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# SUN DEVILS TOO HOT TO HANDLE RED RAIDERS STOMP DA BEARS UNC HAS QB EDGE OVER PIT FSU WEST OFFENSE DOWNS SDSU COWBOYS UP OVER THE RAINBOW

## NCAA Landscape

A week after a load of terrific games highlighted college football's schedule, Week 8 had a lesser group of marquee matchups. But there were still plenty of momentous moments, and pretenders reared their ugly heads.

Syracuse may have proved it belongs with the big boys, but the Orange were dropped from the ranks of the unbeaten in a comeback win by Clemson. Truthfully, the Tigers didn't play like title contenders, either.

UCLA and Ole Miss also lost for the first time all season, and both finals scores were by embarrassing margins in road games to Oregon and LSU, respectively.

TCU came back again to beat its fourth straight ranked opponent, Ohio State and Tennessee kept rolling, and Cincinnati is showing its follow-up season after a trip to the College Football Playoff is worth paying attention to.

Let's take a look at who we thought were winners and losers from last week's action.

**Winner:** Whether there's a quarterback controversy in Clemson remains to be seen, but with his team needing a spark down by 11 points, coach Dabo Swinney inserted true freshman Cade Klubnik in the third quarter, and the Tigers stormed from behind to beat Syracuse. The No. 14 Orange entered the clash of unbeaten teams perhaps a bit disrespected and under-ranked, and they looked like they were on their way to snapping the Tigers' 13-game winning streak and 37-game stretch at home.

DJ Uiagalelei had thrown an interception and fumbled, and Clemson couldn't gain any traction. Needing to stir things up, Swinney went with Klubnik, scaling back the game plan and relying heavily on his rushing attack and offensive line.

The youngster didn't make any mistakes and allowed his team to claw back for the 27-21 win. Klubnik finished 2-of-4 for 19 yards and helped convert a big two-point attempt after the go-ahead touchdown. He also had six carries for 15 yards.

Are those scintillating statistics? No, but it was the right call by Swinney at the right time with his team

needing something to get it going. Still, this is Uiagalelei's team for now.

The real star on offense was running back Will Shipley, who fumbled inside the Syracuse red zone down 21-10 in the third quarter in what was a pivotal mistake at the time. After that, Shipley ran 11 times for 88 yards and scored the go-ahead 50-yard touchdown on his way to 27 carries for 172 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

Syracuse fell apart with 10 penalties for 88 yards, including a huge unnecessary roughness penalty on a borderline late hit out of bounds that extended a touchdown drive on 3rd-and-25 during Klubnik's first series.

From there, Clemson's offense clicked enough to win, and Syracuse quarterback Garrett Shrader threw an awful interception into triple coverage on his team's last series of the game, needing a touchdown and extra point to win.

**Loser:** The town of Eugene, Oregon, was very good to Chip Kelly, who built his legendary college football legacy as the Ducks' head coach from 2009-12 with a 46-7 record. It's been a nightmare for him to visit as an opposing coach. Kelly took his ninth-ranked and unbeaten UCLA Bruins to town to play a Ducks team that started the season with an embarrassing loss to Georgia but has really looked strong since.

He didn't leave with the same spotless record. Oregon signal-caller Bo Nix surpassed his single-season touchdown total during his time at Auburn in only his team's seventh game, brilliantly bludgeoning the Bruins for 283 passing yards and five touchdowns in a 45-30 victory. He also was decisive with his feet, running for 51 yards, but, more importantly, also picked up several vital first downs on short-yardage situations by running. He has always been known as a fierce competitor, and running Kenny Dillingham's offense for first-year coach Dan Lanning has been a revelation for him.

UCLA didn't get nearly the same heroics from its veteran quarterback. Dorian Thompson-Robinson finished with 297 total yards but couldn't keep up offensively.

It was just another forgettable return for Kelly. During his first season with the Bruins in 2018, they traveled to Eugene and limped home with a 42-21 setback. Over the last two seasons, they were much more competitive but still lost 38-35 and 34-31, respectively. Now, this loss makes Kelly 0-4 against the Ducks during his time at UCLA.

**Winner:** Two things we already knew were hammered home during Ohio State's 54-10 dismantling of Iowa. First, the Buckeyes are pretty darn good on both sides of the ball, even when they don't play their best game. Second, Iowa offensive coordinator Brian Ferentz needs to be fired, and it's puzzling why it hasn't already happened.

While the Buckeyes have been tremendously improved on defense under first-year coordinator Jim Knowles, Iowa was pathetic on offense, no matter who played QB. Despite a scoop-and-score touchdown by the Hawkeyes, they didn't do anything else on the scoreboard aside from a field goal.

While Ohio State wasn't as explosive as we're used to seeing against Iowa's normally stingy secondary, the Buckeyes were plenty good enough to continue looking like the Big Ten's best team and one of the top teams in the nation.

The Buckeyes defense proved Ferentz's continued employment looks like the product of nepotism under his father and head coach Kirk Ferentz. The Hawkeyes were 1-of-13 on third-down conversions, mustered just 158 total yards and turned the ball over six times.

Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud wound up getting his, too, finishing with 286 passing yards and four touchdowns. It was a largely uneven performance for the junior star signal-caller, who threw an interception, misfired on a few balls early and had a fumble returned for a touchdown. But he proved he's one of the nation's top playmakers, dissecting Iowa throughout the second half on his way to putting up quality numbers in a runaway win.

**Loser: Ole Miss:** Ole Miss started the season 7-0, but there have been some recent signs of instability. In Baton Rouge, it picked a bad time to all come unraveled. Playing against hated rival LSU, the Rebels couldn't stop Tigers quarterback Jayden Daniels in a 45-20 loss that had a big-time collapse element. After jumping out to a 17-3 lead, the Rebels folded, allowing a 42-3 run to close the game. Daniels was the catalyst, throwing for 248 yards and a pair of touchdowns and running for 121 yards and three more scores. He's quietly emerging as one of the top players in the SEC.

On the other side, Rebels quarterback Jaxson Dart threw a costly interception in the end zone with the chance to take the lead when it was 24-20 LSU. Instead, Joe Foucha picked it off with one hand, and the Tigers marched 80 yards in 10 plays to push the lead to 11.

We saw this coming and we released LSU as a top pick. The only real competition Ole Miss has faced this season was Kentucky, which was ranked seventh. The Rebels needed a major Will Levis blunder at the end to win 22-19. Since then, the Rebels allowed 28 points in a win over Vanderbilt and then 34 to Auburn a week ago. That's two offenses that have been mostly horrible this season, and both teams moved the ball easily.

Those defensive woes manifested themselves yet again against an LSU team that appears to be hitting its offensive stride. Daniels followed up a terrific, six-touchdown game against Florida with another great one this week, and the Bayou Bengals are 6-2 entering a bye.

The Rebels now have to travel to Texas A&M before finally getting a week off.

