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Volume 42 Issue 3

Football Week 3 2023



DJ NAILS HIS COLLEGE FOOTBALL MARQUEE PICK TEXAS AND GOES 3-0 ATS LAST WEEK PRIVATE GOLD PICK WINS AGAIN NOW 3-0 ATS

NCAA LANDSCAPE:

Texas, Miami recreating glory days of decades past, trouble in the SEC and drama in Week 2

We've been here before. It's September, which is the time of year when we can announce, for a few days at least, that a formerly great program has risen from the ashes to reassert its dominance. In a small sample size, we see visions of better days.

Miami has been back before. It never lasts.

Texas is back nearly every September, and that hope ends quicker than the average comeback.

For more than a decade, the "they're back" moment has been less a proclamation than the setup to a joke, with fans all too certain the punchline will come soon enough.

But on this September Saturday, it doesn't feel like a joke.

Texas didn't simply beat Alabama 34-24 in Tuscaloosa. The Longhorns threw haymakers, following each Tide touchdown with their own, getting up off the mat to stare down Nick Saban like Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania. This wasn't a fluke. Texas was the more talented team with the far better quarterback.

A year ago, Quinn Ewers starred as the frontman for a cover band but was, at best, a case in mediocrity at QB. Then he got a haircut and returned to the Horns for 2023 as a genuine star. Ewers threw for 349 yards and three touchdowns, torching the Alabama secondary -- including routinely attacking All-American Kool-Aid McKinstry.

Just as Texas and Alabama kicked off, Miami was putting the finishing touches on its own impressive win over an SEC power. The Hurricanes spotted Texas A&M 10 points to start the game, but then they turned the screws on Jimbo Fisher, with QB Tyler Van Dyke tossing five touchdown passes in a 48-33 win.

It was, at long last, proof of concept for coach Mario Cristobal's promised revival of the Canes, a defining win against a team that, just a year ago, had utterly stifled Miami's offense.

That the teams on the wrong end of these momentous wins both belonged to the mighty SEC was its own unlikely statement.

For Alabama, all the concerns about an offense without a clear identity and a defense that had softened in recent years were on display against the Longhorns.

For the Aggies, the loss to Miami was so decisive that Bobby Petrino likely offered to interview for Jimbo Fisher's job on the plane ride home.

The SEC has six non-conference losses in two weeks already, including four to the ACC. (Though, if commissioner Greg Sankey just wants to expand and add North Carolina, Florida State, Miami and, um, Wake Forest, we can chalk it all up to the grind of a tough SEC schedule.) This marks the first season since 2002 in which Alabama, LSU and Florida have an L by the end of Week 2.

There are 12 weeks remaining, of course, and the story of a college football season never plays out just as we'd expect. Still, for this week at least, 2023 felt something more akin to the glory days of decades past.

Texas looks to be back. Miami looks to be back. Colorado's instant turnaround and Nebraska's never-ending rebuild.

Sequels so rarely live up to the original, but Colorado's second act against Nebraska was, if anything, a more emphatic performance for coach Deion Sanders' team.

Colorado demolished Nebraska 36-14, as Travis Hunter again made an impact on both sides of the ball with three catches for 73 yards and four tackles,

Xavier Weaver looked like an emerging superstar with 10 catches for 170 yards, and Shedeur Sanders followed up his 500-yard passing performance against TCU with another 393 yards and three touchdowns.

And while Week 1's win over the Horned Frogs hardly showcased an elite defense, the Buffaloes held Nebraska to just 11 completions and had four takeaways.

Nebraska offered no complexity. The Cornhuskers' story is simple: They're bad.

Saturday's loss was the 18th in Nebraska's past 23 games. Jeff Sims, the quarterback and coach Matt Rhule handpicked to lead the Huskers' resurgence, was dreadful for the second straight week, turning the ball over three times. The defense, which held up well early, fell apart down the stretch.

The only thing that looked much different from past Nebraska misery on Saturday is that the game was never actually all that close. There are still nits to pick with the Buffaloes.

In their two otherwise impressive wins, they've allowed 12 sacks and rushed for just 1.7 yards per carry. And it's certainly possible Colorado has yet to see a truly challenging opponent. A year ago, however, the Buffs were an embarrassment, hardly capable of taking the field without tripping over their own shoelaces. Now, you have to squint to find any flaws in their game.

The problems at Nebraska are so much bigger -- bigger, perhaps, than they were even a year ago, amid embarrassing losses to Northwestern and Georgia Southern and, well, Huskers fans don't need reminders. Two games isn't enough to judge a rebuild, of course. Rhule has a long history of winning college football games, and life gets at least marginally easier in the next couple of weeks.

But Sims is now 7-18 as a starting QB with 39 touchdowns and 37 turnovers. Is there a reason to think that résumé changes in the months to come? Would you put your hard earned cash on this team? I think not.

Those Blackshirts on defense, once the soul of one of the great programs in the country, have been beaten down by one showing of offensive ineptitude after another.

And while the party in Boulder is just getting started, hope for Nebraska still feels like it's a long way off.

Pac-12 keeps humming

No league stays perfect forever, even if "forever" for that league is about eight more months. So it was that the Pac-12's undefeated start to the season came to a halt in Week 2, when Arizona fell to Mississippi State 31-24 in overtime. And yet, Week 2 was another reminder that, in what sure seems like its last season of existence, the Pac-12 isn't going out without some fireworks.

Oregon overcame a 27-18 deficit and picked off its former QB Tyler Shough three times, including a 45-yard pick six with 45 seconds left to seal a 38-30 win over Texas Tech. Washington State knocked off No. 19 Wisconsin. UCLA dominated San Diego State.

Utah escaped Baylor, Colorado was exceptional again, and the Washington Huskies are tossing touchdown passes like there's no defensive secondary.

USC's game ops even get credit for being way cooler than the officials. Listen, Stanford had no chance to win this game, and that's why Dennis released USC as his private gold pick which kept his perfect 100% record. USC is like a video game on offense. This kind of stuff is just terrifying.

