 yds, 3TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>DeWayne McBride (UAB)</td><td>28 att 223 yds, 4TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Mohamed Ibrahim (MINN)</td><td>23 att 202 yds, 3TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Keaton Mitchell (ECU)</td><td>13 att 185 yds, 1TD</td></tr> </table>		Att/Yds/TD	Samson Evans (EMU)	36 att 258 yds, 1TD	Aidan Robbins (UNLV)	29 att 227 yds, 3TD	DeWayne McBride (UAB)	28 att 223 yds, 4TD	Mohamed Ibrahim (MINN)	23 att 202 yds, 3TD	Keaton Mitchell (ECU)	13 att 185 yds, 1TD	Last Week's Receiving Leaders <table> <tr> <th></th><th>Rec/Yds/TD</th></tr> <tr> <td>Jamari Thrash (GAST)</td><td>10 rec 213 yds, 1TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rashee Rice (SMU)</td><td>11 rec 193 yds, 0TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Charlie Jones (PUR)</td><td>11 rec 188 yds, 1TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Tyrin Smith (UTEP)</td><td>8 rec 183 yds, 0TD</td></tr> <tr> <td>Will Sheppard (VAN)</td><td>10 rec 171 yds, 2TD</td></tr> </table>		Rec/Yds/TD	Jamari Thrash (GAST)	10 rec 213 yds, 1TD	Rashee Rice (SMU)	11 rec 193 yds, 0TD	Charlie Jones (PUR)	11 rec 188 yds, 1TD	Tyrin Smith (UTEP)	8 rec 183 yds, 0TD	Will Sheppard (VAN)	10 rec 171 yds, 2TD
	Att/Yds/TD																								
Samson Evans (EMU)	36 att 258 yds, 1TD																								
Aidan Robbins (UNLV)	29 att 227 yds, 3TD																								
DeWayne McBride (UAB)	28 att 223 yds, 4TD																								
Mohamed Ibrahim (MINN)	23 att 202 yds, 3TD																								
Keaton Mitchell (ECU)	13 att 185 yds, 1TD																								
	Rec/Yds/TD																								
Jamari Thrash (GAST)	10 rec 213 yds, 1TD																								
Rashee Rice (SMU)	11 rec 193 yds, 0TD																								
Charlie Jones (PUR)	11 rec 188 yds, 1TD																								
Tyrin Smith (UTEP)	8 rec 183 yds, 0TD																								
Will Sheppard (VAN)	10 rec 171 yds, 2TD																								

Top Recruit Chooses Alabama Commitment

Nick Saban's Alabama Crimson Tide are used to getting wins both on the football field and on the recruiting trail. Landing 4-star defensive lineman Jordan Renaud is no different for Alabama.

Renaud is one of the top recruits in the 2023 class. He's a nearly 6-foot-4, 245-pound defensive lineman as a senior in high school. He has elite athleticism and agility for his size but also plays strong at the line of scrimmage — where he projects to be a dominant run-stopper who has the ability and speed to get after the quarterback.

Notably, Renaud decided to commit to Alabama over Oklahoma, but he also boasted offers from Auburn, Florida, Georgia, LSU, Miami, Michigan, Tennessee, and Texas among others.

Why did he choose Alabama? Renaud said: Let me just be for real. I feel like me personally, I picked Bama because it's going to stretch me to the max". Like, I don't want anything to be handed to me. I feel like they get the best out of their players. I feel like a lot of people just see the glitz and the glamour of Bama being Alabama.

But they're grinding in the dark and in the mud at night when the lights are off and doing it like that. But when showtime Saturday comes, they're diamonds, they're gold. With them staying down and keeping their heads down, just grinding, by the time they get on TV and they come through and they say their 'Roll Tides,' it changes the energy and the demeanor. That's why — because they work. I chose Bama because they work. That culture and that culture of competition attracted me to that."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

MICHIGAN -17 Over Maryland by 27

Since Jim Harbaugh took over at Michigan, this matchup has been about as competitive as Bulldozer vs. Dandelion. Maryland has had six cracks at Harbaugh with four different coaches, and the Terrapins have yet to stay within 20 points of the Wolverines, with last year's 59-18 humiliation serving as yet another mark as to how wide the gap has become between these divisional foes.

Over the course of Harbaugh's time leading the Maize and Blue, Michigan has outscored Maryland 261-59 and has held the Terps to 10 points or less on four occasions. The Terrapins come into this matchup undefeated and having just bested a decent SMU squad, but winning non-conference games in September is nothing new for Maryland at this point. The problem for this program has been how it handles Big Ten play.

Since their debut in the conference, the Terrapins haven't finished higher than fourth in the Big Ten East, and even that was only because of the abbreviated schedule caused by COVID. Without that season, Maryland's highest finish in the East is fifth, and coach Michael Locksley is a mere 1-8 against the Big Four of Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State, and Penn State.

For the Wolverines, the concern is how they'll react if they happen to get tested. Michigan couldn't have made its non-conference schedule much easier as the Wolverines blasted Colorado State, Hawaii, and Connecticut in Ann Arbor. Maryland shouldn't be that much of a step up from those foes, but the Terrapins are still expected to provide a bit stronger of a test for Michigan.

Maryland running back Challen Faamatau (undisclosed) is questionable. Michigan quarterback Cade McNamara (leg) is out. Linebacker Nikhai Hill-Green (undisclosed), offensive lineman Karsen Barnhart (ankle), and running back Donovan Edwards (undisclosed) are questionable.

If Maryland beats itself the way that it did against SMU last week, this matchup won't be close. When the Terrapins got out of their own way, quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa and running back Roman Hemby proved effective, gashing SMU for 34 points in all and outscoring the Mustangs 14-0 in the game's final quarter to provide the winning margin.

But the penalties nearly gifted SMU the game and would have done it if the Mustangs didn't keep stopping themselves with turnovers of their own. Maryland committed 15 penalties against SMU and lost two fumbles, which allowed the Mustangs to stay on the field and over-exhaust the Maryland defense.

That cannot happen again if Maryland is going to keep this game close. The good news for Maryland is that when the offense can avoid a mistake, it moves the ball pretty well. The Terrapins have averaged more than seven yards per play this season (granted, one of their first three games was against Charlotte, which has one of the worst defenses in the nation) and can score from almost anywhere on the field. But when the other offense is Michigan's, Maryland cannot afford to let penalties turn good drives into punting situations.

The only real adversity Michigan has met this season actually made things a lot easier on Jim Harbaugh because now he doesn't have to go through the charade of pretending that Cade McNamara and J.J. McCarthy are equals at the quarterback position just because he didn't want to

replace the more experienced veteran after McNamara led the Wolverines to a Big Ten championship.

McNamara suffered a leg injury against Connecticut, which means that the job McCarthy won after the Hawaii game is now unquestionably his. So far, it hasn't mattered who Michigan has put under center because the opposition has been so weak that anything the Wolverines tried was going to work. In three games, Michigan has outscored its opponents by a count of 166-17, and the margin could have been a lot worse had Harbaugh not substituted liberally in the second half with the outcome long decided. The first time Michigan meets any adversity will be interesting, but it hasn't happened yet, and Maryland's lack of success against the Wolverines says that it probably won't happen in this game, either.