**Winner: TCU:** It's beginning to feel like this TCU Horned Frogs season may wind up to be something special. The past two weekends, it looked like Cinderella's glass slipper was cracking on national television as coach Sonny Dykes' team stared a pair of large deficits in the face. In both cases, though, the Frogs turned into princes before our very eyes.

Last Saturday night, they surged from behind against Kansas State to keep from joining the ranks of pretenders. Instead, they look like the real deal. After a pair of fourth-quarter touchdowns forced overtime against Oklahoma State a week ago, where they won 43-40, they came home to play TCU and trailed by 18 points late in the first half once again.

Chris Klieman's Wildcats dealt with quarterback injuries throughout, having to replace Adrian Martinez with Will Howard after just two passes. Freshman Jake Rubley also made an appearance, throwing an interception, and the ineffective play at the position stalled the offense that was strong throughout the first half.

TCU's opportunistic defense picked off a couple of passes, and the high-scoring offense finally got going, scoring 28 unanswered points to close the game and turn a 28-10 deficit into a 38-28 win.

Quarterback Max Duggan continued his career resurgence under Dykes, completing 17-of-26 passes for 280 yards and a trio of touchdowns. Even with all the great quarterbacks he's coached, Dykes told the FS1 crew Duggan is playing as well as any signal-caller he's ever coached.

The supporting cast of running back Kendre Miller (29 carries, 153 yards and two touchdowns) and receiver Quentin Johnston (four catches, 74 yards and a touchdown) played key roles, and TCU won its fourth consecutive game over a ranked opponent. If you haven't been a believer in the Horned Frogs, now's the time. Oh how I miss the TCU home games and a visit to Buffalo Bros restaurant with the best wings west of Buffalo. By the way, it's Buffalo Bros because the owners are from Buffalo.

**Loser: Kansas:** Kansas broke out the warhawk helmets and the powder blue uniforms in Waco, Texas, on Saturday for the game against Baylor. Maybe the Jayhawks need to burn those and never wear them again after a 35-23 loss.

All those positive, early-season headlines about Kansas being college football's feel-good story seem far in the past as reality has caught up to Lance Leipold's program the past three weeks. Kansas is still a terrific team that has improved drastically, but the Jayhawks aren't a real Big 12 contender

without injured quarterback Jalon Daniels. They showed that again Saturday against a mediocre Baylor team, and it wasn't just the lack of Daniels that hurt, either.

Leipold hasn't built a depth of talent in Lawrence yet, and it's showing on defense. Baylor built a 25-point halftime lead, and while Kansas scored three second-half touchdowns to make it close late, the Bears rode freshman running back Richard Reese (career-high 186 yards and two touchdowns) to the win with a late, game-clinching scoring drive.

Jason Bean has proved to be a quality backup quarterback, but the bottom line is Kansas hasn't beaten anybody since Daniels went down with a shoulder injury in a battle of unbeaten teams with TCU a few weeks ago. Daniels may be close to returning, and Kansas needs him.

After the Jayhawks lost to the Horned Frogs 38-31, they lost again, 52-42 to an Oklahoma Sooners team that was searching for answers. Baylor was looking for hope Saturday, and the Bears found it against Kansas, which fell to 5-3 and 2-3 in the Big 12.

**Winner: Cincinnati:** Are the Cincinnati Bearcats a threat to repeat as a College Football Playoff participant this year? No. But anybody expecting a massive drop-off from last year's elite team that ran out of bullets once it got to the final four has largely undersold the program coach Luke Fickell has built in the Queen City.

Following Saturday's crucial 29-27 AAC road victory over SMU, the Bearcats are 6-1 and have won six in a row, and the only setback of the year came in the season-opening 31-24 loss to Arkansas.

Nothing was easy for Cincinnati against the Mustangs, which have been up and down in Rhett Lashlee's first year. Despite carrying a 15-point lead into the fourth quarter, the Bearcats had a hard time closing out SMU. The Mustangs dialed up an 11-play, 62-yard touchdown drive and followed it with a nine-play, 82-yard touchdown drive with 1:41 left to pull within two points. But on the ensuing two-point conversion pass, Preston Stone looked for Roderick Daniels Jr., but Ja'Von Hicks broke it up in the end zone.

Cincinnati got a first down, ran out the clock and moved its conference record to 3-0. The Bearcats have huge conference game against top contender UCF (this week) and Tulane (Nov. 25), Fickell's team looks like it has a shot to repeat as conference champions. There's still a good chance of the Bearcats making it into a New Year's Day bowl game if they win this week and turkey week. They don't have the star power of Desmond Ridder at quarterback, and the defensive playmakers don't have the high NFL ceilings of last year's group, but Cincinnati keeps on winning.

**Loser: Purdue:** The Big Ten West is just begging for somebody to win it. Unfortunately, none of the members appear to want it. As one of the leaders in Illinois sat idle and watched the action on Saturday, the other team tied atop the division (Purdue) with the surprise Fighting Illini traveled to Camp Randall to take on Wisconsin.

It looked like old times in the division, as a middling Badgers team that already fired coach Paul Chryst this year and is giving interim Jim Leonhard an on-the-job audition for the permanent gig flashed some of its old defensive dominance.

The Boilermakers had no answer on either side of the ball for the Badgers, who trounced Purdue 35-24 to hand them their second loss in the conference and drop them to 5-3. Wisconsin, meanwhile, evened its record to 4-4 overall and 2-3 in the conference.

With Nebraska, Michigan State, Purdue and Michigan still on Illinois' schedule yet to be played, the Illini have plenty of potential pitfalls. But this was the opportunity for the Boilermakers to nudge a half-game ahead of them in the standings. Instead, an offense that had been explosive throughout the year hit the ditch. Quarterback Aidan O'Connell finished with 320 passing yards but tossed a trio of interceptions as the Boilermakers failed to find any traction.

Embattled Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz actually had the better day between the two, which

was surprising. It just wasn't Purdue's day, trying to stake its claim in a division needing somebody to prove it's worth its spot at the top.

**Winner: Oklahoma State:** Oklahoma State has won a bunch of football games over the past two years with a smothering defense. Over the final two quarters and two overtime sessions of a loss to TCU and the first two quarters of last week's home showdown against Texas, the Cowboys looked soft. But all that changed at halftime against the Longhorns. Defensive coordinator Derek Mason's unit tightened up and bottled up Texas, allowing Oklahoma State to erase a seven-point halftime deficit to win 41-34 in Stillwater.

They had no answers for Texas signal-caller Quinn Ewers or running back Bijan Robinson as the 'Horns piled up 31 first-half points. After the break, the Horns mustered just 172 total yards and, more importantly, just three points. Robinson had just six of his 140 rushing yards in the second half.

Ewers finally looked like he'd recaptured some of his first-half magic on the final drive, but Ja'Tavion Sanders missed a perfect pass that could have gone for a big gain in the closing seconds, and it careened off his hands directly to Kendal Daniels for a game-clinching interception.

