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WHAT A WEEKEND OF TOP 25 COLLEGE FOOTBALL THAT HAD SPORTS BETTORS RIVETED LATE INTO THE NIGHT WITH USC vs UTAH

Vols exposed Bama's weak secondary

NCAA Landscape

I exhaled following USC quarterback Caleb Williams' incomplete pass with zeroes on the game clock, preserving Utah's 43-42 come-from-behind victory over the previously unbeaten Trojans. It wasn't just that game. It was the culmination of an entire day of college football that had me riveted to my tv.

A day that featured an unheard of six head-to-head Top 25 match-ups didn't necessarily begin auspiciously, as #5 Michigan had a huge second half and flattened then #10 Penn State in the early time slot. Still, there were some interesting appetizers, as #22 Texas fought off a game Iowa State team to keep its Big 12 title hopes alive, and surprising Illinois bumped its winning streak to five games and solidified its position in the rankings. Then, the fun began.

In the most anticipated matchup of the day, and perhaps of the season so far, **#3 Alabama and #6 Tennessee** started a football game that turned into a track meet. With the score tied at 49 a piece, Alabama kicker Will Reichard missed a field goal attempt from the Tennessee 32 that likely would have won it with just 15 seconds remaining. Instead of playing for overtime off the miss, Tennessee went for the win. Connecting on Hendon Hooker passes of 18 and 27 yards, the Vols had their own chance to put it away with a 40-yard attempt with only two seconds left. It was a knuckle-ball kick, but it floated through the uprights (uprights which weren't long for this world, as it turns out).

About the same time as Volunteer fans were taking the goalpost for a swim in the Tennessee river, another big game was finishing up in dramatic fashion. The last two unbeaten teams in the Big 12, **#8 Oklahoma State and #13 TCU**, needed two overtimes to settle the matter. Oklahoma State had led 24-7 in the first half, and entered the 4th quarter with a 14-point lead. But the Horned Frogs got two touchdowns before regulation ended, the second coming with under two minutes left. After trading touchdowns in the first overtime session, the Cowboys had to settle for a field goal to start the second session. On the sixth play of TCU's ensuing possession, running back Kendre Miller ran it in from the 2-yard line to seal a huge 43-40 win, and sent the third Top 10 team of the day (at that point in time) down in defeat.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that at the same time those two games were being played, #18 Syracuse continued its best start since 1987 by beating #15 NC State (minus QB Devin Leary, who we unfortunately learned is done for the season) by a convincing 24-9 score. Also, #22 Kentucky got its season back on track by downing #16 Mississippi State. I need to invest in more televisions for my home. Why don't they have a red zone for college football.

The nightcap featured #7 USC visiting #20 Utah. The Utes were stung last week at UCLA, but are known for being a very tough out at home. A Utah crowd that rivaled the decibel-count of the 100,000+ Volunteer fans in Knoxville made life as tough on the Trojans as you could imagine, especially in the second half. Like the other two close games, this one was a track meet. USC had its offense rolling in the first half, despite the hostile surroundings, but Utah was able to stay in shouting distance. Utes QB Cam Rising had an enormous day (accounting for 5 of their 6 TDs), as did TE Dalton Kincaid (16 receptions, 214 yards, 1 touchdown). The Utes never led the game until 48 seconds remained on the clock, thanks to a successful 2-point conversion that if missed would likely have given the Trojans the win.

As I said after Week 1, from September through November, college football seldom fails to deliver the sort of drama you just won't find in other sports until you get to postseason. This week, you didn't have to look past the rankings for the fun, but there were other great games too, some of which I'll mention below.

I hate to bring down what was one of the day's great games, but....I think that if USC and UCLA came out and stated that they weren't going to the Big Ten for the money, but rather to escape Pac-12 officiating, people would find that explanation acceptable.

Exhibit #674 is the Utah-USC game. In what was an important and big-stage game for the conference, the officiating continued as a major impediment to anyone taking the Pac-12 seriously. The officials made two of the worst roughing-the-passer calls seen this side of whatever city Jerome Boger's NFL crew was working today. Both were against USC, and both extended drives that resulted in Utah touchdowns.

The calls were so bad that FOX rules analyst Dean Blandino was at a loss for words, and you could hear the anger in the voice of analyst Brock Huard (a former quarterback, no less). The line of the day was when Huard said, "Tom Brady even disagrees with that call."

Perhaps feeling they went too hard on the Trojans, the officials made a mind-boggling decision that benefited them in the end, even though it ultimately didn't help. During the game's last drive, USC was granted a timeout in the middle of a play. On that play, Utah got an interception, but were correctly called for pass interference. While the flag was thrown promptly, the play continued on, as it should. The Ute defender returned the interception, ticking precious seconds off the clock for USC, practically negating the penalty yardage they'd receive after.

But somehow, the officials decided there was a "timeout" called right at the moment of the interception, and added 6 seconds back on the clock. I'd say this was a black eye for the conference, but they've already been so beaten and bloodied by these horrific gaffes that their reputation is nothing more than a rotting carcass at this point. Just shameful.

The best game of the day that didn't feature a ranked team was North Carolina visiting rival Duke.

Despite coming into the game at 5-1 and 4-2, respectively, this game landed on ACC Network with little fanfare. It was back-and-forth, with Duke taking a 35-31 lead in the 4th. With the score remaining the same and as little as 2:14 left, and Duke in possession in UNC territory, ESPN's win probability gave the Blue Devils a 93.6% chance of prevailing.