Michael Penix Jr. has now thrown for 400 or more yards in four of his past six games. At Rutgers, that's called "a good century."

Dante Moore looks like an emerging star at UCLA, throwing for 290 yards and three touchdowns against San Diego State on Saturday.

Even with Saturday's losses, the Pac-12 figures to have six teams ranked in the top 20, which gives the league a good case as the nation's best. And sure, Stanford looked awful and Cal lost. But that's the ACC's problem LOL.

Heisman Five

We're two weeks in and, honestly, the hardest part is deciding how many Colorado players to include among the Heisman favorites.

1. Colorado do-it-all star Travis Hunter

Hunter had three catches for 73 yards on offense, four tackles and a PBU on defense, and singlehandedly swayed the international markets to send corn futures plummeting. It was a thorough beating of Nebraska.

2. USC QB Caleb Williams

Williams threw for 300 yards and three touchdowns against Stanford. Oh, that was just in the first half. If he keeps doing this to teams, he's going to ruin his Heisman chances by never playing in the second half.

3. Florida State QB Jordan Travis

Travis had just two touchdowns against Southern Miss, but only one of them was to Keon Coleman, so the degree of difficulty was higher. Regardless, Florida State rolled 66-13.

4. Colorado QB Shedeur Sanders

Sanders has 903 passing yards and six passing TDs through two games. Last year, Colorado as a team had 2,075 passing yards and 10 passing TDs. That puts Sanders on pace to top the Buffs' season totals from 2022 before the end of this month.

5. Notre Dame QB Sam Hartman

Hartman's Notre Dame career so far: Three wins, 10 touchdowns, no picks, one rib necklace.

Big Ten vibe check

It was another dull week atop the Big Ten, as Michigan and Ohio State were favored by a combined 83 points. The results were less about wins and more about vibes.

After all, just a week ago, Ohio State's offense scuffled against Indiana and, while the Buckeyes won easily, there were some reasonable concerns. What did we learn in Week 2? Maybe not much more than we did in Week 1. It was an easy 35-7 win over Youngstown State, and Kyle McCord threw for three touchdowns, but really, Ohio State spent the bulk of the second half on cruise control. The Buckeyes have scored 58 points so far, which is their fewest through two games since 2014. Oh, they also won the national title in 2014.

As for Michigan, the Wolverines topped UNLV 35-7 in their second of three games without head coach Jim Harbaugh. J.J. McCarthy tossed two touchdown passes and Michigan had 300 passing yards for the second time in its past three games -- something it had done just twice in its prior 16.

Meanwhile, the Michigan defense has allowed 10 total points so far this season, and with Bowling Green and Rutgers on deck, that number might not move much anytime soon.

Historic win for Iowa. It wasn't easy, but anything else wouldn't have felt fitting, as Iowa's Kirk Ferentz picked up career win No. 200 with a 20-13 victory over rival Iowa State.

During the course of Ferentz's 200 wins, Iowa has scored upward of 600 total points on offense, including 13 on Saturday. The defense added a pick-six, which for reasons we cannot fathom still counts toward Brian Ferentz's quest for 25 points per game -- the number Iowa has to hit for the younger Ferentz to keep his job.

Cade McNamara, the QB brought in from Michigan to invigorate the passing game, threw for 123 yards and a pick. Iowa averaged nearly 4 yards per rush. It was truly a fireworks display.

The Hawkeyes nearly blew a 20-3 lead, which actually might have been a brilliant turn for its offensive coordinator. Overtime would've given OC Brian Ferentz a chance to pad an extra three, maybe six points to his total. Alas, it was not to be.

Instead, his quest for 300 -- 25 points over 12 games -- stands at 44. Since Oct. 1 of last year, Iowa has hit that magical 25-point mark just once. Still, the Ferentz family has lots to celebrate after such a historic win.

Maryland was nearly doomed by a slow start against Charlotte, falling behind 14-0 and trailing 14-9 at the half. Maryland came back and won 38-20.

A year ago, North Carolina and Appalachian State played in a shootout for the ages, with the Heels prevailing 63-61 after the two teams combined for 62 fourth-quarter points. Saturday's rematch wasn't quite as explosive, but the Heels and Mountaineers did rack up more than 1,000 total yards as UNC missed a late field goal that would've won the game, but held on to prevail in double OT.

Tulane was without star QB Michael Pratt (found out after Gridiron Gold Sheet was published) for its matchup with Ole Miss. The Green Wave sent Kai Horton out for the start instead. He held his own for a half, but things fell apart after the break, with Jaxson Dart (267 yards, 2 TDs) leading Ole Miss to a 37-20 win.

Clemson got off to a miserable start against Charleston Southern, with a pick-six by Cade Klubnik putting the Tigers in an early 14-7 hole. Klubnik & Co. figured things out in the second half, however, and outscored the Buccaneers 42-0 to close out the game. Klubnik finished with 315 yards and four touchdowns.

In life, great success begins with a small step forward. Perhaps that will be true, too, for the NAIA's Texas College Steers.

In Week 1, Texas College was walloped 90-0 against Texas-Permian Basin (which, in fairness, is among Texas' finest basins).

In Week 2, a similar result seemed in the offing. At the end of the third quarter, Central Arkansas led 70-0, but our beloved Steers wouldn't go down without a fight.

After a Texas College interception, Central Arkansas started a drive pinned deep in its own territory. That's when Steers legend Dylan DuBois delivered a play for the ages. On a handoff to the tailback, Dubois delivered a hit in the end zone for a safety.

And thanks to Dubois' patented last-second magic, the final score was Central Arkansas 70, Texas College 2.

Did you say 'Utes'? Man did we get lucky ATS with a push on this game. No Cam Rising? No problem. Well, OK, a few problems. But Utah's offensive woes against Baylor on Saturday weren't enough to keep the Utes from moving to 2-0 on the season.

Baylor led 13-3 midway through the third quarter, but coach Kyle Whittingham pulled his starting QB, Bryson Barnes, and went with freshman Nate Johnson, who engineered a late comeback. Johnson completed 6 of 7 throws for 82 yards and added another 32 yards on the ground, including a touchdown -- one of two Utah scores in the game's final two minutes.