It wasn't just Robinson's struggles, though, after the break. Ewers couldn't seem to consistently get on the same page as his receivers, the Longhorns piled up penalties (for the game, Texas had 14 penalties to Oklahoma State's zero) and couldn't move the ball.

Despite their setback to the Horned Frogs two weeks ago, Oklahoma State re-established itself as TCU's biggest threat right now in the Big 12. Like the past two seasons, they did it with defense.

**Winner: Tennessee:** The best wide receiver in college football may be a guy who wasn't on anybody's radar before it started. Tennessee's Jalin Hyatt burst onto the national scene last weekend with a stunning five-touchdown performance to help the Vols beat Alabama.

The Vols didn't have any hangovers against FCS opponent Tennessee-Martin, beating the Skyhawks 65-24 in a tuneup game before huge tilts vs. Kentucky and at Georgia the next couple of weeks.

Hyatt had a great follow-up game too. UT-Martin didn't have answers for any of the Vols' offensive weapons, and Hyatt was the biggest, catching seven passes for 174 yards and a pair of touchdowns, all in the first half. Quarterback Hendon Hooker was sitting before halftime in the rout.

In the past six quarters, Hyatt has nearly 400 receiving yards, and he leads the nation with 12 touchdown catches after grabbing one from Hooker and another from tight end/H-back Princeton Fant. He's one away from the UT record, which isn't bad for a place known as "Wide Receiver U."

Perhaps the most impressive thing is the work Hyatt has done to put himself in this position. He essentially was an afterthought last year, a speed guy who hadn't put in the weight-room work to be physical enough to play. Entering this season, Cedric Tillman was getting all the hype in Knoxville. With Tillman out for most of the year with a high ankle sprain, though, Hyatt has surged into the spotlight. When Tillman returns (maybe next week against Kentucky), the Vols will have even more weaponry.

**Loser: Texas A&M:** It hasn't been a good season for Jimbo Fisher. Because of that, it's an even more embarrassing year for a Texas A&M program that ponied up a fully guaranteed \$95 million contract to their struggling coach.

With every inexplicable failure of a game the talented Aggies play and lose, that number becomes even more baffling. To put things into a perspective, unless some big-money booster helps out, A&M is on the hook for around \$86 million if it fires Fisher without cause this season.

A team that has stacked elite recruiting classes and is coming off a signing of the top-rated class in the country and perhaps the best ever on paper traveled to Columbia, South Carolina, to take on Shane Beamer's Gamecocks. The talent discrepancy alone should have been enough for an A&M

win, but Beamer's Gamecocks were better and better coached.

With a raucous crowd behind them, the home team scored on a 100-yard kickoff return to open the game, got another 59-yard interception return to set the tone. The Gamecocks ultimately won 30-24 to move to 5-2 on the season, with sneaky-solid wins over Kentucky and A&M the past two times out. They came up with enough plays against an A&M team that has fallen to 3-4 and 1-3 in the SEC.

On offense, they are looking for anybody to help out running back Devon Achane. Right now, the cupboard looks stunningly bare, considering all the talent they have. That may be more of a product of Fisher's system not putting them in a position to make plays. There are too many zeroes on Fisher's paycheck to be this bad.

**Winner: Alabama:** Nick Saban has never had much trouble motivating. This week, he probably didn't have to. A week after Alabama missed a late field goal, gave up two big plays and a game-winning kick from Tennessee to erase a 15-year streak and endured Vols fans rushing Shields-Watkins Field, the Crimson Tide had to refocus. They didn't seem to have any leftover ill effects from the loss. Even with the offense sputtering at times and struggling to finish drives with touchdowns, Alabama was its same old dominant self against a good SEC opponent.

Bryce Young made play after play yet again. The Bulldogs blew two early scoring opportunities, and the Tide played much better defense, pressuring Will Rogers and inserting Eli Ricks for embattled cornerback Terrion Arnold, who was terrorized a week ago. The result was a steam-rolling of MSU, 30-6 in Tuscaloosa.

With Ole Miss losing to LSU, the Tide are back in the driver's seat in the SEC West and get a week to rest Young's hurt shoulder before traveling to Baton Rouge to take on the blazing Bayou Bengals.

Despite the 52-49 loss to the Vols a week ago, Alabama still is in a destiny-controlling position in the SEC and also the College Football Playoff picture. It's not uncommon to win the title with a loss. If you think one setback will change the Tide's trajectory, think again.

**Losers: Penn State Fans Wanting Sean Clifford Out:** As Penn State fans clamor for freshman Drew Allar all around him, you have to hand it to redshirt senior Sean Clifford: He found a way to block out the noise and have his best game of the year in the face of adversity. A week after he left an embarrassing blowout loss to Michigan in yet another sub-par performance in a big game, Clifford again trotted out there for James Franklin's team. The coach continues to have faith in the veteran who has played a ton of football for the Lions, and against a good Minnesota defense, Clifford showed up and showed out.

Whether he can repeat the feat this week against Ohio State is another story, but the statement was clear in Penn State's 45-17 domination of the Golden Gophers: This is Clifford's team, for better or worse.

P.J. Fleck's Gophers didn't have any answers for him. While Minnesota has been the picture of mediocrity this season, they were fifth nationally in pass defense and sixth in total defense entering the game against the 16th-ranked Nittany Lions.

Clifford proved those stats were overrated. He even surpassed his strong Week 1 performance against Purdue, torching the Gophers for 295 passing yards and four touchdowns, both season-highs.

Perhaps more impressively, Clifford spread the ball around all over the field, throwing scoring tosses to Theo Johnson, Parker Washington, Mitchell Tinsley and Tyler Warren. It was the perfect, confidence-building tune-up for Clifford before this week's big battle with the Buckeyes. Oh ya, this game will be DJ's Guaranteed Marquee Game **college football pick** this week as the Buckeyes travel to Happy Valley where many have left really sad.

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

### Arizona St - 12 OVER COLORADO by 24

The Arizona State Sun Devils and the Colorado Buffaloes meet Saturday in college football action from Folsom Field.

Arizona State is fresh off a matchup versus Stanford. The Sun Devils ended up losing by a single point. As for Colorado, they played Oregon State over the weekend. The Buffaloes lost that one in a blowout.

Arizona State opened up their year with a win over Northern Arizona, but then took a 34-17 loss to Oklahoma State. The losing streak continued in games versus Eastern Michigan, Utah and USC, but the Sun Devils managed a 45-38 win over Washington.

In the Stanford game, the Sun Devils had a 14-6 lead going into halftime. Arizona State failed to score in the second half however, ultimately losing 15-14. QB Emory Jones posted 227 yards with a TD and a pick, while Xazavian Valladay rushed 18 times for 76 yards and a TD.

Over on the Colorado side, they began the year on a losing streak. The Buffaloes fell to TCU, Air Force, Minnesota, UCLA and Arizona over their first five outings of 2022. Colorado stopped the bleeding with a 20-13 overtime win over California in game six.