On the next play, Duke missed a 47-yard field goal attempt, and the Tar Heels went 74 yards in 9 plays to score a touchdown and take a 38-35 lead with 16 seconds left. A last gasp attempt by Duke to get in range for another field goal ended in an interception. North Carolina was largely forgotten

after their week 4 loss to Notre Dame, but the Heels now stand at 6-1, unbeaten in conference play, and are ranked #22.

Speaking of Notre Dame. Their offense returned to its early-season malaise in a 16-14 loss to Stanford. The Cardinal hadn't beaten an FBS team since October 2, 2021, an 11-game losing streak. Kudos to them for getting up off the mat after a gut-punch loss last week against Oregon State. As for the Irish, they had better get some offensive consistency if they simply want to play in a bowl game. They have tough games remaining at Syracuse, hosting Clemson, then ending the season at USC.

Two stats of the day from Tennessee/Alabama: 1) Vols WR Jalin Hyatt totaled 207 yards on six catches for the day. Five of them were for touchdowns. Alabama's secondary will see the back of his jersey in their nightmares for quite some time. 2) The Tide's 15 penalties at Texas in Week 2 were as un-Alabama under Nick Saban as it gets. Until yesterday, when they were flagged 17 times, a school record. There are only two words to explain how they still nearly won that game: Bryce. Young.

Is it Deja Vu All Over Again? Last season, Penn State was 5-0 and ranked #5 when they went on the road and lost to Iowa. In that game, QB Sean Clifford was injured and had to leave. While Clifford would return the next week, the Nittany Lions would go on to lose 5 of their remaining 7 games. Not saying they will suffer a similar fate after falling at Michigan, when they were also 5-0 and ranked #10, and lost Sean Clifford in the game to an injury....but maybe something to keep an eye on.

Ole Miss HC Lane Kiffin has never been known to do anything quietly, but his Ole Miss team is about as quiet as a 7-0 Top 10 team gets. Kiffin has shown himself capable of something that too many coaches aren't – adapting to the strengths of his personnel. While his offenses are known as pass-first, this season the Rebels have a great running game. Against Auburn they had three guys rush for over 100 yards, including QB Jaxon Dart, and had 448 total on the ground.

It was a weird day for Auburn. They fell behind in that game 21-0. At one point, they pulled their starting QB, and the backup came in and promptly fumbled. They had two turnovers in the first half. Their QB1 and RB1 got in a heated argument on the sideline and had to be separated.

Yet, early in the 3rd quarter, they were down just 28-24. Despite ESPN's best effort to make the game entirely about Bryan Harsin's job, and plenty of on-field adversity, the Tigers did a remarkable job of keeping the game interesting. Halfway through the 4th quarter they were down by just 7 points on the road against a Top 10 team. But it wasn't to be, and they fell 48-34.

4 of the 5 current interim coaches won in Week 6.

Only Colorado's Mike Sanford didn't record a W, because the Buffaloes had a bye last week. Well, in Sanford's debut as the head man, Colorado won against Cal yesterday, 20-13 in overtime. The Buffs' victory means that no FBS team will go winless this season. Over 50,000 fans packed Folsom Field (just shy of a sellout) and rushed the field following the victory.

RIP to the Sun Belt: Their chances of having an undefeated team, and with it perhaps a New Year's Six bowl entrant.

Coastal Carolina, who probably weren't as good as their 6-0 record suggested, lost at Old Dominion 49-21. And just one week after cracking the Top 25, James Madison fell to Georgia Southern 45-38, the team that drove the final nail in Scott Frost's coffin.

It's not completely out of the question that the Sun Belt champion could end up with the automatic qualifier for the New Year's bowls, but with the AAC's Cincinnati and Tulane both now ranked and each with one loss, the American's conference champion is probably a strong betting favorite right now.

GUARANTEED COLLEGE FOOTBALL PICKS
“IF YOU DON'T WIN, YOU DON'T PAY”

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Cincinnati - 3 Over SMU by 13

The Cincinnati Bearcats and SMU Mustangs meet Saturday in week 8 college football action at Gerald J. Ford Stadium. The Cincinnati Bearcats look to build on their 5-game winning streak. The SMU Mustangs look to get a game above a .500 record.

The Cincinnati Bearcats Ben Bryant is completing 66 percent of his passes for 1,561 yards, 15 touchdowns and 6 interceptions. Tyler Scott and Tre Tucker have combined for 887 receiving yards and 7 touchdowns, while Jadon Thompson has 10 receptions.

The Cincinnati Bearcats ground game is averaging 156.8 yards per contest, and Charles McClelland leads the way with 502 yards and 5 touchdowns.

Defensively, Cincinnati is allowing 21.2 points and 313.2 yards per game. Ivan Pace Jr. leads the Cincinnati Bearcats with 63 tackles, Jowon Briggs has 3 sacks and Ja'von Hicks has 2 interceptions.

The SMU Mustangs have won 7 of their last 9 home games. Tanner Mordecai is completing 60.9 percent of his passes for 2,016 yards, 15 touchdowns and 6 interceptions. Rashee Rice and Jake Bailey have combined for 966 receiving yards and 5 touchdowns, while Moochie Dixon has 15 receptions.

The SMU Mustangs ground game is averaging 138.5 yards per contest, and Velton Gardner leads the way with 230 yards and 1 touchdown.

Defensively, SMU is allowing 29.5 points and 435.2 yards per game. Jimmy Phillips Jr. leads the SMU Mustangs with 34 tackles, Elijah Chatman has 3 sacks and Nick Roberts has 1 interception.

The Mustangs are 0-4 ATS in their last 4 home games and 0-5 ATS in their last 5 games overall. The under is 6-2-1 in Bearcats last 9 road games. The over is 5-1 in Mustangs last 6 home games. The Bearcats are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 meetings.