Still, Baylor nearly stole the win. After Jaylon Glover scored to give Utah a 20-13 lead with 17 seconds to play, Baylor connected on a 47-yard throw to Hal Presley, setting up one final heave to the end zone with one second left on the clock. Technically, the pass fell incomplete. But that's not how Baylor fans will remember it. Baylor's last-ditch drive cut short by controversial no-

call. After years of enduring Pac-12 officiating, this must have felt like an early welcome into the Big 12 for the Utes. What looked like a clear defensive pass interference didn't earn a flag, and the Utes escaped 20-13.

Notre Dame is not going to join the ACC. Oh, sure, it's technically a full voting member and spent a portion of this summer nudging the league to add Cal and Stanford, ostensibly for the good of college football, but make no mistake, the Irish are only here to bring the ACC down from the inside.

On Saturday, the Irish toppled NC State 45-24, with Sam Hartman -- the ACC's all-time leading passer whom the Irish swiped from Wake Forest this offseason -- throwing for four touchdowns. It was the first time in 17 games NC State has allowed more than 30 points. The last QB to do it? That'd be Sam Hartman.

Notre Dame has now won 29 straight regular-season games vs. the ACC. Syracuse, which joined the ACC full time in 2013, has just 26 total wins against the conference since then.

Indeed, since the Irish joined the ACC in all sports but football -- they typically play five games per year against the conference -- in 2014, they've racked up 42 ACC wins. Only Clemson, Pitt and Miami have more. The other 11 full-time ACC members have been left in Notre Dame's dust.

This is all incredibly problematic for the ACC, but it's worth remembering that, starting next year, SMU, Stanford and Cal can also lose games to Notre Dame. You know, for the good of the league.

The Delaware Fightin' Blue Hens visited Penn State, and it didn't go well. The Nittany Lions won 63-7. The Delaware State Hornets visited Army, and it didn't go well either. The Black Knights won 57-0. If you're keeping track, that means the two Division I teams from Delaware lost by a combined score of 120-7.

Big bets and bad beats - Well, we think it's safe to say Georgia has lost its edge. The Bulldogs allowed Ball State to drive down the field and boot a meaningless 27-yard field goal, making the score 45-3. That's how it ended, which meant UGA (-42) hit the spread right on the nose.

Wake Forest opened its win over Vanderbilt with an interception that set the Deacons up with a first-and-goal at the 10. They settled for a field goal. Wake got the ball with seven seconds left in the first half and moved into field goal range, but it missed a 44-yarder.

Vandy had four plays inside Wake's 3 but turned the ball over on downs. Wake had a first-and-goal at the Vandy 2 but fumbled. None of that made much difference in the Deacons' impressive enough 36-20 win, but all those miscues were worth noting if you bet the over, which came up a half-point shy (56.5).

Syracuse led Western Michigan 45-7 at the half, having scored on its first seven drives of the game. With 52 points already on the board, it was fair to say the game was trending pretty heavily toward hitting the over 56.

So, what happened in the second half? Syracuse emptied its bench and the backups didn't score. Only one stinking field goal. Syracuse punted four times (and kicked the aforementioned field goal), while Western Michigan turned the ball over on downs on both of its final two drives deep into Orange territory. My cousin had Syracuse and the over. He was very happy after half time. He ended up taking a bag of oranges out of his refrigerator and went outside. I watched as he threw everyone of those oranges, as hard as he could, against the side of his brick house. I LMAO!

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Alabama - 31 Over SOUTH FLORIDA by 45

It has been a while since the Crimson Tide suffered a loss this early in the season, however, the Crimson Tide lost last week at home against the Texas Longhorns and will be looking to bounce back as they travel to take on the South Florida Bulls.

Alabama is 1-1 this season following a win in week 1 at home against the Middle Tennessee State Blue Raiders by a score of 56-7 and a loss at home against the Texas Longhorns in week 2 by a score of 24-34. The South Florida Bulls enter this game with a record of 1-1 following a loss on the road in week 1 against the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers by a score of 24-41 and a win at home against the Florida A&M Rattlers by a score of 38-24.

Will the Crimson Tide bounce back and win in a rout on the road or will the Bulls keep the game closer than expected? Let's take a deeper dive into how these teams are performing this season.

The Alabama Crimson Tide enter this game ranked 10th in the AP Poll and 10th in the Coaches Poll with a record of 1-1 following a 24-34 loss at home against the Texas Longhorns while failing to cover the 7-point spread as a home favorite. Alabama scored 24 points while compiling 362 total yards offensively which included 255 passing yards and 107 rushing yards while allowing 34 points and 454 total yards defensively which included 349 passing yards and 105 rushing yards.

Jalen Milroe led the team in passing, completing 14 of 27 attempts for 255 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions while adding 44 rushing yards. Jase McClellan led the team in rushing with 12 attempts for 45 yards while adding a reception for 12 yards. Kobe Prentice led the team in receiving, catching five of six targets for 68 yards.

South Florida enters this game with a record of 1-1 following a 38-24 win at home against the Florida A&M Rattlers while failing to cover the 20-point spread as a home favorite. The Bulls scored 38 points while compiling 323 total yards offensively which included 217 passing yards and 106 rushing yards while allowing 24 points and 393 total yards defensively which included 374 passing yards and 19 rushing yards.

Byrum Brown led the team in passing, completing 20 of 34 attempts for 180 yards and three touchdowns while adding 23 rushing yards and two touchdowns on the ground. Michael Dukes led the team in rushing with 13 carries for 38 yards while adding a reception for 39 yards. Sean Atkins led the team in receiving, catching five of six targets for 57 yards.

Alabama Crimson Tide listed as 31-point favorites on the road against the South Florida Bulls. These teams have only played one other time before this matchup which occurred in 2003 and resulted in a 40-17 win for Alabama as well as the Crimson Tide covering as 14.5-point favorites at home. Alabama is 1-1 ATS overall and 1-1 ATS as a favorite this season while the South Florida Bulls are 0-2 ATS overall, 0-1 ATS at home, and 0-1 ATS as an underdog this year.