Matched up against Oregon State, the Buffaloes were down 21-3 by halftime and didn't get any closer. Colorado gave up points in every quarter in a 42-9 loss. QB JT Shrout managed 206 yards with two picks, and Jayle Stacks rushed eight times for 50 yards and a score.

The Sun Devils fell apart after halftime in their loss versus Stanford over the weekend, giving up 398 total yards and 28 first downs. Arizona State was a tepid 4-of-13 on third downs and had eight penalties in the loss.

As for Colorado, they were dismantled by a good Oregon State team in their last outing. The Buffaloes had four turnovers and went just 2-of-11 on third downs.

Arizona St should match up much better here. One upset win over Stanford will not turn me on to the Buffalos. I'll lay the lumber with Arizona St.

**Projected Score: Arizona St 34, Colorado 10**

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

### TEXAS TECH - 2 Over Baylor by 10

The Baylor Bears and Texas Tech Red Raiders meet Saturday in week 9 college football action at Jones AT&T Stadium.

The Baylor Bears look for a win after splitting their last 6 games. The Texas Tech Red Raiders also need a win after splitting their last 6 games.

The Baylor Bears have split their last 8 road games. Blake Shapen is completing 68.1 percent of his passes for 1,608 yards, 12 touchdowns and 5 interceptions.

Gavin Holmes and Monaray Baldwin have combined for 729 receiving yards and 7 touchdowns, while Hal Presley has 18 receptions.

The Baylor Bears ground game is averaging 185 yards per contest, and Richard Reese leads the way with 643 yards and 9 touchdowns.

Defensively, Baylor is allowing 24.3 points and 350 yards per game. Al Walcott leads the Baylor Bears with 40 tackles, Bryson Jackson has 2 sacks and Christian Morgan has 2 interceptions.

The Texas Tech Red Raiders have won 5 of their last 6 home games. Donovan Smith is completing

67.1 percent of his passes for 1,505 yards, 12 touchdowns and 7 interceptions.

Xavier White and Jerand Bradley have combined for 768 receiving yards and 6 touchdowns, while Myles Price has 31 receptions.

The Texas Tech Red Raiders ground game is averaging 119.3 yards per contest, and SaRodorick Thompson leads the way with 369 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, Texas Tech is allowing 29.8 points and 367.3 yards per game. Krishon Merriweather leads the Texas Tech Red Raiders with 56 tackles, Tyree Wilson has 6 sacks and Reggie Pearson Jr. has 2 interceptions.

The Bears are 20-7 ATS vs. a team with a winning record and 14-6 ATS in their last 20 games overall. The Red Raiders are 4-1 ATS in their last 5 home games and 5-2 ATS in their last 7 games on fieldturf. The over is 4-0 in Bears last 4 games overall. The over is 5-2 in Red Raiders last 7 games overall.

The Baylor Bears have been real shaky over the last month, and their defense has been shaky at best during this stretch. The Texas Tech Red Raiders have been hit or miss through 7 games, but they've played their best ball by far at home.

Texas Tech is one of the best passing teams in the country, while Baylor is 80th against the pass. Texas Tech should have a field day offensively here. Note that the Bears are 1-5 ATS in their last 6 meetings against the Red Raiders. I'll lay the small number with the home team.

**Projected Score: Texas Tech 37, Baylor 27**

## **COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET**

### **NORTH CAROLINA - 3 Over Pittsburgh by 14**

The Pittsburgh Panthers and North Carolina Tar Heels meet Saturday in week 9 college football action at Kenan Stadium.

The Pittsburgh Panthers look for a win after splitting their last 6 games. The North Carolina Tar Heels look to build on their 3-game winning streak.

Kedon Slovis is completing 60.5 percent of his passes for 1,325 yards, 5 touchdowns and 5 interceptions.

Jared Wayne and Konata Mumpfield have combined for 678 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Gavin Bartholomew has 16 receptions.

The Pittsburgh Panthers ground game is averaging 193.5 yards per contest, and Israel Abanikanda leads the way with 959 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Defensively, Pittsburgh is allowing 26.2 points and 337.2 yards per game. SirVocea Dennis leads the Pittsburgh Panthers with 47 tackles, Calijah Kancey has 3 sacks and Erick Hallett II has 3 interceptions.

The Tar Heels quarterback Drake Maye is completing 70.1 percent of his passes for 2,283 yards, 24 touchdowns and 3 interceptions.

Josh Downs and Antoine Green have combined for 829 receiving yards and 9 touchdowns, while J.J. Jones has 14 receptions.

The North Carolina Tar Heels ground game is averaging 179.3 yards per contest, and Maye leads the way with 378 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, North Carolina is allowing 32.4 points and 476.3 yards per game. Cedric Gray leads the North Carolina Tar Heels with 73 tackles, Noah Taylor has 3.5 sacks and Storm Duck has 1 interception.

The Panthers are 8-2 ATS in their last 10 road games and 2-6 ATS in their last 8 games overall. The Tar Heels are 2-5 ATS in their last 7 home games and 4-1 ATS in their last 5 games following a ATS loss.

The over is 4-1 in Panthers last 5 games overall. The over is 5-2 in Tar Heels last 7 games on grass. The over is 4-1 in the last 5 meetings.

The Pittsburgh Panthers have won 6 of their last 7 road games. The North Carolina Tar Heels have won 8 of their last 10 home games.

The Pittsburgh Panthers continue to underachieve against quality competition, and their defense struggles to keep up. USC transfer QB Kedon Slovis has not performed as expected for the Panthers.

The North Carolina Tar Heels are quietly the hottest team in the ACC, and they're led by easily one of the best offenses in the country. Drake Maye is making a case as the best quarterback in college football.

You can argue UNC should be a bigger favorite. Pittsburgh isn't consistent enough to match UNC score for score. I'm backing the under rated UNC QB Drake Maye. I'll gladly lay the small number with the Tar Heels.

**Projected Score: North Carolina 38, Pittsburgh 24**

## **COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET**

### **FRESNO ST - 8 Over San Diego St by 17**

The San Diego State Aztecs and Fresno State Bulldogs meet Saturday in week 9 college football action at Bulldog Stadium.

The San Diego State Aztecs look for a win after winning 4 of their last 6 games. The Fresno State Bulldogs look to get back to a .500 record.

The San Diego State Aztecs QB Jalen Mayden is completing 59 percent of his passes for 478 yards, 1 touchdown and 0 interceptions.

Tyrell Shavers and Jesse Matthews have combined for 439 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Brionne Penny has 8 receptions.

The San Diego State Aztecs ground game is averaging 176 yards per contest, and Jordan Byrd leads the way with 337 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, San Diego State is allowing 23.8 points and 394.2 yards per game. Michael Shawcroft leads the San Diego State Aztecs with 42 tackles, Jonah Tavai has 3 sacks and Davaughn Celestine has 1 interception.

The Fresno State Bulldogs QB Logan Fife is completing 70 percent of his passes for 892 yards, 2 touchdowns and 6 interceptions.