The SMU Mustangs will be up for this game, obviously, and they have the offensive punch to give themselves a chance. However, SMU and its defensive effort isn't good enough to be trusted against some of the better teams in the conference.

The Mustangs are 0-4 ATS in their last 4 home games and 0-5 ATS in their last 5 games overall. The Cincinnati Bearcats are just the better team across the board, and their top-25 scoring offense should have a field day against an SMU defense that can't stop the run. I'll lay the field goal.

Projected Score: Cincinnati 37, SMU 24

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Purdue + 2½ Over WISCONSIN by 10

The Purdue Boilermakers have won 5 of their last 6 home games. Aidan O'Connell is completing 66.5 percent of his passes for 1,559 yards, 10 touchdowns and 4 interceptions. Charlie Jones and Payne Durham have combined for 883 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns, while TJ Sheffield has 17 receptions.

The Purdue Boilermakers ground game is averaging 121 yards per contest, and Devin Mockobee leads the way with 275 yards and 4 touchdowns.

Defensively, Purdue is allowing 22 points and 327.8 yards per game. Sanoussi Kane leads the Purdue Boilermakers with 30 tackles, Kydran Jenkins has 2.5 sacks and Cam Allen has 3 interceptions.

The Cornhuskers are 1-3-1 ATS in their last 5 road games and 1-6 ATS in their last 7 games overall.

The Boilermakers are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games in October and 4-1 ATS in their last 5 conference games. The under is 4-1 in Cornhuskers last 5 games overall. The over is 6-2 in Boilermakers last 8 games overall. The Cornhuskers are 2-5-1 ATS in their last 8 meetings.

The Nebraska Cornhuskers have been a team I've blindly faded over and over this year, and wins over Rutgers and Indiana doesn't change that. Nebraska is still horrible defensively and the offensive consistency comes and goes. The Purdue Boilermakers are as talented as they've been in years, the defense is top-20 against the run, and the offense has one of the better passing games in the country. I can't get behind Nebraska. Give me Purdue by double digits.

Projected Score: Purdue 31, Wisconsin 21

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

TCU - 3½ Over Kansas St by 14

The Kansas State Wildcats and TCU Horned Frogs meet Saturday in week 8 college football action at Amon G. Carter Stadium.

The Kansas State Wildcats look to build on their 3-game winning streak. The TCU Horned Frogs look for their first 7-0 start since the 2017 season.

The Kansas State Wildcats have won 4 of their last 5 road games. Adrian Martinez is completing 62.3 percent of his passes for 900 yards, 4 touchdowns and 0 interceptions. Phillip Brooks and Malik Knowles have combined for 540 receiving yards and 3 touchdowns, while Kade Warner has 14 receptions.

The Kansas State Wildcats ground game is averaging 244.8 yards per contest, and Deuce Vaughn leads the way with 661 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, Kansas State is allowing 16.7 points and 356.8 yards per game. Austin Moore leads the Kansas State Wildcats with 41 tackles, Felix Anudike-Uzomah has 6.5 sacks and Cincere Mason has 2 interceptions.

The TCU Horned Frogs have won 5 straight home games. Max Duggan is completing 69.5 percent of his passes for 1,591 yards, 16 touchdowns and 1 interception. Quentin Johnston and Taye Barber have combined for 762 receiving yards and 4 touchdowns, while Derius Davis has 21 receptions.

The TCU Horned Frogs ground game is averaging 229.2 yards per contest, and Kendre Miller leads the way with 578 yards and 8 touchdowns.

Defensively, TCU is allowing 26.5 points and 400 yards per game. Johnny Hodges leads the TCU Horned Frogs with 37 tackles, Dee Winters has 4.5 sacks and Josh Newton has 2 interceptions.

The Wildcats are 11-5-2 ATS in their last 18 road games and 5-1-1 ATS in their last 7 games overall. The Horned Frogs are 14-30-1 ATS in their last 45 home games and 4-1-1 ATS in their last 6 games overall. The under is 9-4 in Wildcats last 13 games overall. The over is 4-1 in Horned Frogs last 5 games overall.

The Wildcats are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 meetings in at Texas Christian and 4-0 ATS in their last 4 meetings. That shows that the Kansas State Wildcats have proven they can play with the big boys.

The problem for the Wildcats this year is that they do have offensive limitations with no passing game to speak of, and it prevents the offense from really putting games away.

The TCU Horned Frogs make a case as the best offensive team in the country, and they've had a field day 3 straight weeks against quality teams. I'm not sure why one would be eager to step in front of TCU at the moment. Kansas State doesn't have the offensive horses to hang for 60 minutes. I'll lay the more than reasonable chalk.

Projected Score: TCU 35, Kansas St 21

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

OREGON ST - 23 Over Colorado by 31

The Colorado Buffaloes and the Oregon State Beavers meet Saturday in college football action from Reser Stadium.

Colorado is fresh off a matchup versus California. The Buffaloes bagged an overtime victory. As for Oregon State, they played Washington State over the weekend. In that one the Beavers won by two touchdowns.

Colorado hasn't been able to find their footing this year, opening the season with a string of losses. The Buffaloes fell to TCU 38-13, Air Force 41-10, Minnesota 49-7, UCLA 45-17 and Arizona 43-20 to kick off the campaign.

On Saturday versus California, Colorado scored 10 points in the fourth quarter to force overtime and eventually won 20-13. QB Owen McCown managed 104 yards with an interception, and Deion Smith had 12 carries for 48 yards.