The Terrapins are a mere 17-36 ATS in their last 53 Big Ten games, a far cry from the 5-2 ATS mark they've had in their past seven September games. Michigan has been pounding the daylights out of both Big Ten and non-Big Ten opponents not named Georgia. The Wolverines have covered five straight against Big Ten foes, and the only reason they haven't covered in eight of their past nine is that the spread was absurdly high in the game against Hawaii after the Rainbow Warriors allowed Vanderbilt to drop 63 on them. Otherwise, Michigan has been a finely-tuned machine on offense and a sneakily good defense.

SMU was too flawed to punish Maryland's mistakes. A week isn't enough time to clean up all of the things that the Terrapins did wrong against the Mustangs. The bottom line is that Maryland was the inferior football team against SMU, but won because the Mustangs gave away the game with TO's.

This Maryland squad is still a flawed team that has talent but needs the opponent to make mistakes of its own to offset its own mistakes. Michigan isn't going to make those kinds of mistakes. The Wolverines will take those Terrapin gifts and turn them into touchdowns.

As stated earlier, Maryland is 0-6 SU and ATS against Harbaugh, and that's in large part because Maryland consistently looks good in September and then crashes to earth when it begins to take on the Big Ten. There's a reason that Harbaugh has pounded Maryland six years in a row, and I think he and the Wolverines make it seven here. Lay the lumber, the Wolverines will rip the Terrapins.

Projected Score: Michigan 44, Maryland 17

CALIFORNIA - 3 Over Arizona by 11

The Arizona Wildcats and Cal Golden Bears meet Saturday in week 4 college football action at California Memorial Stadium. The Arizona Wildcats look to build on their 2-1 record. The Cal Golden Bears also look to get off to a 3-1 start.

Cats Jayden de Laura is completing 60.2 percent of his passes for 748 yards, 6 touchdowns and 4 interceptions. Jacob Cowing and Dorian Singer have combined for 437 receiving yards and 5 touchdowns, while Tetairoa McMillan has 8 receptions. The Arizona Wildcats ground game is averaging 131.3 yards per contest, and Michael Wiley leads the way with 131 yards and 2 touchdowns. Defensively, Arizona is allowing 29 points and 355 yards per game. Jerry Roberts leads the Arizona Wildcats with 31 tackles, Hunter Echols has 2 sacks and Jaxen Turner has 1 interception.

The Cal Golden Bears have won their last 5 home games. Jack Plummer is completing 60.4 percent of his passes for 730 yards, 5 touchdowns and 2 interceptions. Jeremiah Hunter and J. Michael Sturdivant have combined for 388 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Mavin Anderson has 11 receptions. The Cal Golden Bears ground game is averaging 117 yards per contest, and Jaydn Ott

leads the way with 189 yards and 1 touchdown. Defensively, Cal is allowing 17 points and 331 yards per game. Jackson Sirmon leads the Cal Golden Bears with 32 tackles, Xavier Carlton has 2.5 sacks and Craig Woodson has 1 interception.

The Wildcats are 9-24 ATS in their last 33 road games and 3-12 ATS in their last 15 games on fieldturf. The Golden Bears are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 home games and 7-3 ATS in their last 10 games overall. The over is 4-1-1 in Wildcats last 6 games overall. The under is 4-1 in Golden Bears last 5 games overall.

The Wildcats are 0-6 ATS in their last 6 meetings in California and 2-5 ATS in their last 7 meetings. The Arizona Wildcats have lost 5 of their last 6 road games.

The Arizona Wildcats has a ways to go offensively, and their run defense isn't a good recipe for success on the road. The California Golden Bears have been one of the better home teams in the PAC-12 dating back to last season, and their effort against Notre Dame was respectable enough to assume they're going to be a decent team this year. At home, I'll lay the reasonable chalk with Cal. Arizona has things to improve. The trends are your friends in this matchup.

Projected Score: California 31, Arizona 20

RUTGERS + 8 Over Iowa by 1

The Iowa Hawkeyes head into this game 2-1 this season. The last time they stepped onto the field, the Hawkeyes played against the Nevada Wolf Pack and earned the victory with a final of 27-0. Gavin Williams led the offense in rushing for the Hawkeyes with 16 totes for 57 yards (3.6 yds per attempt). Spencer Petras connected on 14/26 with 175 yds passing and 1 touchdown. He had a QB rating of 123.1 and finished the contest without throwing a pick. In the running game, the Hawkeyes gave up 69 yards on 36 attempts, which averages out to 1.9 yards per rush surrendered. Iowa gave up 14 completions on 28 attempts for 82 yds, and a completion percentage of 50.0%. When all was said and done, they ran 61 plays which gave them 337 yards. The Iowa Hawkeyes ran the ball a total of 35 different times and totaled 162 yds, which earned them an average of 4.6 yards per attempt.

The Hawkeyes have earned 653 total yards for the year. In terms of distribution of touchdowns, Iowa has compiled 1 touchdown through the air and 3 rushing touchdowns. They have turned the football over 5 times. Iowa has accumulated 36 1st downs as a team, and they have committed 11 infractions for 65 yards. As a team they average 92.3 yards on the ground which is 117th in D-1. Concerning putting the ball in the endzone, the Iowa Hawkeyes are averaging 13.7 points per game.

The Hawkeyes are ranked 3rd in college football when it comes to team defense, conceding 4.3 PPG. They are allowing 2.1 yards per rushing attempt and 77.0 yards on the ground per game so far this year. During this campaign, they have allowed 231 yards via the ground game in 3 contests. Concerning yards through the air, the Hawkeyes are giving up 353 yards which ranks them 7th in college football. They are conceding 117.7 yards per contest through the air and allowed a completion percentage of 53.1%. During this campaign, they are giving up 194.7 yards/contest ranking them 4th in college football. They have yielded 1 touchdown via the pass as well as 0 touchdown on the ground.

The Scarlet Knights come into this matchup with a record of 3-0 for this season. In their last game, the Scarlet Knights got the victory with a final of 16-14 against the Temple Owls. Evan Simon walked away from the game with 52 yards on 9/15 passing while his quarterback rate was 89.1. He kept the ball away from the defense with no picks and his average yards per pass attempt was 3.5. Johnny Langan ran the football 9 times for 79 yards, finishing the contest with 8.8 yds per carry for Rutgers.

Rutgers rushed the football for 3.5 yards per attempt, finishing with 142 yards on 41 attempts. The Scarlet Knights finished the game with a total of 201 yards while they ran 58 plays (3.5 yards per play). The Scarlet Knights secondary gave up a completion rate of 59.4%, surrendering 215 yds on 19 out of 32 passing. Rutgers gave up 30 run attempts for 49 yds (1.6 yards per rush).