Jalen Moreno-Cropper and Nikko Remigio have combined for 868 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Erik Brooks has 20 receptions.

The Fresno State Bulldogs ground game is averaging 116.8 yards per contest, and Jordan Mims leads the way with 645 yards and 7 touchdowns.

Defensively, Fresno State is allowing 26 points and 386.5 yards per game. Levelle Bailey leads the Fresno State Bulldogs with 50 tackles, David Perales has 6.5 sacks and Malachi Langley has 1 interception.

The Aztecs are 1-3-1 ATS in their last 5 road games and 2-5 ATS in their last 7 games overall. The Bulldogs are 2-6 ATS in their last 8 home games and 2-6 ATS in their last 8 games overall. The under is 35-16-1 in Aztecs last 52 games overall. The under is 5-2 in Bulldogs last 7 games on fieldturf.

The San Diego State Aztecs have won 6 of their last 8 road games. The Fresno State Bulldogs have won 7 of their last 9 home games.

The San Diego State Aztecs are finding ways to win games, but they don't do much of anything well on either side of the ball. I have a hard time believing San Diego State will keep this winning stretch for much longer.

You can say similar things about the Fresno State Bulldogs, but their defense is respectable when it needs to be, and they've been terrific at home over the years.

Fresno State is the more talented team here. Note the Aztecs are 3-7 ATS in their last 10 meetings against the Bulldogs. I'll lay the points.

**Projected Score: Fresno St 31, San Diego St 14**

## **COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET**

### **Wyoming - 10 Over HAWAII by 23**

The Wyoming Cowboys and the Hawaii Rainbow Warriors meet Saturday in college football action from Clarence TC Ching Athletics Complex.

Wyoming played Utah State in their last outing. In that game the Cowboys took a 14-point victory. As for Hawaii, they're coming off a game versus Colorado State. The Warriors ended up losing by four points.

Wyoming started out their year with a 38-6 loss to Illinois, but quickly rebounded with three straight wins over Tulsa, Northern Colorado and Air Force. Wyoming would then lose to BYU and San Jose State before a win versus New Mexico.

In the Utah State game, the Cowboys put up points in every quarter. Wyoming would ultimately end up with a 28-14 victory. Quarterback Andrew Peasley finished with 199 yards on 13-of-26 passing, and Titus Swen bagged 28 carries for 160 yards and three scores.

Over on the Warriors' side, they lost to Vanderbilt, Western Kentucky and Michigan in succession to start out the year. Hawaii would then beat Duquesne before losses to New Mexico State and San Diego State, then a 31-16 win over Nevada.

Matched up against Colorado State, the Warriors had a 13-3 lead at halftime. Hawaii failed to score in the second half however and ended up with a 17-13 loss. QB Brayden Schager threw for 173 yards, one TD and one interception. Dedrick Parson led the rush with 71 yards on 15 carries.

The Cowboys are coming off a pretty good overall effort against Utah State, a much better team than Hawaii. Wyoming's offense managed 529 total yards and 28 first downs.

Defensively, the Cowboys allowed just 217 yards to the Aggies with 13 first downs and a 5-of-15 rate on third-down tries. This will be a similar opportunity for a big defensive effort, and Wyoming will get it.

As for Hawaii, they're reeling after giving away their game to Colorado State, a much lesser team than Wyoming. The Warriors didn't do too badly on defense, but the offense managed just 15 first downs, 257 total yards and a 4-of-12 success rate on third downs.

That type of performance will not cut it against Wyoming and I don't see it getting better here.

Wyoming beat Tulsa and Air Force! Hawaii beat Duquesne (wow) before their upset over Nevada. Give me the Cowboys as they ride rough shot up high over the Rainbows.

**Projected Score: Wyoming 37, Hawaii 14**

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# **FALCONS SOAR OVER PANTHERS DOLPHINS TOO QUICK FOR LIONS EAGLES WIN STATE BATTLE OF PA TITANS TOO BIG FOR THE TEXANS**

**NFL Landscape**

## **BIGGEST LOSER**

Beating up on the Carolina Panthers wouldn't have proven that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers were back, but it was a good spot for them to blow out a bad opponent and get some confidence. At least that is we thought would happen.

Well, now what?

If the Buccaneers don't look good and loses to the 1-5 rebuilding, fire-sale Panthers, then where's their season heading? The Bucs were somehow shut out in the first half against the Panthers. It's the second time in seven games this season the Bucs have been scoreless in the first half. They were shut out in the third quarter, too. The Buccaneers could get only a field goal in a shocking 21-3 loss.

It was a shocking loss, and it was even more surprising how bad the Bucs looked. This isn't what Tom Brady came back for I'm sure of that.

Early in the game, Brady had Mike Evans wide open over the middle. He was going to walk in for a touchdown. Brady hit him in stride, Evans somehow bobbled the pass and knocked it up in the air, and it fell incomplete. That was a sign.

That Evans play was the only sign of life the Bucs had Sunday. The rest of the time they looked pedestrian. Brady was 32-of-49 for 290 yards. He didn't look good.

The injury excuse is pretty much gone. Yes, center Ryan Jensen is still out and that's a big deal. Julio Jones has been out, but that's not shocking. Every team in the NFL is dealing with injuries. Relatively speaking, the lineup the Buccaneers had on the field Sunday was reasonably healthy. Blaming injuries for the lack of offense doesn't fly. And it's not like the Panthers were great on defense before this week. They were ranked 23rd go in into this game.

This is who the Buccaneers are this season. Maybe things get a little better, but how? Brady doesn't look washed up but he doesn't look like the same guy who led the NFL in passing yards and touchdowns last season. He missed several passes in the first half. It was bound to happen that a 45-year-old quarterback would decline. It's not all Brady's fault, but he also isn't the same player. That's getting harder to deny.

Brady's stat line looks a lot better if Evans catches that 75-yard touchdown pass, but it's clear that Tampa Bay has offensive issues that are not going away.

In the third quarter the Buccaneers got the ball in Panthers territory. On third-and-1, with the greatest quarterback ever, the Buccaneers ran up the middle. Leonard Fournette was stuffed. On fourth down, Fournette got it again and got nothing again. The Panthers held their 7-0 lead. Early in the fourth quarter the Panthers broke two long runs and took a 14-0 lead.

Tampa Bay got the ball inside the 10-yard line early in fourth quarter. Brady threw three straight incompletions, including a third-down pass that he tossed right into the ground after being under pressure, and the Bucs settled for a field goal. This is who the Buccaneers are on offense. They have a ton of star players and are mediocre at best.

Brady came back after briefly retiring, and by now everyone knows that he is having issues with his personal life. He came back, presumably, for one more shot at a Super Bowl before he retired for good. The Buccaneers don't look like a Super Bowl team. They don't even look very good. It's probably not getting much better, either.