Over on the Oregon State side, they started the year with wins over Boise State 34-17, Fresno State 35-32 and Montana State 68-28. Following losses to USC 17-14 and Utah 42-16, the Beavers got back in the W column with a 28-27 result versus Stanford.

Matched up against Washington State, the Beavers put up points in every quarter during a 24-10 victory. Quarterback Ben Gulbranson finished with 141 yards, one TD and one interception. Damien Martinez led the rush with 111 yards on 16 carries.

The Oregon State Beavers are the much better team. The Beavers had a whopping 203 rush yards in their win over Washington State this past weekend, bagging 21 first downs, 71 plays and just two penalties along the way. Oregon State has bounced back from consecutive losses (USC & UTAH) well with consecutive wins in the past two weeks.

As for Colorado, they put up a valiant fight in their comeback victory. The Buffaloes managed 328 total yards, 17 first downs and three turnovers in an uneven performance overall.

If Oregon State is on their game in this matchup, and they usually are at home. I just don't see Colorado keeping pace. Therefore, I'll take Oregon St for a comfortable win and cover.

Projected Score: Oregon St 41, Colorado 10

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Fresno St - 10 Over NEW MEXICO by 21

The Fresno State Bulldogs and New Mexico Lobos meet Saturday in week 8 college football action at University Stadium.

The Fresno State Bulldogs look to rebound from a 2-4 record. The New Mexico Lobos look to snap a 4-game losing streak.

The Fresno State Bulldogs have split their last 8 road games. Jake Haener is completing 71.4 percent of his passes for 854 yards, 4 touchdowns and 1 interception. Jalen Moreno-Cropper and Nikko Remigio have combined for 662 receiving yards and 1 touchdown, while Erik Brooks has 19 receptions.

The Fresno State Bulldogs ground game is averaging 116.8 yards per contest, and Jordan Mims leads the way with 480 yards and 6 touchdowns.

Defensively, Fresno State is allowing 26 points and 386.5 yards per game. Levelle Bailey leads the Fresno State Bulldogs with 44 tackles, David Perales has 6.5 sacks and Malachi Langley has 1

interception.

The New Mexico Lobos have lost 6 of their last 8 home games. Miles Kendrick is completing 58.5 percent of his passes for 849 yards, 3 touchdowns and 7 interceptions. Geordon Porter and Luke Wysong have combined for 452 receiving yards and 3 touchdowns, while Christian Washington has 11 receptions.

The New Mexico Lobos ground game is averaging 134.4 yards per contest, and Nathaniel Jones leads the way with 280 yards and 1 touchdown.

Defensively, New Mexico is allowing 22.6 points and 329.9 yards per game. Cody Moon leads the New Mexico Lobos with 53 tackles, Justin Harris has 3.5 sacks and Ronald Wilson has 2 interceptions.

The Bulldogs are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 games following a ATS win and 1-6 ATS in their last 7 games overall.

The Lobos are 2-7-1 ATS in their last 10 home games and 16-38-1 ATS in their last 55 games overall. The under is 7-3 in the Bulldogs last 10 games overall. The under is 10-4 in Lobos last 14 games overall.

The New Mexico Lobos just can't get out of their own way, as they're solid defensively, but they can't move the ball the length of home plate to first base. The Lobos are 128th in total offense and 121st in scoring offense, and they've been held to single digit points in 2 of their last 4 games.

The Fresno State Bulldogs have issues of their own, but there's talent on this roster, and their numbers are deflated because of their schedule. Fresno State has played tough teams and had a rough go schedule wise.

This is a game where Fresno State can let loose and get a comfortable victory. The Bulldogs are 6-1 ATS in their last 7 meetings. The favorite is 5-2 ATS in their last 7 meetings. I'm backing the tough Bulldogs by three touchdowns + three extra points.

Projected Score: Fresno St 31, New Mexico 10

Last Week's Top Performers Jalin Hyatt (TENN vs. BAMA): 6 rec, 207 yds, 5 TD John Rhys Plumlee (UCF vs. TEM): 18/22, 373 yds, 4 TD Cameron Rising (UTAH vs. USC): 30/44, 415 yds, 2 TD Todd Centeio (JMU vs. GASO): 28/48, 468 yds, 2 TD Jayden Daniels (LSU vs. FLA): 23/32, 349 yds, 3 TD DeQuan Finn (TOL vs. KENT): 16/22, 263 yds, 6 TD Hendon Hooker (TENN vs. BAMA): 21/30, 385 yds, 5 TD Caleb Williams (USC vs. UTAH): 25/42, 381 yds, 5 TD Michael Penix (WASH vs. ARIZ): 36/44, 516 yds, 4 TD Blake Watson (ODU vs. CCAR): 18 rush, 256 yds, 3 TD	Last Week's Passing Leaders Cmp/Att Yds TD Kyle Vantrease (GASO) 38/64, 578 yds, 4TD Michael Penix (WASH) 36/44, 516 yds, 4TD Todd Centeio (JMU) 28/48, 468 yds, 2TD Bryce Young (BAMA) 35/52, 455 yds, 2TD Parker McNeil (LT) 26/37, 424 yds, 2TD
Last Week's Rushing Leaders Att/Yds/TD Blake Watson (ODU) 18 att 256 yds, 3TD Christopher Rodriguez (UK) 31 att 197 yds, 2TD Chase Brown (ILL) 41 att 180 yds, 0TD Tank Bigsby (AUB) 20 att 179 yds, 2TD Carson Steele (BALL ST)	Last Week's Receiving Leaders Rec/Yds/TD Tyrone Howell (ULM) 9 rec 244 yds, 3TD Trey Palmer (NEB) 7 rec 237 yds, 2TD Dalton Kincaid (UTAH) 16 rec 234 yds, 1TD Gavin Holmes (BAY) 7 rec 210 yds, 1TD Jalin Hyatt (TENN)



BUFFALO ROLLS OVER CHIEFS JOSH ALLEN FOR MVP? SHOULD BE! BILLS SMILING DURING BYE WEEK

Bills Finally Beats Chiefs

NFL Landscape

With one game left to play, Week 6 in the NFL saw several massive upsets take place that may be indicative of a shifting balance of power, particularly in the NFC.