When it comes to this team's ability to score points, the Scarlet Knights currently sit 59th in the country by tallying 34.7 points per outing. For the season to this point, the Scarlet Knights have racked up 426 passing yards along with an average of 142.0 passing yards per game, which has them ranked 119th in college football. The Rutgers Scarlet Knights average 369.3 yards/game, ranking them 91st in college football. The Rutgers offense has 220 penalty yards on 25 violations, which is good for 21st in the nation in terms of making mistakes.

Rutgers has conceded a total of 97 rushing yards (32.3 yards per outing) in addition to 1 touchdown by way of the ground game this year. They have surrendered 5 touchdowns through the air and 208.0 yards/game, which puts them in 60th in the nation. The Scarlet Knights defense has been on the field for 185 plays, which has them ranked 30th in D-1. The Scarlet Knights are giving up 14.0 PPG, ranking them 22nd in D-1. This year, they have allowed 42 points in total.

The Iowa Hawkeyes are arguably the best defense in the country, and that's mainly why they're going to continue to get respect from oddsmakers. However, I have little confidence in Iowa offensively, as it remains 131st in total offense and 124th in scoring offense. The Rutgers Scarlet Knights are playing with confidence, and they've flashed their muscle defensively, as they're second in run defense and 10th in total defense. Rutgers looks to start 4-0 for the first time in a decade. They will be fueled by a large raucous home crowd. This is going to be an old school epic battle in the trenches. With the total sitting at 35, don't expect a lot of points. Therefore, I'm calling for an outright upset, but I'm still taking the points. Rutgers + 8 is my pick.

Projected Score: Rutgers 17, Iowa 16

ALABAMA - 39½ Over Vanderbilt by 47

This season, the Commodores have an overall mark of 3-1 and will be kicking off their first game in the SEC. The Commodores are going for another win, as in their last game they defeated Northern Illinois, despite entering as the betting underdog. The team finished the game throwing for 4

touchdown passes. Overall, the Commodores had 255 passing yards on a completion percentage of 64.3%. On the ground, the team ended with 1 rushing touchdown, while averaging 4.4 yards per carry for a total of 173 yards.

The team's leading quarterback is AJ Swann, who comes into the game with a passer rating of 135.14. Heading into this week's game, he has a total of 452 passing yards. Will Sheppard leads the team's receiving corps with 23 catches for a total of 313 yards. The Commodores have turned to running back Ray Davis a total of 70 times for a total of 385 rushing yards.

This year, Crimson Tide have an overall record of 3-0. The team will be playing its first game in the SEC. The Crimson Tide head into this week's game looking to pick up another win, after they most recently defeated UL Monroe by a score of 63-7. In the game, Alabama finished with 3 touchdowns through the air, while throwing for 236 yards. The team ended the game with 3 rushing touchdowns, along with a total of 273 yards on the ground.

The team's quarterback is Bryce Young, who comes into the game with a passer rating of 116.0 on a completion percentage of 68.2%. Wide receiver Traeshon Holden, has come up with the most

production for the team, with a total of 169 receiving yards. The top option in the run game for the team is Jase McClellan, who has carried the ball 18 times for a total of 167 yards.

The Commodores come into this week's game having covered just 30.0% of their last 10 games. Their overall record in these games is just 3-7-0. The team averaged 27.7 points in these games, while allowing 32.7. Their last 10 over-under record is 6-4-0.

In their last 10 games, Alabama have covered the spread at a rate of 90.0%, while putting together a straight up record of 9-1-0. On average, the team scored 36.9 points while allowing 16.3, leading to a positive scoring differential.

So far, the Commodores are averaging 42.0 points per-game on offense, which is good for 22nd most in college football. This season, Vanderbilt has struggled to move the ball through the air, averaging just 219.5 passing yards per-game. This week, the Commodores will be facing a Alabama defense ranked 18th in pass yards allowed per-game. So far, they are averaging 255.0 yards per-game when facing top 25 pass defenses.

This season, the run game has not been a big part of the Vanderbilt offense, as they are averaging just 37.5 attempts per-game. With their limited opportunities, they have an average of 217.25 yards per contest, good for 29th in the NCAA. This week, the Commodores will be facing Alabama defense that is ranked 15th in rush yards allowed per-game. So far, they are averaging 173.0 yards per-game when facing top 25 rush defenses.

Heading into the game, the Commodores will hope for some improved play from their defense, as they are currently 87th at 28.5 points per-game allowed. So far, the Crimson Tide are averaging 46.0 points per-game on offense, which is good for 12th most in college football.

This season, the Crimson Tide have struggled to move the ball through the air, averaging just 243.33 passing yards per game. This week, the Crimson Tide will be facing a Vanderbilt defense that is ranked 117th in pass yards allowed per game. This year, they are averaging 243.33 yards-per-game when facing defenses ranked outside the top 50 in passing defense.

So far, the Alabama offense is 13th in yards per game, despite handing the ball off an average of 31.67 times per contest (107th). This week, the Crimson Tide will be facing a Vanderbilt defense that is ranked 76th in rush yards allowed per game. So far, they are averaging 237.33 yards per game when facing defenses ranked outside the top 50.

Vandy has overachieved this year, surpassing their season total wins odds already. But, this week they get into the tough part of their schedule and it doesn't get any tougher than the Crimson Tide defense which is 9th in points allowed at 8.67 points per game allowed. A possible look ahead game for the Alabama Crimson Tide with Arkansas on deck, but they've also covered 6 of their last 8 games when favorites of 35 or more points. Vanderbilt will have issues scoring double-digit points in this game.

Projected Score: Alabama 54, Vandy 7



MY BOOKIE
PROMOCODE
GRIDIRONGOLD

DOUBLE YOUR FIRST DEPOSIT
UP TO \$1000

PATRICK MAHOMES

BET NOW

LSU - 29½ Over New Mexico by 37

The New Mexico Lobos head into this game 2-1 for this season. The last time they stepped onto the field, the Lobos faced the UTEP Miners and earned the victory with a final of 27-10. Miles Kendrick finished 13/19 with 111 yards passing. He had a QB rating of 107 and ended the contest with 1 interception. Nate Jones was the rushing leader for the Lobos with 21 totes for 83 yds (4.0 yds per attempt). At the end of the game, they had 64 plays which totaled 299 yds. The New Mexico Lobos ran the ball 45 times and totaled 188 yards, which had them averaging 4.2 yards per carry. When it came to stopping the run, the Lobos conceded 54 yds on 21 tries, which averages out to 2.6 yards per run surrendered. New Mexico conceded 20 pass completions on 46 attempts for a total of 299 yards, and a completion rate of 43.5%.

Regarding putting points on the board, the New Mexico Lobos are averaging 27 PPG. As a unit they're holding an average of 160 yards on the ground ranking them 73rd in college football. The Lobos have earned 859 total yards for the season. In terms of getting in the endzone, New Mexico has compiled 3 passing TD's and 6 rushing TD's. New Mexico has compiled 52 1st downs as a unit, and they have been called for 24 infractions for 204 yds. They have surrendered the ball 4 times.