Here are the rest of the winners and losers from Week 7 of the NFL season:

## WINNERS

**Josh Jacobs:** The Las Vegas Raiders probably made a mistake not picking up Jacobs' fifth-year option. Jacobs had been solid but not great through three seasons in the NFL. The former first-round draft pick has been much better this season, and he'll hit free agency when it's done. Jacobs had a monster game in the Raiders' 38-20 win over the Houston Texans. He rushed for 143 yards and three touchdowns and helped Las Vegas control the game. Running backs have been devalued and that's one reason Jacobs' option for next season wasn't picked up. But he has been a consistent force for the Raiders this season.

**Joe Burrow:** For most of this season, Burrow looked just OK. Not bad, but nothing like the form that brought the Cincinnati Bengals to the Super Bowl. That version of Burrow is back. For a while it looked like Burrow might have a shot at the NFL record of 554 yards in an easy 35-17 win over the Atlanta Falcons. He had to settle for 481 yards with four touchdown passes and one rushing touchdown. Burrow hit Ja'Marr Chase for a couple of first-half touchdowns and the rout was on. Burrow looked comfortable for the first time all season and the Bengals cruised to a win. It's not too late for Cincinnati to emerge as a contender again, especially in the AFC North.

**Titans defense:** Mike Vrabel is a really good head coach. That's why the Tennessee Titans are the easy favorite to win another AFC South title. The Titans are in the driver's seat after a 19-10 win over the Indianapolis Colts that gives them the season sweep. The Titans are 4-2, and the Colts are a disappointing 3-3-1. The Titans' defense led the way. They had a long pick-six to open the scoring. They held the Colts to 65 rushing yards, and forced three turnovers. The Titans' defense doesn't have a lot of star players but it has Vrabel's influence all over it. Tennessee started this season slow but it has recovered. Vrabel probably won't win NFL Coach of the Year, like he did last season, but he has Tennessee cruising again, thanks mostly to its defense.

**Daniel Jones:** He is going to get paid this off-season. The New York Giants declined the fifth-year option on Jones and it'll probably cost them. Jones did enough again for the Giants in a 23-17 win over the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Giants are 6-1 after the defense stopped Christian Kirk cold on the 1-yard line on the final play of the game. Jones had 107 yards rushing and another 202 passing. Playoff teams generally don't move on from their quarterback, and at 6-1, the Giants would have to completely blow it to not make the playoffs. Whether Jones is worth a new deal, the Giants will probably give him one. The franchise tag should be about \$31 million for next season. Nobody has benefitted more from the coaching change to Brian Daboll more than Jones.

## LOSERS

**Chargers:** The Los Angeles Chargers had a really, really bad Sunday. They lost 37-23 to the Seattle Seahawks and that was only a bit of the problem. Cornerback J.C. Jackson, the team's big offseason addition, went down with what looked to be a bad knee injury. On a fourth-down incompleteness in the fourth quarter, receiver Mike Williams had his foot twisted underneath him. He couldn't put any weight on his leg as he left the field. The loss was bad enough. The Chargers have to beat teams like the Seahawks at home if they want to be a playoff team. They didn't look like a playoff team Sunday. More injuries to key players aren't going to help L.A. get there, either.

**Jimmy Garoppolo:** He is surrounded by stars, but he's still a question mark for the San Francisco 49ers. The difference in quarterbacks was stark Sunday. Patrick Mahomes was great in the Kansas City Chiefs' 44-23 win. Garoppolo was OK, but he wasn't going to match Mahomes. Garoppolo had huge mistakes. His first-half interception in the red zone killed all of the 49ers' momentum. He took a

safety in the fourth quarter with the 49ers barely hanging on to hope. The 49ers made an all-in type of move to trade for running back Christian McCaffrey. That might end up paying off. It's still tough to trust Garoppolo in the biggest moments. First things first, he has to help lead the 49ers out of a 3-4 hole to start the season.

**Nathaniel Hackett:** There are plenty of Denver Broncos fans who wanted Hackett fired in September. They sure won't let up now. The Broncos looked awful again in a home 16-9 loss to the New York Jets and are 2-5 this season. Russell Wilson was out with a hamstring injury, but he wasn't helping much when he was playing. On Sunday the Broncos turned to backup Brett Rypien and scored one touchdown. Just because it's the 2022 Broncos, they missed the extra point after that score. Denver's season isn't going anywhere. The Broncos are probably the most disappointing team in the NFL. They can't move on from Wilson for a couple more years after giving him a big contract extension. They could, however, move on from Hackett after just one season.

**Detroit Lions offense:** The good news for the Lions is their defense, which has been awful, showed up against the Dallas Cowboys. They played pretty well in Dak Prescott's return to the starting lineup. But the offense that was so fun for the first few weeks of the season is gone. The Lions are miserable right now. They lost 24-6 to the Cowboys, and for the second straight game their offense didn't get in the end zone. It looked like Detroit had a touchdown in the fourth quarter but it was ruled short. Then Jamaal Williams fumbled on the next play. That's how the Lions' season is going. There was reasonable optimism for the Lions before the season. There's none anymore. If it keeps going this bad, head coach Dan Campbell's job might be in danger too. It's a mess for the Lions.

**Cleveland Browns:** The Cleveland Browns are 2-5, and a lot of their malaise is their own doing. They had a complaint on Sunday due to some bad officiating. Trailing the Baltimore Ravens 23-20, the Browns lined up for a field goal late in the fourth quarter. They didn't seem to move at all, but got called for a false start. That pushed Cade York's attempt back to 60 yards, and it was blocked. The Ravens went on to win. The Browns have to blame themselves for their start. Jacoby Brissett hasn't been good. The defense was decent Sunday against the Ravens but it has given up way too much. But in the loss to the Ravens, the officials didn't help.

**Aaron Rodgers:** A lot like Tom Brady, we have to wonder if Rodgers' prime is over, or is it the loss of his top receiver? The Green Bay Packers looked miserable in a bad 23-21 loss to the Washington Commanders. Rodgers did very little against a middling Washington defense. We can blame Rodgers' line or his lack of receivers, but at some point the responsibility for the Packers' offensive woes fall on him. He's the one with the three-year, \$150 million extension. He threw for just 179 yards, with 47 in the first half. Rodgers had his thumb taped and perhaps that affected him, but either way, it was not a good day for him or the Packers. The Packers got nothing going, but they had a shot at an ugly win. On a fourth-and-1 in the fourth quarter, Rodgers hit Romeo Doubs on a short pass. Doubs dropped it and the drive ended. Washington took over and scored a game-clinching field goal. That drop can be blamed on one of Rodgers' teammates. The rest is on Rodgers, who suddenly looks little like the back-to-back MVP from the past two seasons. His final stat line looked better due to a fourth-quarter touchdown to Aaron Jones, but after that score Washington ate up most of the remaining time, the Packers couldn't score on a long lateral play and they fell to 3-4 with a loss that's very hard to explain. Rodgers has not been terrible but he isn't the same player he has been, either. We probably have to quit blaming everything around Rodgers at some point and wonder how much the quarterback himself has left.