The San Francisco 49ers lost to the Atlanta Falcons. The New York Jets topped the Green Bay Packers at home. And the banged-up Pittsburgh Steelers took down the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. That has left room for upstart teams like the Seattle Seahawks, Minnesota Vikings and New York Giants to make moves up the NFC standings.

In the AFC, the Baltimore Ravens blew another lead, but two teams have separated themselves as the top contenders in the conference: the Buffalo Bills and Kansas City Chiefs. But even though Josh Allen and the Bills took the hyped matchup between the two, these look like two teams destined for a rematch in January.

Bills bag Chiefs. With Von Miller joining redemption mission, Bills look like team to beat – for now. Minnesota Vikings are 5-1, but how good is this 'resilient' team? It depends on the day. Here are the winners and losers from the week 6 slate.

WINNERS

The odds of a Bills-Chiefs rematch?

These are the best teams in the AFC and, typically when that's the case, they find ways to stay alive deep into the postseason. Obviously, a lot will depend on health, but the Bills (5-1) and Chiefs (4-2) are uniquely built to match up well against each other. That starts at quarterback.

Josh Allen and Patrick Mahomes are tied for the NFL lead with 17 touchdown passes, four more than Lamar Jackson of the Ravens, the next closest player. Though they combined for 44 points in Buffalo's victory, these are the top two scoring offenses in the NFL and seemingly capable of explosive plays on demand. The coaching staffs are among the most creative. And while Buffalo gained a significant boost in its quest for home field advantage, the Chiefs have plenty of playoff experience to navigate late-season pressure. Both of these teams are built to make postseason runs. Let's hope we get another round.

Brian Daboll, runaway coach of the year.

The Giants, by just about every metric, are far and away a better team this year. New York (5-1) stunned the Ravens and the work coach Brian Daboll has done with quarterback Daniel Jones is not getting nearly enough attention.

Though his overall stats are rather pedestrian, Jones has played well and efficient in high-pressure situations; with Baltimore holding a 10-point lead early in the fourth, Jones (19-of-27 for 173 yards with two touchdowns) completed all five passing attempts for 57 yards to help set up a key touchdown. New York (5-1) has started slow at times this season, but it's finishing games. And while the roster still has holes, that competitiveness until the end bodes well for continued improvement; the Giants have outscored opponents in second halves this season 87-49, including a margin of 48-22 in fourth quarters.

The case for the Patriots to ease Mac Jones back

Two and a half games is not enough of a sample size to supplant a starting quarterback, but Patriots rookie Bailey Zappe is building a case for New England (3-3) to at least consider easing starter Mac Jones (ankle) back from injury. In the victory against the Browns, Zappe completed 24-of-34 passing for 309 yards with a pair of scores.

A couple of caveats: New England's two most recent opponents, the Lions and the Browns, are hardly tough barometers to measure a quarterback's potential. And while the Patriots offense has been more explosive — New England is averaging 33.5 points over its last two games, compared to 16.7 during Jones' starts — that's the expected progression of a unit that has a new offensive coordinator. Zappe, though, has been slightly more calculated with the football than Jones, who's responsible for six turnovers in three starts compared to Zappe's three in two starts.

LOSERS

Buccaneers can't score touchdowns in the red zone.

The Buccaneers — simply put — win their game against the Steelers if they don't settle for field goals inside the red zone. Tampa Bay, however, converted just 1-of-4 trips and failed to punch in a touchdowns on either of its two goal-to-goal attempts. That it came against a defense missing three starting defensive backs, including two-time All-Pro safety Minkah Fitzpatrick, is even more of an indictment.

In their first three red zone possessions, once they crossed the 20, the Bucs (3-3) ran 16 plays that combined for just 15 yards. Of those, Tampa had three negative plays, including one sack. It also committed two penalties. Tom Brady combined to go 2-of-8 for 20 yards on passes attempted in the red zone. The Buccaneers got as close as the four-yard line (twice) and scored in one in those drives. Instead, Tampa Bay converted three field goals of 30, 27 and 24 yards.

Time to P-A-N-I-C

The Packers offense might just be broken and, unsurprisingly, wide receiver is the culprit. Though the team's brass has de-emphasized the position, it's merely one area of concern; in Green Bay's (3-3) stunning loss at home against the Jets, the banged up offensive line yielded eight hits to reigning two-time MVP Aaron Rodgers, four of which were sacks.

Aside from Allen Lazard, Green Bay's receivers haven't separated from defenders this season. Lazard had receptions of 35 and 25 yards against the Jets, the latter of which went for a touchdown in the third quarter. The next longest Packers completion went for 16 yards. Running back Aaron Jones ran the ball nine times for 19 yards. Effort on special teams was lacking, as the Jets blocked a field goal and a punt that was returned for a score. The defense, which entered Sunday tied for 26th with only four takeaways, again failed to force a turnover.

The end of the absurd Cooper Rush argument

Credit Jerry Jones for stirring drama and keeping the Cowboys on the minds of NFL media and fans when he suggested several weeks ago that backup Cooper Rush could draw consideration as a long-term starter. Now, as Dak Prescott (thumb) nears a return from an injury sustained in the season opener, we can put an end to a debate that was somehow taken way too seriously.