The Lobos sit in 20th in college football in terms of their opponents scoring, giving up 13.7 PPG. The opposition is running for an average of 2.9 yards per attempt on the ground and 74.7 rushing yards per game on the year. For the year, they have allowed 224 rushing yards through 3 games. Concerning passing yards, the Lobos have given up 565 yds which has them sitting in 37th in D-1. They are conceding 188.3 yards per contest through the air as well as giving up a completion percentage of 48.0%. They have given up 263.0 yards per game this year, putting them 15th in D-1. They have yielded 3 touchdowns through the air in addition to 1 touchdown on the ground.

The Tigers step onto the field holding a record of 2-1 for this year. The last time they took the gridiron, the Tigers went home victorious with a score of 31-16 when they played the Mississippi State Bulldogs. Jayden Daniels ran the football 16 times for 93 yds, walking away from the contest with 5.8 yds per carry for LSU. Jayden Daniels (1 touchdown) finished the contest with 210 yards on 22/37 through the air while his QB rate was 116.1. He didn't throw any interceptions and his Y/A was 5.7. LSU surrendered 23 running attempts for 73 yds (3.2 yds per rush). The Tigers secondary allowed a completion percentage of 57.1%, surrendering 214 yds on 24 out of 42 passing. The Tigers finished the game with 420 yards and they ran 76 plays (5.5 yards per play).

In terms of the points being put on the board, the Tigers currently sit 31st in the country holding an average of 39.7 points per game. Over the course of the season thus far, the Tigers currently have a total of 739 yards through the air as well as an average of 246.3 throwing yards per game, which is ranked 69th in college football. The LSU Tigers have an average of 439.3 yards per game, ranking them 53rd in the country.

The Tigers are surrendering 19.0 points per contest, which has them 43rd in college football. LSU has surrendered a total of 406 yards rushing (135.3 yards per outing) in addition to 3 touchdowns via the rush this season. In total, they have conceded 57 points. They have given up 3 touchdowns through the air and 178.3 yards/game, which puts them in 27th in Division 1.

A letdown for LSU here after their big win over Mississippi St and a road game against Auburn next? Even getting a boatload of points, it's hard to make a case for New Mexico. LSU routed Southern in a look-ahead spot going into last week's win over Mississippi State, The Tigers do it again, and beat up on the Lobos. Lay the lumber.

Projected Score: LSU 44, New Mexico 7



NFL MAJOR MATCHUP GAMES: STEELERS @ BROWNS RAVENS @ PATRIOTS - BILLS @ DOLPHINS - RAMS @ CARDS PACKERS @ BUCCANEERS - COWBOYS@GIANTS

NFL Football Landscape

WINNERS LAST WEEK

Miami Dolphins: The Miami Dolphins gave up a lot for Tyreek Hill. Miami traded five draft picks to the Kansas City Chiefs for Hill: a first-rounder, a second-rounder, two fourths and a sixth. Then the Dolphins gave Hill a \$120 million deal over four years. It was a big move in the NFL offseason.

That's what the Dolphins have done. They make huge offseason headlines and they rarely pay off with playoff wins. But the Hill trade, while costly, was exactly what the Dolphins needed. They needed it to figure out what they had with Tua Tagovailoa.

The Tagovailoa-Hill combo is working out pretty well. The Dolphins had one of their best wins in years on Sunday, coming back from 21 points down to beat the Baltimore Ravens 42-38. Tagovailoa had by far his best NFL game, throwing six touchdown passes. Give Tagovailoa credit, but also give the Dolphins' front office credit for understanding how Hill would change Miami's entire offense.

Hill had 190 yards on 11 catches, including two long touchdowns in the comeback. He has a unique ability to make defenses look slow. Because teams have to account for his world-class speed on every play, it opens up a lot elsewhere in the field. That's a reason Jaylen Waddle had 171 yards and two touchdowns.

Tagovailoa was criticized and not all of it was fair. He had played only two NFL seasons, and was still working back from an awful hip injury he suffered in his final season at Alabama. It wasn't his fault he was drafted before Justin Herbert, who he'll always be compared to. But mostly, he had nothing around him. He needed Hill, and a coaching staff that believed in him. Ownership didn't believe fully in Tagovailoa either, considering the tampering with Tom Brady that cost Stephen Ross a \$1.5 million fine and a suspension.

The Dolphins got Hill, hired offensive guru Mike McDaniel as their new head coach and they look better than they have in a long time. Hill has changed everything about Miami. He's one of the rare non-quarterbacks who has that type of an impact. The Dolphins haven't always hit on their high-profile moves. But the Hill trade looks perfect so far.

Denver Broncos: The Broncos won, but there will be another week of Nathaniel Hackett criticism coming. The Broncos' rookie head coach made an unpopular decision to try a 64-yard field goal in the season opener, and Sunday was another string of sloppy errors. The Broncos wasted timeouts for things like not having a returner deep when the Houston Texans were ready to punt. There were weird play calls. The offense wasn't good.

The Broncos won 16-9, which is good because the heat on Hackett would be ridiculous if Denver lost at home. But the Broncos need to get much better, and in a hurry. This was Dennis' only loss in his pick pack and it was a major disappointment on the play of the Denver Broncos offensive unit'

San Francisco 49ers: Jimmy Garoppolo: This isn't how Garoppolo wanted the San Francisco 49ers' starting quarterback job back, with Trey Lance suffering a season-ending ankle injury.

But he did pretty well with his opportunity Sunday. Garoppolo came in for Lance and completed 13 of 21 passes for 154 yards and a touchdown, and added a rushing touchdown in a 27-7 win over the Seattle Seahawks.

It was a typical Garoppolo performance. He wasn't splashy but he was solid and the 49ers won. San Francisco didn't know what it had with Lance, and the quarterback controversy could have followed the Niners around all season. They know what they have with Garoppolo. And they know they can win games with him. Niners tried to dump Garoppolo all year long and now they're lucky they have him. If Garoppolo has a solid season, he can say good-bye to the Niners on his own terms.

Joe Flacco and the Jets: The New York Jets were bad in Week 1 and they were trailing 30-17 with less than two minutes to go in Sunday's game at the Cleveland Browns.

And the Jets somehow won. Flacco, starting in place of injured Zach Wilson, threw a 66-yard touchdown to Corey Davis to give the Jets hope. Teams rarely get onside kicks anymore due to new rules. But a great spinning onside kick was mishandled by Browns receiver Amari Cooper, and the Jets recovered. Then Flacco led a scoring drive that was capped by rookie receiver Garrett Wilson's second touchdown of the game with 22 seconds left. The Jets picked off Jacoby Brissett after that and the Jets escaped with a 31-30 win. Flacco has had a great career but he's in the backup phase of it. He showed Sunday he's still capable of big moments. His magic act was enormous for the Jets to get some momentum early this season.

Tampa Bay: The Buccaneers defense: The Tampa Bay Buccaneers' offense hasn't done much this season, though Tampa has good reasons. It's without several key players, including a few linemen and receiver Chris Godwin. Tampa Bay's offense will get healthier and better.