Alabama will be out for blood in this matchup and I don't see South Florida being able to even keep the game close as an angry Nick Saban will have this team focused after last week's defeat at home against the Texas Longhorns. Look for Alabama not to let up and get a big win. How big do you ask? The Crimson Tide should win by more than 50 points, which is why I will be taking the Alabama Crimson Tide -31 on the road against the South Florida Bulls.

Projected Score: Alabama 55, South Florida 10

A promotional banner for MyBookie. On the left, it says "MY BOOKIE" in large, bold, orange and white letters, with "PROMOCODE GRIDIRONGOLD" in smaller white letters below it. In the center, it says "UP TO \$1000 WELCOME BONUS" in large, bold, white letters. On the right, there is a green button with the text "BET NOW" in white. The background features a green and black color scheme with a football player in a helmet and jersey on the right side.

MY BOOKIE
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COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

South Carolina at GEORGIA Under 55 by 10

The top-ranked Georgia Bulldogs will get their true challenge of the season this weekend when they host the South Carolina Gamecocks inside the hedges at Sanford Stadium. Through two games this season, Georgia has dismantled the likes of UT Martin (48-7) and Ball State (45-3) in expected fashion by dominating on the defensive side of the football. This week, the competition picks up with the start of SEC competition against a familiar foe, the Gamecocks.

Despite little notoriety, South Carolina and Georgia have been competitive rivals throughout their tenure in the SEC. In recent years, with the rise of the Bulldogs program to a national power under Head Coach Kirby Smart, the Gamecocks have not been nearly as competitive in this rivalry, with the exclusion of their upset against a 3rd ranked Georgia team in double overtime back in 2019. Since then, Georgia has won by decisive scores of 45-16, 40-13, and 48-7 over the last three meetings. On Saturday, the Bulldogs will host the Gamecocks as 28-point favorites as they continue to march towards a potential 3rd straight National Championship.

It is no secret that the Georgia Bulldogs have a big talent advantage over South Carolina. Head Coach Shane Beamer has done a great job at South Carolina in a relatively short time, but they are in a rebuilding season. The Gamecocks return QB Spencer Rattler, who has developed into a solid passer, but this game will be decided by the battle in the trenches. The Gamecocks offensive line was destroyed in the season-opening loss to North Carolina, and Georgia has an even more talented defensive front.

The Gamecocks have failed to establish any reliable threat in the running game through two games this season. In fact, Dakereon Joyner leads the team in rushing with just 65 yards. For those who are not familiar with that name, Joyner has spent his career as a utility player and backup quarterback. The fact that he has been moved into the backfield for his senior season should tell you all you need to know about the talent at the skill positions for South Carolina. Needless to say, I think this will be a game where Rattler is scrambling for his life throughout 60 minutes of play, and I doubt South Carolina finds much success on the offensive side of the football.

That said, Georgia still has a relatively large number to cover in the 28 points. So far this season, QB Carson Beck has shown to be an efficient replacement for former standout Stetson Bennett at the quarterback position. The Bulldogs rely on a heavy running game and use their rushing success to exploit opportunities down the field in the passing game, which is essentially the same philosophy that Smart learned under Alabama Head Coach Nick Saban. I think that formula is going to work well this weekend against an inferior and smaller defensive front in South Carolina. Expect running backs Kendall Milton and Roderick Robinson to set the tone and keep the offense moving forward behind a stellar Bulldogs offensive front.

This South Carolina team has not impressed through 2 games this season, but they find ways to be competitive. I think that will likely be the case in this game if they can avoid turnovers. The road team has covered the last seven games between South Carolina and Georgia. While I'm not confident in South Carolina covering, that trend is something to consider. I do believe the Gamecocks can get some stops and make things difficult for the Bulldogs offense, which has not exactly impressed thus far. As a result, I'm taking the under 55 as the best play in this match-up!

Projected Score: Georgia 35, South Carolina 10



COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

OHIO STATE - 28 Over W. Kentucky by 18

The Western Kentucky Hilltoppers will travel to take on the #4-ranked Ohio State Buckeyes in week 3 of the college football season on Saturday afternoon. Western Kentucky enters this game with a record of 2-0 following wins at home against the South Florida Bulls by a score of 41-24 and the Houston Christian Huskies in week 2 by a score of 52-22 while the Ohio State Buckeyes enter this game with a record of 2-0 following wins on the road against the Indiana Hoosiers by a score of 23-3 and at home against the Youngstown State Penguins by a score of 35-7.

Will the Ohio State Buckeyes win in a rout to improve to 3-0 on the season or will the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers keep the game closer than Vegas projects? Let's take a closer look at how these teams are faring this season.

The Western Kentucky Hilltoppers enter this game with a record of 2-0 following a 52-22 win at home against the Houston Christian Huskies, an FCS team, in week 2 of the college football season while failing to cover the 41.5-point spread as a favorite at home. The Hilltoppers scored 52 points while compiling 433 total yards offensively which included 318 passing yards and 115 rushing yards while allowing 22 points and 368 total yards defensively which included 213 passing yards and 155 rushing yards.

Austin Reed led the team in passing, completing 27 of 33 attempts for 253 yards and four touchdowns while rushing for 14 yards and a touchdown. Markese Stepp led the team in rushing with nine carries for 48 yards. Easton Messer led the team in receiving with nine receptions for 116 yards and a touchdown.

Ohio State enters this game ranked 6th in the AP Poll and 4th in the Coaches Poll with a record of 2-0 following a 35-7 win at home against the Youngstown State Penguins while failing to cover the 45.5-point spread as a favorite at home in week 2 of the college football season. Kyle McCord led the team in passing, completing 14 of 20 attempts for 258 yards and three touchdowns.

TreVeyon Henderson led the team in rushing with five carries for 56 yards and two touchdowns while adding two receptions for 18 yards. Marvin Harrison Jr. led the team in receiving, catching seven of 12 targets for 160 yards and two touchdowns.