In the loss against the Eagles, Rush (18-of-38 for 181 yards with one touchdown versus three interceptions) showed he's a very solid backup whose limitations expose him against top-level competition and — more importantly — leave Dallas (4-2) compromised when needing its offense to keep pace in a shootout. Rush wasn't the exclusive reason (or maybe even a predominant one) why the Cowboys ripped off four straight in Prescott's absence; it was Dallas' defense. If the Cowboys make the postseason this year, Rush will not be a key reason why. This team is exponentially better with Prescott under center.

Baltimore on the brink

At this point, Baltimore has no one but itself to blame. The Ravens (3-3) blew their third double-digit lead of the season and are on the brink of a season that could spiral if they don't fix familiar issues: questionable play calls that often go away from the team's strength, penalties, drops and lapses of concentration, untimely turnovers and the lack of a supporting cast.

Against the Giants, the Ravens committed 10 penalties. They converted just 1-of-3 trips inside the red zone. Baltimore's issues have started to impact quarterback Lamar Jackson. At times this season, when no other Ravens have stepped up, Jackson has felt the need to press and do too much. He committed a pair of turnovers on the team's final two offensive possessions, including an interception forced into double coverage that gave New York a short field and led to the game-winning score.

The 49ers as legitimate NFC contenders. If there's one stat that shows just how mercurial the 49ers can be, look at their win-loss splits. After their shocking loss to the Falcons, San Francisco (3-3) has averaged 11.3 points per game in losses; in victories, that number swells to 29.3. The Niners have converted 12-of-35 (34.3%) third-down attempts in their losses; in their victories, they moved the chains 18-of-39 (46.2%) times. In three losses, the Niners' turnover differential is minus-7; in victories it's plus-5.

Atlanta gashed the 49ers for 168 rushing yards and San Francisco had no answer for Marcus Mariota running the read option. The offense faced injuries early in the season. Now it's the defense that has had several starters missing, with Nick Bosa being the most prominent. San Francisco has elite speed and playmaking ability on offense, though quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo, like the rest of the squad, is susceptible to stretches of inconsistency.

I Gave You The Ammo

Did you pay attention to my blog article a few weeks ago. It's at <https://www.gridirongold.com/blog/?2022-nfl-trends> and it is on NFL trends, did they can help you win?

Don't believe in trends? Well, you better start now. We're now in Week 6 of the NFL, and the unders continue to hit at a 60% clip. And how about the Eagles and Falcons, did they remain perfect? The answer is yes. Philadelphia is still undefeated after beating Dallas on Sunday night, and Atlanta covered the spread with ease for the sixth straight week.

You're a loser if you don't bet the under

Betting markets can keep lowering the total points, but it doesn't matter. The under just keeps on hitting. The under was 10-4 last week, and overall on the season, the under is 56-38. If you don't want to do the math, we'll do it for you. That's good for 59%.

We undefeated, we undefeated

Who would have thought the Richmond Oilers from the movie Coach Carter and the Philadelphia Eagles would have something in common? Probably no one. But you know what, they do. You know what it is? Anyone? No. OK, we'll give you a hint ... it has something to do about being undefeated. Yup, that's right. The Eagles are still undefeated. Philadelphia improved to 6-0 after beating the Dallas Cowboys, 26-17, on Sunday night. And that won't change next week either because the Eagles have a bye for Week 7.

Falcons upset 49ers, remain perfect against the spread

Atlanta didn't just cover the spread against San Francisco on Sunday, they upset them. The Falcons took down the 49ers, 28-14, and are now 6-0 against the spread this season. Atlanta is only the third team in the past decade to start the season 6-0 against the spread, and the Falcons have been an underdog in each of their first six games. Despite Sunday's upset, the Falcons are currently underdogs for next week's match-up against Cincinnati (-6).

Rush no longer perfect

Cooper Rush entered Sunday's divisional game against Philadelphia a perfect 5-0 and one of just 14 quarterbacks in NFL history to win their first five starts, but that came to end as the Eagles beat the Cowboys, 26-17. Rush threw three picks, and questions about whether or not Dak Prescott will be the team's starting quarterback once he returns can now finally be put to rest.

Bills take down Chiefs, stand alone atop AFC

The Bills have finally done it ... beat the Chiefs, that is. After losing to Kansas City during the regular season and postseason last year, Buffalo rallied in the fourth quarter to beat the Chiefs, 24-20 on Sunday. Sunday's win gives Buffalo sole possession of first place in the AFC, and ties them with Minnesota and the New York Giants for the second-best record in the NFL.

Rodgers, Packers on the cusp losing three straight

When's the last time Aaron Rodgers and the Packers lost three straight games? Better yet, have the Packers ever lost three straight games under Rodgers? The answer is yes. And it could happen again next week. The Packers have lost back-to-back games for the first time under head coach Matt LaFleur after falling to the Jets, 27-10 on Sunday, and if they lose next week to Washington, it'll be the first time the Packers have lost three straight games since 2018, which happened to be Mike McCarthy's last season as Green Bay's head coach.

Bad Day?

Think you had a bad betting day? Wait to till you hear about this bettor. One bettor at Caesars lost \$1.05 million after taking the Jaguars (+3), Browns (-2.5) and Buccaneers on the spread on Sunday.

Heading into Week 7

Tennessee and Indianapolis play each other for the second time already this season, but this one will matter a little more. That's because the winner of next week's game will take sole possession of first place in the AFC South.