We can already see that the defense will be more than good enough this season. The defense looks great. A week after throttling the Dallas Cowboys, the Buccaneers shut down the New Orleans Saints in a 20-10 win. The score was 3-3 into the fourth quarter. The defense kept the Bucs in it until Tom Brady hit Breshad Perriman for a 28-yard touchdown pass to give Tampa Bay a 10-3 lead. Mike Edwards' pick-six off Jameis Winston put the game away. The Saints had a meaningless touchdown after that to make the stat sheet look better. The Bucs picked off Winston three times.

Jacksonville Jaguars: Maybe Trevor Lawrence just needs to play the Indianapolis Colts every week. Lawrence has had two fantastic games in the NFL and both were against the Colts. He was very good the last time the Colts and Jacksonville Jaguars met before Sunday, a big upset win in last season's finale that kept the Colts out of the playoffs. Lawrence, who was uneven in a Week 1 loss, looked great against the Colts again on Sunday. He was 14-of-17 for 137 yards, a touchdown and a 119.9 passer rating as the Jaguars took a 17-0 lead into halftime.

The Jaguars won 24-0 against a Colts team that was without receiver Michael Pittman Jr. and linebacker Shaquille Leonard. The win matters a lot, but seeing Lawrence look like a top-end quarterback was even better.

LOSERS LAST WEEK

Las Vegas Raiders: Hunter Renfrow is a fantastic player but he had a rough overtime for the Las Vegas Raiders last Sunday. Renfrow fumbled twice in overtime against the Arizona Cardinals. The first fumble was recovered by the Raiders. Renfrow wasn't so lucky the second time.

Renfrow was hit hard by linebacker Isaiah Simmons after a short catch and coughed up the ball. Byron Murphy Jr. scooped it and returned it 59 yards for a touchdown and a 29-23 win. Under bettors had to swallow a horrible bad beat.

The loss is a bad one for the Raiders. They led 20-0 at halftime. In a rough AFC West they can't drop winnable games, and now they're 0-2.

Sunday's loss came after they led 23-7 going into the fourth quarter and had multiple chances to stop the Cardinals on their final drive of regulation that ended up tying the game. They'll regret this loss for a while, but they better get over it quickly because 0-3 start will doom them for the playoffs.

Cincinnati Bengals: Battling the Super Bowl hangover or what? The Cincinnati Bengals are a bad 0-2 to start the season. They have lost two games as fairly significant betting favorites. They lost last week to the Pittsburgh Steelers when they were minus-five in turnover differential. The offense didn't get anything moving in Week 2, and they lost 20-17 on the final play to the Dallas Cowboys.

The Bengals had a chance to win against a Cowboys team led by replacement quarterback Cooper Rush. They tied it in the fourth quarter and then forced a punt. But Joe Burrow and the offense went three-and-out, punted from deep in the Bengals' own territory and Rush completed a couple passes to set up the game-winning field goal. Going three-and-out with the game on the line sums up the Bengals' start to the season.

Teams that lose the Super Bowl often struggle the following season. The Bengals seemed like a good candidate to regress after their hot finish to last season. Losing twice to teams they should have beat, with the offense turning it over too often in one game and not moving the ball in the other, is a discouraging way to follow up on their AFC title.

Los Angeles Rams: The Rams won and that's the most important thing of course, but it's hard to feel good about them after two games. The Rams were blown out in the opener against the Buffalo Bills and then were in danger of blowing a 28-3 lead to an Atlanta Falcons team that won't be that good this season.

After a Cooper Kupp fumble the Falcons had the ball trailing 31-25, but Jalen Ramsey made a great interception to turn back the comeback attempt. That's the good news.

The Rams aren't yet the team that won last season's Super Bowl though. There's a lot of time to improve, and they played well enough early on to take a 25-point lead, but nobody is going to be impressed with the Rams' start.

At least they're 1-1 as they figure things out, and not explaining away how they blew a 28-3 lead and lost to the Falcons. Blowing that lead blew up Dennis' Private Gold pick.

Washington Commanders: The thing about Carson Wentz isn't that he's bad each week. It's that he's bad sometimes and you never know which Wentz will show up from week to week.

Last week, it was bad Wentz, at least in the first half. Really bad. He threw four touchdowns last week and gave hope to Washington Commanders fans that the questionable trade the franchise made to get Wentz would pay off. Then Wentz was bad against a Detroit Lions defense that gave up 38 points to the Philadelphia Eagles in Week 1.

At halftime, Wentz was 9-of-16 for 59 passing yards and the Commanders were getting trashed 22-0 by Detroit. Wentz heated up in the second half and got his team back in the game, but that awful start

was a big reason for a 36-27 loss. Wentz will have his good days. It will just be hard to remember them when the bad days come.

Pittsburgh Steelers: A paltry offense with Mitchell Trubisky. There was a report that Mike Tomlin's plan is to not start rookie quarterback Kenny Pickett this season. He might not have much choice.

The Pittsburgh Steelers got a nice win at the Cincinnati Bengals last week, but they also barely escaped in overtime despite a plus-five turnover advantage. There was no escape Sunday.

The New England Patriots beat the Steelers 17-14 and it was an ugly game for Pittsburgh's offense. The Steelers had 243 yards. Trubisky had 168 yards on 33 attempts. Pittsburgh rarely did anything positive when it had the ball.

The Steelers' offensive issues aren't all Trubisky's fault, but he's the one in the spotlight and with a first-round draft pick waiting on the bench behind him. Pittsburgh plays Thursday night at the Browns, and if Trubisky doesn't play well again there will be a few questions for Tomlin on whether he's ready to change his mind on Pickett.

Carolina Panthers: HC Rhule barely kept his job after leading the Carolina Panthers to a 5-12 record last season. He was 5-11 the season before.

Rhule is now 0-2 and he can't feel too comfortable. The Panthers, who lost late last week on a long field goal by the Browns, lost 19-16 in a rough game Sunday against the New York Giants. The offense didn't do much, with Baker Mayfield throwing for just 145 yards.

Rhule has a seven-year, \$62 million contract. That might buy him a little bit more time. But team owner David Tepper isn't very patient, and he has the money to buy out a mistake and move on.