## **NFC vs AFC What's Happening This Year**

Let's try to make sense of this:

1. Tom Brady and the Bucs get stomped by Carolina, a team in full tank mode.
2. Aaron Rodgers loses a duel against Taylor Heinicke and the Commanders, who like the Packers and Bucs, are now 3-4.

3. The Giants are 6-1 and Daniel Jones is gonna get paid. Wait, Daniel Jones is gonna get paid
4. Going into Week 8, the Jets have the same number of wins (5) as the Bills.
5. A year ago, the Giants and Jets went a combined 8-26. The city of New York (and state of New Jersey) is now 11-3 with more than half the season to go.
6. Out in the NFC West, home to the reigning Super Bowl champs and the all-in Niners who just traded for Christian McCaffrey, the team that dealt Russell Wilson is in first place.
7. Seattle may be the biggest surprise of a season. Geno Smith is playing at a Pro Bowl level, and it's not as the Seahawks have played a cake schedule. Seattle pounded the Chargers Sunday and are now 2-0 against the AFC West, the Group of Death heading into this season.
8. The NFL isn't exactly upside down — the Broncos' offense still sucks without Russell Wilson — but there's a whole lotta shaking going on in the middle. Seven weeks in, 14 teams are at or within a game of .500. In the NFC, where more of the head scratching is going on, the Giants, Seahawks, Vikings and Falcons are all leading or tied in the win column atop their divisions.
9. On the expected side, Joe Burrow is beginning to roll. Since throwing four picks in the season opener, he's got a 13-to-1 TD-to-INT ratio. The Bengals three losses this season have come by a combined eight points. So take that 4-3 record with a grain of salt.
10. With Tua Tagovailoa back, the Dolphins started the reboot of a team that opened its season by beating the Patriots, Ravens and Bills.

The AFC is toughening up. The Bills still looked good in a bye week, the Chiefs dropped 44 on the vaunted Niners defense and the aforementioned Bengals and Dolphins are rounding into form.

It's not so clear on the NFC side. The Eagles are 6-0, but if there's a knock it's that they've beaten just two teams with winning records, one of those without their starting QB. Their toughest game left on the schedule — outside of Dallas on the road — may be at home against Green Bay, and that's based on the Packers' reputation alone. Undefeated yes, but tested against the best, no.

But aside from Philly, who is there? We don't know what the Giants are going forward. The Cowboys have the defense and an easy schedule too, but they aren't elite. Not yet. Neither are the Vikings. And Brady and Rodgers are going to have to work some serious magic to turn their offenses into something that doesn't resemble what it looks like right now.

These are my thoughts coming out of last week. If things hold, next week will be the exact opposite. Or will it? It's wild, it's wide open and it's awesome for those of us watching as fans. But for football handicappers and bettors, it has been really bad for some. Buckle up, because it's going to be a real bumpy ride to the playoffs.



## PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

### ATLANTA - 4½ Over Carolina by 14

The Carolina Panthers enter this game having lost two of their last three games, but are coming off a shocking 21-3 win at home against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers last week 7, which also ended their three-game losing streak.

Meanwhile, the Atlanta Falcons enter this game having lost two of their last three games which includes a 17-35 loss on the road against the Cincinnati Bengals last week.

Atlanta Falcons is listed as 4.5-point favorites at home against the Carolina Panthers and has set the total for the over/under plays at 42.5 points. Will the Panthers get their 2nd win in a row or will the Falcons get the win at home? Let's take a closer look at how these teams are faring this season.

The Carolina Panthers enter this game with a record of 2-5 which includes a 21-3 win over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at home on Sunday. Carolina out gained Tampa Bay 343 to 322 total yards offensively in the win. The Panthers are 2-5 ATS overall, 0-2 ATS on the road, 2-2 ATS as an underdog, and 2-0 ATS in Division games this season.

Baker Mayfield leads the team in passing completing 84 of 153 yards for 962 yards with four touchdowns and four interceptions while adding 40 rushing yards and a touchdown on 14 attempts.

D'Onta Foreman leads the team in rushing with 27 carries for 155 yards while adding two receptions for 27 yards. D.J. Moore leads the team in receiving catching 27 of 54 targets for 273 yards and two touchdowns.

The Atlanta Falcons enter this game with a record of 3-4 and are coming off a road loss against the hot Joe Burrow and the Cincinnati Bengals by a score of 17-35. Atlanta lost the time of possession 26:55 to 33:05 and was outgained by Cincinnati 214 to 537 total yards offensively in the loss. The Falcons are 6-1 ATS overall, 3-0 ATS at home, and 2-0 ATS in Division games this season.

Marcus Mariota leads the team in passing completing 92 of 150 attempts for 1,179 yards with seven touchdowns and four interceptions while adding 237 rushing yards and three touchdowns on 49 attempts.

Cordarrelle Patterson leads the team in rushing with 58 carries for 340 yards and three touchdowns while adding four receptions for 28 yards. Drake London leads the team in receiving catching 26 of 44 targets for 315 yards and two touchdowns.

The under has hit in seven of the last ten games in the series with the teams combining for an average of 41.3 points per game in those contests. The under has hit in two of the last three games with the teams combining for an average of 41.33 points per game in those matchups.

Atlanta has won seven of the last ten games in the series. The Falcons have won two of the last three games while going 2-1 ATS in those contests.

Atlanta is the more talented team this season and has the better coaching staff. Atlanta has been the much better team this year and in the series, winning seven of the last ten and two of the last three games. The Falcons are 7-3 ATS in the last ten and 2-1 ATS in the last three games of the series.

Marcus Mariota has been playing at a high level and his running ability gives the Falcons a clear advantage. Yes, Carolina beat Tampa Bay last week, but that was more like Tampa Bay beating themselves as their offense is in total disarray. I'm backing the Falcons to win and cover the spread.

**Projected Score: Atlanta 27, Carolina 13**

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## PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

### NY Giants + 3 Over SEATTLE by 5

The New York Giants and Seattle Seahawks meet Sunday in week 8 NFL action at Lumen Field.

The New York Giants look to build on their 4-game winning streak. The Seattle Seahawks look for a win after winning 3 of their last 4 games.

Giants quarterback Daniel Jones is completing 66.7 percent of his passes for 1,223 yards, 6 touchdowns and 2 interceptions.

Richie James and Saquon Barkley have combined for 371 receiving yards on 45 catches, while Darius Slayton has 11 receptions.

The New York Giants ground game is averaging 173.4 yards per contest, and Barkley leads the way with 726 yards and 4 touchdowns.

Defensively, New York is allowing 18.8 points and 355.4 yards per game. Julian Love leads the New York Giants with 50 tackles, Dexter Lawrence has 4 sacks and Xavier McKinney has 4 pass deflections.

Seahawks quarterback Geno Smith is completing 73.5 percent of his passes for 1,712 yards, 11 touchdowns and 3 interceptions.