It's still early, but the NFC West might be a dogfight till the end. Seattle was atop the division after Week 1, the Rams were in first after Week 3, and the 49ers were in first after Week 5, but currently, all three are tied for first. The Rams have a bye this week, but if the 49ers win and Seahawks lose, or vice versa, it'll mark the fourth different time a team has had sole possession of first place in the division.

Are the New York teams actually good at football?

Well, it might still be too early in the season to answer that, but as of right now, the answer is yes. The Giants are 5-1 and have already surpassed last season's win total, and the Jets have won three straight and are 4-2

Week 6 Top Performers

Joe Burrow (CIN): 28/37, 300 yds, 3 TD
Ja'Marr Chase (CIN): 7 rec, 132 yds, 2 TD
Matt Ryan (IND): 42/58, 389 yds, 3 TD
Josh Allen (BUF): 27/40, 329 yds, 3 TD
Stefon Diggs (BUF): 10 rec, 148 yds, 1 TD
Trevor Lawrence (JAX): 20/22, 165 yds, 1 TD
Brandon Aiyuk (SFO): 8 rec, 83 yds, 2 TD
Marcus Mariota (ATL): 13/14, 129 yds, 2 TD
Tyreek Hill (MIA): 12 rec, 177 yds, 0 TD
Deon Jackson (IND): 12 rush, 42 yds, 1 TD

Week 6 Passing & Rushing Leaders

Cmp/Att Yds TD
Matt Ryan (IND) 42/58 389 yds, 3TD
Patrick Mahomes (KAN) 25/40 338 yds, 2TD
Josh Allen (BUF) 27/40 329 yds, 3TD
Teddy Bridgewater (MIA) 23/34 329 yds, 2TD
Bailey Zappe (NWE) 24/34 309 yds, 2TD
Rushing Leaders Att/Yds/TD
Kenyan Drake (BAL) 10 att 119 yds, 1TD
Breece Hall (NYJ) 20 att 116 yds, 1TD
Alvin Kamara (NOR) 19 att 99 yds, 0TD
Kenneth Walker (SEA) 21 att 97 yds, 1TD

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

NY Jets + 4 Over Denver by 7

The Denver Broncos will try to bounce back and snap a three-game losing streak, falling to 2-4 after a 19-16 OT loss to the Chargers last time out.

Russell Wilson's has thrown for 1,442 yards, 5 touchdowns and 3 interceptions on 58.6% passing while Melvin Gordon III has 201 rushing yards and a touchdown.

Courtland Sutton leads Denver's receiving group with 31 grabs for 431 receiving yards while Jerry Jeudy has 290 receiving yards this season.

On defense, Alex Singleton has a team-high 47 total tackles total tackles while Bradley Chubb has 5.5 sacks so far this season.

New York is 5-1 ATS in their last 6 road games and 6-14 ATS in their last 20 games against a team with a losing record while the under is 4-1 in their last 5 games following an ATS win.

Denver is 3-7 ATS in their last 10 games overall and 3-11 ATS in their last 14 games against the AFC while the under is 8-1 in their last 9 games following an ATS win.

The Broncos are on a short week, with an offense that has a hard time producing consistently as well. The Jets have had their ups and downs, but don't look now, as the Jets look pretty good with Zach Wilson under center and while Denver's got a solid defense, I'm not sure the offense can do enough and put up enough points to get the Broncos a cover in this one.

Sure, the Broncos are favored, but this Jets' defense is for real. The unit ranks ninth in total defense, and they have given up 20 points or less each of the last three weeks against struggling offenses.

That should be enough to keep it close against the Russell Wilson-led Broncos. Can we believe the hype after a fourth straight victory? I think so. I'll side with the Jets and the points here.

Projected Score: NY Jets 24, Denver 17

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

LAS VEGAS - 7 Over Houston by 17

The Houston Texans and Las Vegas Raiders meet Sunday in week 7 NFL action at Allegiant Stadium.

The Houston Texans look to rebound from a 1-3-1 record. The Las Vegas Raiders look to bounce back from a 1-4 record.

The Houston Texans have lost 8 of their last 11 road games. Davis Mills is completing 62.7 percent of his passes for 1,048 yards, 5 touchdowns and 4 interceptions.

Nico Collins and Brandin Cooks have combined for 507 receiving yards and 1 touchdown, while Rex Burkhead has 18 receptions.

The Houston Texans ground game is averaging 99.2 yards per contest, and Dameon Pierce leads the way with 412 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, Houston is allowing 19.8 points and 414.2 yards per game. Jonathan Owens leads the Houston Texans with 46 tackles, Jerry Hughes has 4 sacks and Jalen Pitre has 2 interceptions.

The Las Vegas Raiders have split their last 10 home games. Derek Carr is completing 61.4 percent of his passes for 1,279 yards, 8 touchdowns and 4 interceptions.

Davante Adams and Mack Hollins have combined for 687 receiving yards and 6 touchdowns, while

Darren Waller has 16 receptions.

The Las Vegas Raiders ground game is averaging 121.4 yards per contest, and Josh Jacobs leads the way with 490 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, Las Vegas is allowing 26 points and 359.2 yards per game. Divine Deablo leads the Las Vegas Raiders with 48 tackles, Maxx Crosby has 6 sacks and Amik Robertson has 1 interception.

The Texans are 4-1-1 ATS in their last 6 road games and 4-1-1 ATS in their last 6 games overall. The Raiders are 4-0 ATS in their last 4 games in October and 0-4 ATS vs. a team with a losing record. The under is 8-2 in Texans last 10 road games. The over is 4-0 in Raiders last 4 games in October. The road team is 5-2 ATS in their last 7 meetings.