Last Week's Top Performers (no MNF stats) Lamar Jackson* (BAL): 21/29, 318 yds, 3 TD Tua Tagovailoa* (MIA): 36/50, 469 yds, 6 TD Tyreek Hill* (MIA): 11 rec, 190 yds, 2 TD Amon-Ra St. Brown* (DET): 9 rec, 116 yds, 2 TD Jaylen Waddle* (MIA): 11 rec, 171 yds, 2 TD Nick Chubb (CLE): 17 rush, 87 yds, 3 TD Aaron Jones (GNB): 15 rush, 132 yds, 1 TD Carson Wentz (WAS): 30/46, 337 yds, 3 TD Joe Flacco (NYJ): 26/44, 307 yds, 4 TD Cooper Kupp (LAR): 11 rec, 108 yds, 2 TD	Week 2 Passing Leaders (no MNF stats) <table><tr><th></th><th>Cmp/Att Yds TD</th></tr><tr><td>Tua Tagovailoa (MIA)</td><td>36/50 469 yds, 6TD</td></tr><tr><td>Carson Wentz (WAS)</td><td>30/46 337 yds, 3TD</td></tr><tr><td>Justin Herbert (LAC)</td><td>33/48 334 yds, 3TD</td></tr><tr><td>Lamar Jackson (BAL)</td><td>21/29 318 yds, 3TD</td></tr><tr><td>Joe Flacco (NYJ)</td><td>26/44 307 yds, 4TD</td></tr></table>		Cmp/Att Yds TD	Tua Tagovailoa (MIA)	36/50 469 yds, 6TD	Carson Wentz (WAS)	30/46 337 yds, 3TD	Justin Herbert (LAC)	33/48 334 yds, 3TD	Lamar Jackson (BAL)	21/29 318 yds, 3TD	Joe Flacco (NYJ)	26/44 307 yds, 4TD												
	Cmp/Att Yds TD																								
Tua Tagovailoa (MIA)	36/50 469 yds, 6TD																								
Carson Wentz (WAS)	30/46 337 yds, 3TD																								
Justin Herbert (LAC)	33/48 334 yds, 3TD																								
Lamar Jackson (BAL)	21/29 318 yds, 3TD																								
Joe Flacco (NYJ)	26/44 307 yds, 4TD																								
Week 2 Rushing Leaders (no MNF stats) <table><tr><th></th><th>Att/Yds/TD</th></tr><tr><td>Aaron Jones (GNB)</td><td>15 att 132 yds, 1TD</td></tr><tr><td>David Montgomery (CHI)</td><td>15 att 122 yds, 0TD</td></tr><tr><td>Lamar Jackson (BAL)</td><td>9 att 119 yds, 1TD</td></tr><tr><td>Christian McCaffrey (CAR)</td><td>15 att 102 yds, 0TD</td></tr><tr><td>Nick Chubb (CLE)</td><td>17 att 87 yds, 3TD</td></tr></table>		Att/Yds/TD	Aaron Jones (GNB)	15 att 132 yds, 1TD	David Montgomery (CHI)	15 att 122 yds, 0TD	Lamar Jackson (BAL)	9 att 119 yds, 1TD	Christian McCaffrey (CAR)	15 att 102 yds, 0TD	Nick Chubb (CLE)	17 att 87 yds, 3TD	Week 2 Receiving Leaders (no MNF stats) <table><tr><th></th><th>Rec/Yds/TD</th></tr><tr><td>Tyreek Hill (MIA)</td><td>11 rec 190 yds, 2TD</td></tr><tr><td>Jaylen Waddle (MIA)</td><td>11 rec 171 yds, 2TD</td></tr><tr><td>Courtland Sutton (DEN)</td><td>7 rec 122 yds, 0TD</td></tr><tr><td>Amon-Ra St. Brown (DET)</td><td>9 rec 116 yds, 2TD</td></tr><tr><td>Mike Williams (LAC)</td><td>8 rec 113 yds, 1TD</td></tr></table>		Rec/Yds/TD	Tyreek Hill (MIA)	11 rec 190 yds, 2TD	Jaylen Waddle (MIA)	11 rec 171 yds, 2TD	Courtland Sutton (DEN)	7 rec 122 yds, 0TD	Amon-Ra St. Brown (DET)	9 rec 116 yds, 2TD	Mike Williams (LAC)	8 rec 113 yds, 1TD
	Att/Yds/TD																								
Aaron Jones (GNB)	15 att 132 yds, 1TD																								
David Montgomery (CHI)	15 att 122 yds, 0TD																								
Lamar Jackson (BAL)	9 att 119 yds, 1TD																								
Christian McCaffrey (CAR)	15 att 102 yds, 0TD																								
Nick Chubb (CLE)	17 att 87 yds, 3TD																								
	Rec/Yds/TD																								
Tyreek Hill (MIA)	11 rec 190 yds, 2TD																								
Jaylen Waddle (MIA)	11 rec 171 yds, 2TD																								
Courtland Sutton (DEN)	7 rec 122 yds, 0TD																								
Amon-Ra St. Brown (DET)	9 rec 116 yds, 2TD																								
Mike Williams (LAC)	8 rec 113 yds, 1TD																								

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

New Orleans - 2½ Over CAROLINA by 13

The winless Carolina Panthers will host the New Orleans Saints at Bank of America Stadium this Sunday for an early season NFC South showdown. After a close loss to the Browns in the opener, the Panthers delivered another dud in week 2 with a 19-16 loss to the Giants. As a result, the Panthers will be hoping to get back on track this Sunday when they get an opponent that has also had a shaky start to the year. The Saints did get a win in the opener by narrowly avoiding an upset loss to the Falcons but followed that up with an ugly 20-10 loss to the Buccaneers. Like the Panthers, the Saints are 0-2 ATS on the season and will be looking for their first cover as 2.5-point betting favorites.

In many ways, both the Saints and Panthers are encountering similar issues. The Panthers' bold move over the offseason to seek former Cleveland QB Baker Mayfield is not turning out the way they hoped. Mayfield has completed just 53% of his passes for 380 yards with two touchdowns and one pick through the opening two games. The Panthers' passing game has not shown any improvement, and the offense is still dependent on the play of RB Christian McCaffrey. Essentially, it is the same issues that have been in place throughout the Matt Rhule era in Charlotte, and the Panthers desperately need to turn things around.

Meanwhile, the Saints have also had many struggles on the offensive side of the football. Unlike Carolina, the Saints have several playmakers in WR Michael Thomas, RB Alvin Kamara, and others. However, as seen multiple times in the last year or more, QB Jameis Winston can be extremely hot or cold from week to week. In last week's 20-10 loss to the Buccaneers, Winston threw three interceptions, including a pick-six, despite a pretty respectable effort from the New Orleans' defense. RB Alvin Kamara was also sidelined with an injury which did not help matters, but I believe everyone would agree that Winston needs to play better for the Saints to win. The good news, at least for Sunday's road trip to Carolina, is that Kamara is expected to return to his starting role in the backfield following a rib injury that kept him out last week.

Matt Rhule in a must-win situation against New Orleans? Typically, we don't start talking about coaches that are on the hot seat or potential firings until much later in the year. However, I can assure everyone that the Panthers' front office is starting to feel some pressure to make changes. The consensus around the Panthers' organization is that Rhule has failed to show any consistent improvement since taking over as the Head Coach. Rhule is 10-25 SU in 3 seasons at Carolina, and the team is basically no better than it was three years ago despite having more talent on the field. There is a large group of people, myself included, that believe Rhule's job is on the line if the Panthers do not win imminently, and if Carolina loses again this Sunday, it would be the first time since 2010 that Carolina has started a season 0-3 SU.

From a handicapping perspective, the only thing that scares me is that the Panthers and Baker Mayfield are due for a strong performance. Aside from that situational and speculative narrative, the Saints are the better football team on both sides of the football. After a slow start, the Saints defense held Tom Brady and Tampa's offense to just 260 total yards last week. The Saints' secondary is vastly improved from a year ago, and I think this will be a tough match-up for Carolina's passing attack. Mayfield has been bad throughout the opening two weeks of the season, and the Saints have all the personnel to make things really difficult for the Carolina receivers this week.