Tyler Lockett and DK Metcalf have combined for 886 receiving yards and 4 touchdowns, while Will Dissly has 19 receptions.

The Seattle Seahawks ground game is averaging 137.1 yards per contest, and Kenneth Walker III leads the way with 411 yards and 4 touchdowns.

Defensively, Seattle is allowing 26.6 points and 399.1 yards per game. Jordyn Brooks leads the Seattle Seahawks with 73 tackles, Uchenna Nwosu has 3 sacks and Tariq Woolen has 4 interceptions.

The Giants are 24-11 ATS in their last 35 road games and 4-0 ATS in their last 4 games overall.

The Seahawks are 6-1 ATS in their last 7 games in October and 3-10 ATS in their last 13 games in Week 8.

The under is 24-6-2 in Giants last 32 games overall. The over is 4-1 in Seahawks last 5 games overall.

The New York Giants have lost 7 of their last 9 road games. The Seattle Seahawks have won 5 of their last 8 home games and The Giants are 1-4 ATS in their last 5 meetings.

The Seattle Seahawks look like a team that's quietly gaining confidence, and they have an offense that's fifth in scoring.

Of course, playing in Seattle is never easy. With that said, the New York Giants keep winning games, and they're still getting disrespected by oddsmakers.

This is the sixth time this season the Giants are underdogs, and yet here they are with six victories. It's not obvious, but the Giants have the top rushing attack in the country, and they're clearly well coached.

The Giants are putting money in smart money bettors pockets. Until that stops, I have to keep backing this confident team. Give me the Giants and the free field goal.

**Projected Score: NY Giants 26, Seattle 21**

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## PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

### PHILADELPHIA - 9½ Over Pittsburgh by 21

The Pittsburgh Steelers and the Philadelphia Eagles meet Sunday in NFL action from Lincoln Financial Field.

Pittsburgh is 2-5 overall and coming off a loss to the Dolphins. As for Philadelphia, they're undefeated and fresh off a bye week. The Eagles last appeared in a win over the Cowboys.

Pittsburgh kicked off their season with an overtime win versus the Bengals. Pittsburgh hit a losing streak afterward with losses to the Patriots, Browns, Jets and Bills. The Steelers broke the trend with a two-point win versus the Buccaneers.

Back on Sunday versus the Dolphins, the Steelers trailed by six heading into the second half. Neither team scored after the break in a 16-10 Pittsburgh loss. QB Kenny Pickett bagged 257 yards with a TD and three picks. Najee Harris led the rush with 17 carries for 65 yards.

Over on the Eagles' side, they began the year with a close win over the Lions. Philadelphia kept the run going with consecutive victories versus the Vikings, Commanders, Jaguars, Cardinals and Cowboys over the next five games.

Back on October 16 versus the Cowboys, Philly took a 20-3 lead into halftime. The Eagles slowed down in the second half but still hung on for the 26-17 win. QB Jalen Hurts managed 155 yards with two touchdowns. Miles Sanders rushed 18 times for 71 yards and a score.

The Steelers are 4-1 ATS in the last five in Week 8 and 3-1-1 ATS in their last five after an ATS win. Pittsburgh is 27-11-1 ATS in the last 39 in October.

Meanwhile, the Eagles are 5-0 ATS in their last five in Week 8 and 5-1-1 ATS in their last seven at home. Philadelphia is 4-1 ATS in their last five overall.

Pittsburgh is going to have to play great football to stay in range here. The Steelers posted 341 total yards with 19 first downs against Miami in their last outing. That said Pittsburgh also had three interceptions and went a cold 4-of-14 on third-down tries.

As for Philadelphia, they get the advantages of being rested and playing at home this week. The Eagles are coming off a humble 268 yards in the win over Dallas, but the team took care of the ball with zero turnovers and had just two penalties.

The Steelers are going through a learning curve with their rookie quarterback and their running game has been less than mediocre at best. The Eagles have the advantages on offense, defense and quarterback.

Jalen Hurt will put a hurting on the Steelers defense with his scrambling and running ability. I know Miami only scored 10 points on this Steeler defense.

The Eagles will find the going much easier against the Steelers. with a balanced offense the Eagles should prosper from field position. I surmise the Philadelphia Eagles will soar comfortably over the double digit point spread. Philadelphia gets bragging rights in the state of Pennsylvania, and covers the double digit spread.

**Projected Score: Philadelphia 31, Pittsburgh 10**

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## PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

### Tennessee - 1½ Over HOUSTON by 14

The Tennessee Titans and Houston Texans meet Sunday in week 8 NFL action at NRG Stadium.

The Tennessee Titans look to build on their 4-game winning streak. The Houston Texans look to rebound from a 1-4-1 start.

Ryan Tannehill is completing 65.1 percent of his passes for 1,097 yards, 6 touchdowns and 3 interceptions.

Robert Woods and Nick Westbrook-Ikhine have combined for 368 receiving yards and 1 touchdown, while Dontrell Hilliard has 12 receptions.

The Tennessee Titans ground game is averaging 108.7 yards per contest, and Derrick Henry leads the way with 536 yards and 5 touchdowns.

Defensively, Tennessee is allowing 21.3 points and 374.3 yards per game. David Long Jr. leads the Tennessee Titans with 45 tackles, Denico Autry has 5 sacks and Amani Hooker has 1 interception.

Texan QB Davis Mills is completing 63.8 percent of his passes for 1,350 yards, 7 touchdowns and 5 interceptions.

Nico Collins and Brandin Cooks have combined for 586 receiving yards and 1 touchdown, while Jordan Akins has 10 receptions.

The Houston Texans ground game is averaging 100.7 yards per contest, and Dameon Pierce leads the way with 504 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Defensively, Houston is allowing 22.8 points and 411.8 yards per game. Jonathan Owens leads the Houston Texans with 56 tackles, Jerry Hughes has 4 sacks and Jalen Pitre has 2 interceptions.

The Titans are 6-2 ATS in their last 8 vs. AFC South and 4-0 ATS in their last 4 games overall. The Texans are 4-10 ATS in their last 14 games in October. The under is 9-3 in Titans last 12 games overall. The over is 4-1 in Texans last 5 home games. The Titans are 1-7 ATS in their last 8 meetings in Houston and 6-15-1 ATS in their last 22 meetings.

The Tennessee Titans have won 6 of their last 9 road games. The Houston Texans are 1-8-1 SU in their last 10 home games.

This line has dropped to a very low number. The Titans look like a team that's gotten their act together with 4 straight wins. The Houston Texans have issues finishing games, and they're below average on both sides of the ball.

These are two teams heading in completely different directions, and the Titans have won 6 of the last 9 meetings against the Texans.

This line is a bit confusing to me, as the Titans are clearly the better team, they're in the better form, and they have more to play for as they're chasing a playoff spot. The Texans look like a team in full tank mode. Do I smell a rat? Nevertheless, I'll take a bite off the cheese. Give me the Titans and lay the very reasonable number.

**Projected Score: Tennessee 27, Houston 13**

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