Both teams in must win situations and both teams fresh off a bye week. There's value with the free touchdown in a spot like this. However, the Houston Texans are a bad 1-3-1, as their offense is one of the worst in the league while the defense is 31st in total defense and 30th against the run.

The Texans are coming off a bye week, and it's tough to trust the Raiders as a favorite, even in this game. Houston can hang around with another strong effort from Dameon Pierce, but that won't be easy knowing the Raiders rank sixth in the NFL in run defense (103.2 ypg.).

The Las Vegas Raiders are better than their record indicates, as they've been on the end of some brutal losses, and letting that Chiefs loss marinate could be good for this club. I like the Raiders to bounce back in a big way. Derek Carr and Davante Adams will hook up often and for a pair of Tds or more. Las Vegas gets back in the win column and covers. I'll lay the touchdown.

Projected Score: Las Vegas 30, Houston 13

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

TENNESSEE - 2½ Over Indianapolis by 10

Ryan Tannehill is completing 65.1 percent of his passes for 965 yards, 6 touchdowns and 3 interceptions. Robert Woods and Nick Westbrook-Ikhine have combined for 342 receiving yards and 1 touchdown, while Dontrell Hilliard has 12 receptions.

The Tennessee Titans ground game is averaging 102.8 yards per contest, and Derrick Henry leads the way with 408 yards and 5 touchdowns.

Defensively, Tennessee is allowing 23.6 points and 390.8 yards per game. David Long Jr. leads the Tennessee Titans with 37 tackles, Denico Autry has 4 sacks and Amani Hooker has 1 interception.

The Colts are 12-5 ATS in their last 17 road games and 1-4 ATS in their last 5 vs. AFC South. The Titans are 6-0 ATS in their last 6 games in October and 5-1-1 ATS in their last 7 games following a bye week. The under is 10-1 in Colts last 11 games overall. The under is 8-3 in Titans last 11 games overall. The Colts are 7-3 ATS in their last 10 meetings in Tennessee and 0-4 ATS in their last 4 meetings.

The Indianapolis Colts are finding ways to win all of a sudden, but excuse me if I'm still not a believer. The Colts ground game is still nonexistent, and their scoring offense is 28th in the league.

The Tennessee Titans ground game is starting to come along, they've won 3 straight games, and they've had an extra week to prepare for this contest. Also, we can't ignore the Titans winning the last 4 meetings against the Colts, which includes a week 4 victory this season on the road.

The Titans won the first meeting 24-17 and had a bye week to prepare for the rematch with their AFC South rivals. Matt Ryan is coming off a three-TD performance, but it's a tough road assignment given Ryan has not played well on the road. The Colts are 0-4 ATS in their last 4 meetings. The Tennessee Titans have won 8 of their last 10 home games. This line feels soft. Give me the small dog Titans.

Projected Score: Tennessee 26, Indianapolis 16

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

CINCINNATI - 5 Over Atlanta by 13

The Atlanta Falcons and Cincinnati Bengals meet Sunday in week 7 NFL action at Paycor Stadium.

The Atlanta Falcons look to get a game above a .500 record. The Cincinnati Bengals also look for their fourth win on the season.

The Atlanta Falcons have lost 4 of their last 5 road games.

Marcus Mariota is completing 61.3 percent of his passes for 1,055 yards, 6 touchdowns and 4 interceptions.

Drake London and Olamide Zaccheaus have combined for 577 receiving yards and 4 touchdowns, while Kyle Pitts has 13 receptions.

The Atlanta Falcons ground game is averaging 165.2 yards per contest, and Cordarrelle Patterson leads the way with 340 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, Atlanta is allowing 22.7 points and 385.2 yards per game. Rashaan Evans leads the Atlanta Falcons with 52 tackles, Grady Jarrett has 3.5 sacks and Richie Grant has 1 interception.

The Cincinnati Bengals have split their last 10 home games.

Joe Burrow is completing 66.7 percent of his passes for 1,616 yards, 12 touchdowns and 5 interceptions.

Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins have combined for 837 receiving yards and 6 touchdowns, while Tyler Boyd has 21 receptions.

The Cincinnati Bengals ground game is averaging 89 yards per contest, and Joe Mixon leads the way with 347 yards and 1 touchdown.

Defensively, Cincinnati is allowing 19.2 points and 339 yards per game. Germaine Pratt leads the Cincinnati Bengals with 44 tackles, Trey Hendrickson has 2.5 sacks and Vonn Bell has 3 interceptions.

The Falcons are 3-0-1 ATS in their last 4 road games and 6-0 ATS in their last 6 games overall. The Bengals are 5-1 ATS in their last 6 home games and 12-2 ATS in their last 14 games overall. The under is 4-0 in Falcons last 4 games in October. The under is 10-1 in Bengals last 11 games overall.

Joe Burrow and Ja'Marr Chase restored their elite connection against the Saints, but this is a bit of a trap game they cannot toy with. Atlanta is 6-0 ATS as an underdog this season, but they are 1-2 S/U on the road.

The Atlanta Falcons are finding sneaky ways to win games somehow, but this is a bad matchup for them. The Cincinnati Bengals have arguably the best receiving group in the league, and the Falcons have a pass defense that's ranked 31st in the league. The Bengals have the eighth best passing offense. The Cincinnati Bengals should have a field day in this spot, and I'm not sure the Falcons have the offensive horses to keep up, especially with no Cordarrelle Patterson. I'll lay the 5 points with the Bengals.

Projected Score: Cincinnati 30, Atlanta 17

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	Cincinnati - 3	Purdue + 2½	TCU - 3½	Oregon St - 23	Fresno St - 10
NFL	Jets + 4	Raiders - 7	Titans - 2.5	Bengals - 5	