Ohio State Buckeyes listed as 28-point favorites at home against the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers in week 3 of the college football season on Saturday. This will be the first time in history that these two teams will face each other in college football. Western Kentucky is 1-1 ATS overall this season while the Ohio State Buckeyes are 0-2 ATS overall, 0-1 ATS at home, and 0-2 ATS as a favorite this year.

Ohio State is the superior team in terms of talent this season and will not have any trouble coming away with the win in this matchup, however, the Buckeyes have struggled to cover the spread this season as favorites going 0-2 ATS overall and 0-2 ATS as a favorite this season.

Western Kentucky beat powerhouse Houston Christian Huskies in week 2 by a score of 52-22, really who scheduled this game? Now they play the Ohio State Buckeyes. This is the biggest jump in class we've seen in a very long time.

Nevertheless, I think the trend is your friend in this matchup which is why I am taking the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers +28 on the road against the Ohio State Buckeyes on Saturday. Note that the Buckeyes may be looking ahead a bit to next week and are also susceptible to a back door cover as they pull out all their starters. Who are they playing next week you ask. Well, it's none other than the Notre Dame Fighting Irish. Buckeyes get an easy win, but I'm grabbing the boatload of points.

Projected Score: Ohio State 41, Western Kentucky 23

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

Tulane - 12 Over SO MISS U by 20

A thrilling clash awaits in Mississippi as the Tulane Green Wave (1-1) squares off against the Southern Miss Golden Eagles (1-1), promising an exciting betting opportunity. Will Tulane be able to secure the cover on the road?

The Green Wave returned to action after a 37-20 defeat against the Ole Miss Rebels. They actually had the lead at the half, 17-10, but gave up 20 points in the fourth quarter alone.

In their initial two games this season, they have consistently produced 389 total yards, with 262.5 attributed to their passing attack. Conversely, their adversaries have compiled 314 yards, primarily through passing, with an average of 232 yards. To thrive, they must bolster their defensive performance.

Their scoring average stands at 28.5 points per game, while they have allowed an average of 27 points. With such a narrow margin for error, an improved defense will be crucial as they move forward.

The Green Wave secured the top spot in the American Athletic Conference with a 12-2 record (7-1 in conference) last season. While they might have a good season this year, they are at risk of missing the same record.

The Golden Eagles are licking their wounds after a 66-13 defeat against the Florida State Seminoles in their last battle. They were down 31-3 at halftime and the Seminoles never looked back.

They have amassed a respectable 349.5 yards per game, with 225 through their passing game, while their opponents have gained 390 yards, mainly through rushing plays, totaling 244 yards. If the Green Wave can run the ball well, they will have a great shot at tearing apart their defense.

Regarding scoring, they typically average 26.5 points per game, but their recent loss to the Seminoles has skewed these figures, with their opponents now averaging 40 points per game. This will likely change as more games are played, hopefully for their sake.

The Golden Eagles finished third in the SBC West with a 7-6 record. They seem like they could attain similar success, but will need to show they can in this game.

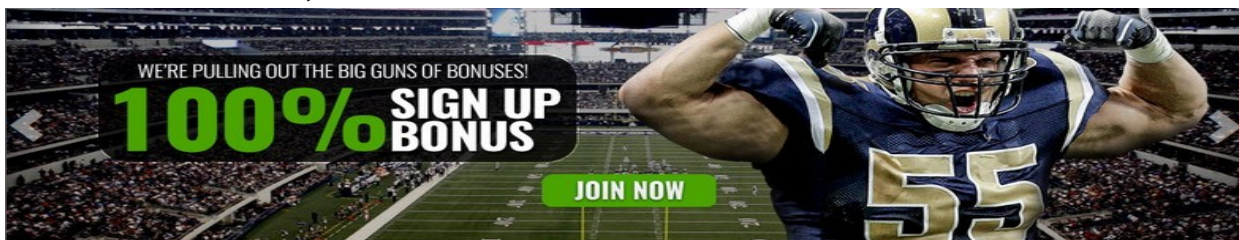
In the most recent odds update provided by MyBookie, the Tulane Green Wave stand out, holding a slight edge in terms of covering the game. Market analysis indicates a strong 79.5 percent likelihood of their victory.

Tulane QB Michael Pratt was held out of their game against Ole Miss last week. That killed our best bet over selection in last weeks newsletter. As of this writing, we're unsure of his status for this game.

We would surely like to have him playing, but if not, we're confident that backup QB Kai Horton can be successful against the So Miss secondary. After all, FSU torched them last week.

Tulane just dropped out of the national rankings, but they had Ole Miss Rebels sweating in the first half. The slight tick upward from 11.5 to 12 may indicate Pratt will play this week. We're backing the Green Wave to cover against the spread this week, with or without Pratt at QB.

Projected Score: Tulane 37, So Miss 17



COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BET

CLEMSON - 24 vs FAU by Over 37

The Florida Atlantic Owls (1-1) and Clemson Tigers (1-1) will square off in South Carolina soon, offering a good betting opportunity to consider. Will the Tigers cover the spread or can the Owls keep it competitive?

The Owls are coming off of a narrow 17-10 defeat against the Ohio Bobcats and will look to get back on track. They looked promising going into halftime with a 10-7 lead, but it all fell apart in the second half of action.

Out of two games this season, they are averaging 339 total yards, with 230 of those coming off of passing plays. They are allowing 357.5 from their opponents, who have averaged 226 from passing yards. This cannot continue to happen if they want to be successful.

They have averaged 26 points per game and have allowed 18.5. If it was not for their first game in a blowout victory, they likely would have less appealing scoring stats.

They capped off their previous season with a 5-7 record in the Conference USA. They appear to have a better group of players ready to go, but they will need to remain consistent in their performances.

The Tigers have been kicked out of the top 25 for the first time since 2021. They had a tough loss against the Duke Blue Devils in their opener, but their recent 66-17 victory over the Charleston Southern Buccaneers was not enough to hold onto their ranking.