The Panthers best path to victory is to ride the coattails of Christian McCaffrey this week. McCaffrey had 102 yards on 15 carries last week and added another 26 yards on four catches. However, it could be easily argued that McCaffrey did not touch the ball enough, especially in the latter stages of the contest with the game on the line. For this week's match-up against New Orleans, the Saints have not exactly played well against the run, which should open the door for another opportunistic performance from McCaffrey. The question is whether Rhule will find enough ingenuity or common sense to find ways to exploit New Orleans' weaknesses upfront.

The total for this week's contest is posted at just 40 points which speaks to the ceiling of both defenses in this match-up. While Carolina's defense is pretty decent, I think the Saints have more paths to victory in this game on the offensive side of the ball. When Winston is not throwing pick-sixes, he can be a very effective quarterback. WR Michael Thomas looks like his old self, and WR Jarvis Landry appears to be a nice fit in this Saints offense. Throw in the return of Kamara to the lineup, and I think New Orleans has more ways to effectively attack the Panthers to get a victory.

With the urgency in Carolina, I would not be surprised to see a bit better performance from the offense this week. I don't have any faith in Carolina pulling out this victory unless we see a dramatic change. I'll back the Saints to get the job done and cover on the road!

Projected Score: New Orleans 27, Carolina 14

CHICAGO 2½ Over Houston by 10

The Houston Texans come into Soldier Field on Sunday to take on the Chicago Bears. Neither team had a good time of it in week two, each absorbing a loss. The Texans actually hung in there nicely for the most part against the Broncos on Sunday, eventually falling, 16-9. Following a tie with Indy and now having covered a pair of spreads to open the season, one can say the Texans have been a little better than advertised. We'll see if they can keep this up against a Bears team coming off a rough 27-10 road loss to Green Bay. Now back where they beat San Francisco in week one, maybe they can find better success this week in what seems like a winnable spot.

It's hard to get an early gauge on Houston. Yes, they've covered twice, and that's the bottom line. A tie against Indy was a nice start, but the Colts look a bit rough. And so does Denver, where the Texans went on the road and hung in there nicely. Back on the road this week, they face what seems like a team in their wheelhouse in the Bears, but it's a tough spot—another road game, this time against an NFC North team. But through two weeks, they've managed to at least show they're not out of their element against teams that might not be there yet.

The Bears' win against the Niners was a nice start to the season, with the weather making it an up-in-the-air affair that might not show much about either team. And not that they were expected to roll at Lambeau on Sunday, but one score on the day was awful. With the Bears down 24-7 at the half, you'd at least think Justin Fields would be dispensed to connect with Darnell Mooney, but Mooney was targeted twice on the day, and Fields ended up with a woeful 11 pass attempts, 70 yards, and a pick. And despite all that, they had a handful of drives struck down by bad breaks where you could almost envision a path where they would have been right in this game. The final verdict is we have too dicey teams where we might know less than we think.

With the Texans, it's not easy to cross conference and take to the road with this level of firepower. Davis Mills at quarterback is an equation that seldom delivers. With a featured piece like Brandin Cooks, you're going to get 3-4 big games a season and a bunch of middling ones. You're left to bank on the sporadic contributions of Rex Burkhead, rookie Dameon Pierce, or a receiver crew that is really low on difference-makers. But they aren't always like that. Once in a while, and sometimes

when you don't see it coming, they'll jump up on you a little bit. Most surprising this season is the lack of success the opposing offense has enjoyed against Houston. Indy was supposed to put a bunch of points on them and couldn't surpass 20 in almost five quarters' worth of football. And Denver at home was sitting at 6 points going into the fourth quarter. While they did add a few scores late in the game to sew up the tough win, Houston's defense was keeping them in the game.

Chicago hasn't been able to get anything aerial going through two games. Fields could start to connect with Mooney and others, but there are going to be days where it's anemic. They at least have some juice on the ground, with David Montgomery doing most of the work and capable of carrying this offense in spots. Khalil Herbert is a solid contributor, and Fields can at least show some upside with his legs in spots. This is something they can wield on a Houston defense that has shown to be less than steadfast against the run, even if their line does seem improved. But Chicago has been even worse through two weeks in that area, and this could be a spot where someone like Pierce starts to show his wares.

Not that it's a great sign for the site of a game to be the main asset for a team, but the Texans will be out of their element. A very substantial chunk of this Houston roster has never been to Soldier Field, and it's not hard seeing the Bears making this a rough, low-scoring game where they emerge at the end against an out-of-sorts Texans squad. It won't be a fraction as bad as it was in week one against the 49ers, but the weather could still surface on Sunday. And when dealing with two teams with issues on defense of which depths we're not quite clear, opting for superior or somewhat dependable offensive production could be key, and that nod goes to the Chicago run-game.

In the end, we'll be looking at two sub-.500 teams, but there are levels even within that realm, and where these teams rest on that fulcrum remains to be seen. A -2.5-point quote at Soldier Field in this spot almost suggests the Texans are the Bears' equal or even a tick better. And sure, the Texans have shown a spark, and maybe there's some extra mojo with head coach Lovie Smith returning to Soldier Field. They've apparently responded well to Smith, and that shouldn't stop here. If anything, it could surface even more. I'm just not sure that offensively they have the horses to pull it off in this spot. I'll take the short home favorite Bears.

Projected Score: Chicago 24, Houston 14

Las Vegas PK Over TENNESSEE by 10

The Las Vegas Raiders come to Nashville on Sunday for an AFC showdown with the Tennessee Titans. It's been a rough start for both teams, a pair of squads who entered the season with some high hopes. Both teams made the playoffs last season and have started by dropping their first two games, with a combined four non-covers. The Raiders blew a 20-0 lead at home against Arizona on Sunday before losing in OT, 29-23, on a fumble recovery returned for a TD. They now pick up and come into Nashville to face a Titans squad coming off the short week following a 41-7 smashing at the hands of Buffalo on MNF.

Somebody has to win and somebody has to lose. Good time Titans and Raiders have the blues.

Even if you thought the Titans would come down to earth this season a bit and that the changes the Raiders made wouldn't make them a ton better, it's still jarring to see some of these results. The Raiders losing at SoFi in week one to the Chargers didn't make anyone bat an eyelash, but this past Sunday suggested a team that has a lot to work on. And both of these teams need answers, particularly on defense, where opponents have had too easy a time going on spurts. It might even be worse for the Titans, sponging an upset at home to the Giants in week one before being a sparring partner on MNF for the Big Bad Bully Bills.

Considering the state of each team, it stands to reason that offense will win the day on Sunday. And that doesn't mean that either team's offense is in fine working order because it's not. We see Derek Carr putting together some decent drives, while most of them just sort of die. Davante Adams is a definite asset, but he also shifted the balance of the offense, and they're still trying to find their footing entering week three. The Titans have some of the same issues. Their star back Derrick Henry hasn't gotten loose yet, and a revamped receiver package for Tannehill hasn't really gelled yet.