They have put together 550.5 total yards each game, with 307 stemming from passes. They have allowed 223.5 from their opponents, who have put up 118 from passing plays.

They are averaging 36.5 points per game and their opponents are putting up 22.5.

Looking back at last season, the Tigers finished atop the ACC with a 11-3 record. They have a long way to go if they want a shot at reaching the same success.

According to the latest odds update, the Clemson Tigers are positioned with market analysis suggesting a high probability of 93.7 percent for them to achieve this.

The Tigers were in the process of adjusting after their loss to the Blue Devils. They came out flat against the Buccaneers, but eventually kept their foot on the gas and went 42-0 when they started the third quarter until the finish. The Tigers have had two blowouts in a row. Tigers win and cover against the spread in their third straight blowout win.

Projected Score: Clemson 44, FAU 7

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICKS

Kansas State -4.5 at Missouri - Kansas State beat Missouri 40-12 in Manhattan last season. The Tigers will seek revenge in an renewed rivalry, but they must find a running game against a Wildcats' defense that is the best in the nation at 38 yards per game. Will Howard is an experienced QB, too. We're wary of home underdogs, but the Wildcats are 4-0 S/U as an away favorite since 2020.

TAKE: Kansas - 4½.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

South Carolina + 28 at Georgia - This line has ticked down a half point from its open. It's the first SEC test for the Bulldogs. Georgia has won the last three meetings by an average of 30.3 points per game. The Gamecocks are averaging just 53 rushing yards per game. They cannot be one dimensional or the Georgia defense will tee off on Spencer Rattler. The road team has covered the last seven games between South Carolina and Georgia..

Take: South Carolina + 28

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Northwestern +20 at Duke - The spread has dropped a half-point from its open. The Blue Devils have won the last four games in this series – and the last two were one TD victories. Duke averaged 6.3 ypc against the Wildcats last season. Northwestern found a running game with Cam Porter and Bryce Gallagher. Wildcat rush defense is stout. That's a lot of points – even for Duke ats.

Take: Northwestern + 20

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Hawaii +38 at Oregon - Hawaii is already on its fourth game, and the Warriors allow 36 points per game and cannot run the ball (49.3 ypg.). Oregon is 2-0 ATS and leads the FBS with 59.5 points per game. It's still a huge line, and the Buffaloes come to Autzen Stadium on Sept. 23. Look for Oregon to leave no doubt here with Bo Nix, but we still think Hawaii can back-door a cover here with their pass-happy offense. Oregon will pull starters early to prevent injury. Colorado is next. **Take: Hawaii + 38**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

The line already has ticked up a point, and the Buffaloes have won the last two meetings by an average of 26.5 points per game. The Buffaloes are 2-0 ATS under Deion Sanders. Colorado State had a bye week to prepare after giving up 50 points in the opener to Washington State on Sept. 2. Don't let this line get too much higher. **Take: Colorado – 22**



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THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	Alabama - 31	Georgia Un55	W Kentucky+28	Tulane - 12	Clemson - 24

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET PREFERRED PICKS

CFB	Kansas - 4½	So Carolina +28	Northwestern +20	Hawaii +38	Colorado - 22
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DAN CAMPBELL LEADS LIONS TO 2023 OPENING GAME UPSET WIN BY LIMITING MAHOMES PASSING TO 226 YARDS & 53%

NFL LANDSCAPE:

NFL WEEK 1 WINNERS

With most of the Week 1 NFL schedule in the books, here are the players and coaches that delivered standout performances:

Dan Campbell, head coach, Detroit Lions: Campbell admitted he believed the Lions were the Kansas City Chiefs' hand-picked Week 1 opponent simply because they would put up a good fight. They did one better: they held reigning MVP Patrick Mahomes to 226 yards passing and the third-worst completion percentage (53.8) of his career while edging the defending Super Bowl champions in a statement-making win.

Campbell and the Lions players have done their best to quiet the enormous amount of hype surrounding them heading into Week 1, but after knocking off Mahomes and the Chiefs, that may prove to be a much more difficult task.

Jordan Love, QB, Green Bay Packers: Love out-dueled Bears QB Justin Fields, throwing for 245 yards and three touchdowns with a 123.3 passer rating and no turnovers as the Packers continued their dominance over their NFC North rivals (they've won nine straight, including five in a row at Soldier Field).

Not only that, but Love's debut performance was actually better than both Aaron Rodgers (227 yards, two touchdowns, one interception, 105.8 passer rating) and Brett Favre (214 yards, one touchdown, one interception, 69 passer rating) in their respective first starts with Green Bay.

Tyreek Hill, WR, Miami Dolphins: Hill's lofty goal of reaching 2,000 receiving yards this season may not actually be that improbable after all. Especially if he has more performances like he did in Sunday's 36-34 win over the Los Angeles Chargers.

Hill hauled in 11 receptions, 215 yards and two touchdowns. It's the fourth 200-yard game of his career and a great way to start his pursuit of Calvin Johnson's NFL single-season receiving yards record (1,964). That year, Johnson had two 200-yard games and averaged 122.7 yards per contest over 16 games.

Brock Purdy, QB, San Francisco 49ers: As 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa put it: "Purdy shut some haters up." The 23-year-old QB completed 19 of 29 passes for 220 yards and two touchdowns with a passer rating of 111.3 in San Francisco's 30-7 shellacking of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Purdy played with confidence, poise and efficiency and showed why the 49ers front office was high enough on him throughout the offseason to trade former No. 3 overall pick Trey Lance to the Dallas Cowboys. Purdy is now 6-0 as a starter in the regular season with 1,318 yards, 13 touchdowns and two interceptions.

Sean McVay, head coach, Los Angeles Rams: The Rams have the second-youngest roster in the NFL with a league-high 15 rookies, but that didn't bother McVay, who took a team of relatively unknowns and cruised to a 30-13 blowout of the Seattle Seahawks, a division rival and playoff team last season.