Of course, every game is big in this league. But when two fancied teams open the way these teams have, the urgency could be ramped up a bit. The Titans benefit from this being at home, but the last time they were here, *they lost to the Giants*. The Raiders could certainly do one better than that right? Still, the Raiders will be out of their time zone for this 1 PM eastern time game, facing a desperate Titans squad on a really tricky road trip.

Neither team has really distinguished themselves on the defensive side of the ball, except for a few nice individual plays here and there. The Titans opened by having Saquon Barkley run wild on them before yielding a full offensive circus to the Bills on MNF. It really seems they've hit a wall. And even when they were doing good, this loomed as an exploitable part of the team—a defense that overly relies on big plays while not really being particularly stout. There haven't been many positive sequences from this bunch the first two games, and it has forced the offense to come out of character and rely on a young passing crew that wasn't ready to hit the ground running.

The Raiders might have more immediate hope in this area, being that it at least hasn't been a total collapse. They have put together some good quarters this season. Granted, the supposed enhanced pass-rush hasn't really developed. And the defense hasn't been playing in consort with the offense. In other words, when the offense isn't putting together big drives and pumping out scores, the defense doesn't uphold its end of the deal. There have been very few clutch sequences from this group through two games.

With what we've seen from this Tennessee defense, the Raiders could be in good shape with their more-proven weaponry. The Titans have a major weapon in Derrick Henry, but the Raiders wield a real difference-maker in Adams. But the Raiders, with Waller, Renfrow (questionable), and Jacobs, have a more-compelling supporting cast, barring the Tennessee rookie receivers suddenly rise up.

It's a lot of firepower for Carr to use on a defense that has shown itself to be quite porous. But then the mind goes to what Henry can do to a Vegas defense that has little consistency. And if the Raiders manage to curb Henry, what would stop Tannehill from connecting with his young receiving talent? The Raiders' secondary through two weeks, has been making precious few good plays and cannot sustain anything they do well for too long.

This is a tough spot for the Raiders. It's a difficult road game out of their wheelhouse against a desperate 0-2 Titans team coming off a one-seed in the AFC last season. It's just that between the two teams, there have been more flashes of the Raiders being who they want to be. They haven't made it hold up, and no one can say they look good through two weeks, but they seem slightly more in a position to put together a big game than a Titans squad that is already on the rocks after two weeks and coming off the short week following a humiliating hammering on MNF. I think the Raiders have enough offense to strike often and get win and cover.

Projected Score: LA Raiders 27, Tennessee 17

Gridiron Gold Guaranteed Picks "If You Don't Win, You Don't Pay"

Baltimore - 3 Over NEW ENGLAND by 11

The Baltimore Ravens come to Foxborough on Sunday for a big AFC showdown with the New England Patriots. These 1-1 teams are coming off eventful week two games. New England was able to bounce back from an inept-looking loss to Miami in week one to beat the Steelers on the road, 17-14. Not that a win over a Steelers team changes things, but it has at least quieted New England naysayers for a week. Baltimore had a rougher week two, squandering a masterful performance from Lamar Jackson and allowing the Dolphins to come back for the win in a shootout, 42-38.

Last Sunday, we started to see what has made New England keep it together in the wake of Brady leaving—clutch play and a certain resourcefulness that Bill Belichick is able to foster with a team that really doesn't look good on paper. But they're also not in a position to take full advantage of the Ravens' issues this week.

The Ravens are still the Ravens on the offensive side of the ball. However, a slew of early-season injuries has rendered their defense a pretty bad group all of a sudden, with the secondary being totally demolished. With time, guys can file back into the rotation, and dinged-up players can get healthier, but whereas the Dolphins were able to unleash vast aerial fireworks, the Patriots might not be in that good of a spot. Not with Mac Jones leading the brigade and a receiver package of Jakobi Meyers, Nelson Agholor, and Kendall Bourne. Granted, it's not like Tua Tagovailoa had a track record of massive passing performances, but having top receiver talent at least made it something that was in the cards potentially. I don't see that here from the Pats.

On the positive side of the equation for New England, you have a resourceful and masterful coaching staff that can still take an opponent's best weapon and diminish it to a fair degree. Baltimore's offense has a lot of juice, but it's all about Lamar, and if you can put a crimp in his style, it goes a long way.

They don't really have a run game right now outside of Jackson, and perhaps the Baltimore offense isn't as hard to disrupt as some of the more versatile offenses the Patriots will face this season. But make no mistake, if this dissolves into a shootout, it won't be easy for the Patriots to keep pace. They need a game that's a bit of a stinker where they hang around and have a chance at the end to steer it into their column. And in favor of their cause, they get this one at home against a Ravens team that left a lot on the field last week.

Over the years, we've become accustomed to deferring to Belichick and assuming whatever deficit he faces can be made up with his mastery on the sidelines and ability to get the most of what he has. And that might all be true. I'm just not sure that a win over a shabby Steelers team bolsters that sentiment. It's one thing to take on a team like that and hem and haw your way to a narrow win, and it's quite another to do that with a team that can do the things the Ravens can do. So sure, in this road spot for the Ravens, some caution is to be exercised. Chances are it won't come off as swimmingly as an overconfident Baltimore backer would like to assume, but the Patriots are outgunned offensively and might not be in the best position to take advantage of the weaknesses that seem to exist on the Baltimore defense.

Having seen the Ravens fall to another AFC East opponent last week, the Patriots and their backers might feel emboldened until one realizes that the Dolphins beat this very Pats team by 13 in week one. The path for the Pats to rise in this spot seems narrow. They need a big showing on the defensive side of the ball while hoping their offense can keep pace with what is truly a low-end accumulation of talent on that side of the ball. But if Baltimore starts moving the ball with impunity, it's hard to picture a scenario where the Pats can really keep pace.

The Baltimore defense we saw last week might even be easy pickings for this Patriots' offense, but it's still hard to picture that much offense coming from New England this week. And while their "D" can handle dysfunctional offenses like the Steelers, this is a different kettle of fish. New England's defense will be pushed to the limit of its capabilities, and it's still an area that holds more promise than the other side of the ball. New England could see everything go according to plan and still come out on the wrong side of a 17-13 or 21-17 game.

As for the Patriots, they edged the Steelers in most categories in their week two win, but overall the numbers were fairly modest. So long as the Ravens don't sabotage themselves once again, I think they'll be in line for a cover. After last week's collapse, I picture a more on-point Ravens team putting together a good 60 minutes of play against a Pats team that will find it difficult to keep pace. I see Baltimore getting out of town with the win and cover on Sunday.

Projected Score: Baltimore 28, New England 17

[Download College Football Line Sheet Schedule](#)

[Download NFL Football Line Sheet Schedule](#)

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS					
	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	Michigan - 17	California - 3	Rutgers + 8	Alabama - 39½	LSU - 29½
NFL	Saints - 2½	Bears - 2½	Raiders - Pk	Ravens - 3	

Subscribe Now, Don't Miss An Issue of Gridiron Gold Sheet Newsletter and Tip Sheet
 You Get [Gridiron Gold Sheet Best Bets Newsletter](#)
 Plus Added Absolutely Free a \$79 Value [Gold Membership](#)