Second-year wideout Tutu Atwell and rookie Puka Nacua combined for 16 receptions and 238 yards while the defense held a Seahawks offense that averaged 351 yards per game a season ago to 180 yards. Sunday's win was one of McVay's better coaching jobs.

Calvin Ridley, WR, Jacksonville Jaguars: In his first game since Oct. 24, 2021, Ridley put opposing defenses on notice that he was officially back. The former first-round pick logged eight receptions for 101 yards and a touchdown as the Jaguars knocked off the Indianapolis Colts 31-21.

Ridley is just the fifth different Jags receiver to record 100 yards in a game since Trevor Lawrence became the starter in 2020 and his performance is just the 10th time in 35 starts Lawrence has had a receiver top 100 yards.

With all due respect to Christian Kirk and Zay Jones, Lawrence finally has a bona-fide No. 1 receiver to throw to, which should help him unlock even more of his potential.

Bill O'Brien, offensive coordinator, New England Patriots: In his first game back as offensive coordinator, the Patriots offense looked miles better under O'Brien in Sunday's 25-20 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles than it did last year with Matt Patricia calling plays.

New England put up 382 yards of total offense while QB Mac Jones logged his fifth career 300-yard game and fifth three-touchdown game. While the Pats took the loss, there's much to be encouraged about offensively.

Baker Mayfield, QB, Tampa Bay Buccaneers: Given his experience, many expected Mayfield to win the Bucs quarterback competition with 25-year-old Kyle Trask. But what they might not have expected was for the 28-year-old QB to lead Tampa Bay to a season-opening win over the reigning NFC North champion Minnesota Vikings, who went 13-4 last season and were the No. 3 seed in the NFC. Mayfield was an efficient 21-of-34 for 173 yards, two touchdowns and no turnovers with a 94.4 passer rating.

NFL WEEK 1 LOSERS

Not every player, coach and team can shine, and with that in mind, let's look at Week 1's losers in the NFL.

Brian Daboll, New York Giants head coach: There's plenty of blame to go around after the Giants 40-0 blowout loss against the Cowboys. However, the decision by Daboll to keep QB Daniel Jones in the game late goes beyond the absurd.

With the Cowboys up by 40 with under five minutes to go, Jones was still on the field, taking hits behind a leaky offensive line in the rain. There's a right and wrong time to send a message, whether to an individual player or the team as a whole. But there's simply no benefit to forcing Jones to ride it out. It's pointless and irresponsible, and Daboll will deserve all the criticism he gets for the bonehead move.

Joe Burrow, Cincinnati Bengals quarterback: Only days after becoming the NFL's highest-paid quarterback, Burrow and the Bengals laid a stinker against the rival Cleveland Browns, falling 24-3. In harsh, rainy conditions, Burrow was abysmal, finishing 14-of-31 for only 82 yards.

To make matters worse, Burrow was benched in the fourth quarter in favor of backup Jake Browning as the Bengals waived the white flag. While Burrow's first game atop the quarterback pay mountain wasn't ideal, it's not likely to become a trend. Unless Burrow has forgotten how to play football, he'll soon turn things around. After all, he has 275 million reasons to do so.

Pittsburgh Steelers, almost everybody: The offense didn't have a first down 26 minutes into the game and quarterback Kenny Pickett was running for his life most of the afternoon. Pickett finished 31-of-46 for 232 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions. He was sacked five times.

Meanwhile, the Steelers' defense didn't fair much better, giving up 391 yards to QB Brock Purdy and the San Francisco 49ers in a lopsided 30-7 loss. It's only one game against a formidable opponent, but the positivity surrounding the Steelers at the start of training camp is already beginning to sour after just one week. However, one would be a fool to give up on a team led by Mike Tomlin.

Rookie head coaches: It could have been a better first day on the job for the three rookie head

coaches: Jonathan Gannon (Arizona Cardinals), Shane Steichen (Indianapolis Colts) and DeMeco Ryans (Houston Texans).

Gannon's Cardinals dropped a heartbreaker against the Washington Commanders, fumbling a lead away late and losing, 20-16.

Much like the Cardinals, the Colts had the advantage (21-17) late but were outscored 14-0 in the fourth quarter by the Jacksonville Jaguars, falling 31-21.

Meanwhile, Ryans' Texans hung with the Baltimore Ravens early, trailing by one (7-6) at halftime, but ultimately fell apart in the second half, losing 25-9. Barring a tie, either Steichen or Ryans will get their first "W" with the Colts and Texans facing off in Week 2.

Rookie QBs: Three QBs made their first career starts Sunday, the most in a Week 1 since 2012 (five). However, neither C.J. Stroud (Texans), Bryce Young (Carolina Panthers) or Anthony Richardson (Colts) won. Stroud failed to throw a touchdown pass despite finishing with 44 pass attempts, and Young completed only 52.6 percent of his passes and threw two picks in his debut.

Richardson may have had the best game of the bunch, going 24-of-37 for 233 yards with a touchdown and an interception and adding 40 rushing yards and a TD. The NFL is an adjustment for any rookie, especially for quarterbacks. There are surely better days ahead for all three.

Los Angeles Chargers defense: The defense didn't give its offense a chance in a 36-34 loss to the Miami Dolphins. The unit failed to record a sack as quarterback Tua Tagovailoa and electric wideout Tyreek Hill victimized the secondary.

The Dolphins QB posted the fourth-most passing yards (466) in a season opener in NFL history and threw for three TDs. Meanwhile, Hill hauled in 11 receptions for a 215 yards, averaging 19.5 yards per catch and scoring two TDs. In 2022, only the Browns (196.2) and New York Jets (189.4) gave up fewer passing yards per game in the AFC than the Chargers (200.4). But after one game, it's clear that last year was last year.

Jalen Hurts, Philadelphia Eagles quarterback: Opening the year as an MVP favorite, Hurts looked anything but in the opener Sunday against the New England Patriots. Philly escaped with a win, 25-20, but Hurts didn't play well. In fact, the Eagles may have won despite Hurts. The 25-year-old was off his game against the Patriots, going 22-of-33 for 170 yards (5.2 yards per reception) with a touchdown.

Hurts led the Eagles to only 251 yards of offense, fewer than in any game last season. Game analyst Tony Romo called out Hurts several times for making the wrong read and failing to get the ball to wide open receivers. With the Eagles leading by five late in the fourth, he nearly gave the game away, fumbling inside Philly territory. Luckily for Hurts, his defense bailed him out.



PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

LA Chargers - 3 Over TENNESSEE by 11

The Los Angeles Chargers come to Nashville for a pivotal week two AFC showdown with the Tennessee Titans on Sunday. Neither team was able to get a win in week one, each the recipient of painfully close losses. The Chargers saw Tyreek Hill put a cap on a huge day with a late TD that was the dagger on Sunday in a 36-34 loss. Tennessee, meanwhile, couldn't get in the end zone, settling for five field goals against the Saints in a 16-15 loss.

I think Tennessee still faces ample matchup concerns with the Chargers' aerial attack under Justin Herbert. Keenan Allen is a dependable weapon, and you figure Mike Williams will come to life sooner than later, with RB Austin Ekeler and others chipping in along the way. They might not be able to manufacture the same kind of standardized run-game that they were able to do against Miami, with Tennessee pretty tough up front on defense. But we've seen the Chargers thrive on offense without that before, using the variety of their air-game to adequately quell opposing defenses. Anything can occur in a one-week window, but it's hard to imagine the Chargers and Herbert not getting it done.

That brings us to a Chargers' defense that might not ever make up the apparent ground between their talent and results. We see other defenses in the league with far less star power routinely surpassing the Chargers in terms of defensive play. Again, week one is just a one-game window, and that Miami offense is most likely going to make a lot of defenses look shabby this season. The fact is that this Chargers' defense can be gotten to, and if the Titans are able to get something clicking offensively, we'll better see if week one was just a false alarm for this Bolts' defense.

It's clear that this Tennessee offense is not really on its way up, so to speak. There is some overall promise with guys like rookie Tyjae Spears, young TE Chigoziem Okonkwo, and WR Treylon Burks, but overall, there might not be a true difference-maker in that lot. That leaves the Titans with the diminished Ryan Tannehill and a still potentially-impactful Derrick Henry, where you can't help but think the bulk of his best work is in the rear view mirror. The percentage of clunkers delivered by Tannehill the last few seasons is on the rise, and while the Saints' defense can make some things happen at home, not getting in the end zone in week one is a damning indictment. You just generally don't like to see offenses where their major pieces are aging, protected by one of the worst offensive lines in the league. A few years ago, when the Titans were contending, this was an area of strength. Now, when facing defenses, even underachieving ones like the Chargers' who can still rush the passer, it becomes a major sticking-point.

The Titans defense can thrive in certain situations, particularly with teams that run the ball more. And not that it's not a part of the Chargers' typical offensive outlook, but in their best offensive showings of the last few years, a lot of them don't have big rushing stat-lines. Ekeler can get you a multitude of different ways, not relying on standard runs. Herbert brings a lot of different guys into the aerial mix—backs, tight ends, and receivers who specialize in different things all over the field. And against a Tennessee secondary that, while still having some big-play ability, has become exceedingly porous the last season or two, that looms as something that might be difficult for the Titans to overcome.

To be frank, a situation where the Titans kick it into gear with better games from Tannehill and a few more big runs from Henry isn't all that hard to picture, in which case the Titans could make a strong run at this spread or even the win. We all know too well of how hard it can be for the Chargers to translate what's on paper to what's on the field. Even so, I see the Chargers' defensive front having some success against this Titans' offensive line, getting to Tannehill and giving an already iffy Tennessee offense more problems they may not be able to overcome. Meanwhile, the Chargers passing game should be able to get enough out of this matchup to create a little margin, get the win, and cover the spread on the road. The Chargers burned us last week right here in this newsletter, but there's no Tua slinging it so I'll come right back with the Chargers in this one.

Projected Score: LA Chargers 31, Tennessee 20

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

JACKSONVILLE + 3½ Over Kansas City by 4

The Kansas City Chiefs come to the Sunshine State to take on the Jacksonville Jaguars. Kansas City opened the NFL season at home, coming out on the wrong end of a 21-20 squeaker to the upstart Lions. They look to right the ship against the team they beat in the divisional playoffs last season en route to their Super Bowl win, as they will be hosted by a Jaguars team that labored a bit in week one before eventually vanquishing the Colts, 31-21.

When dealing with longtime contenders and teams with Super Bowl glory, some unevenness is expected at times during the regular season. Without Travis Kelce, the Chiefs were taking on a rising Lions' team and got nipped at the wire. The sounding of any alarm bells would be premature. You'd think, coming off the long week, they'd get Kelce back in there, as it is truly a faceless aerial package without him. There is talent, with some receivers with nice upside, but for a Super Bowl winning team that doesn't really run the ball a lot and isn't known for defense, it creates a situation where a lot is riding on Kelce to get back in there and keep things rolling and he's going to be 34 next month. It didn't seem to hurt them last season, but if injuries to Kelce or age starts creeping into the equation, they might be facing a lot of questions this season.

Be that as it may, it's hard not to notice that in the last several seasons under Patrick Mahomes, they usually produce when they need it. With all their success and ease in taking down the AFC West year after year, you're not going to see them shot from a cannon every week. But when they need to answer the call, or there's a hint that things are about to go sideways, they are quite adept at righting the ship in quick order. Jacksonville is a team on the rise, and it's been a drastic rise, going from a 4-8 team last season to winning a playoff game. And there are difference-makers on both sides of the ball. But I'm not sure I'd be feeling so secure about a Jaguars' defense facing a more urgent KC offense that comes into week two with an ax to grind.

Again, it rings empty to call out the Chiefs for a mish-mosh offense with less-defined roles and no real stars outside of Mahomes and Kelce. It's still hard not to like what has been formed over the past season with Lawrence and this offense, with guys like Christian Kirk, Zay Jones, Evan Engram, and Travis Etienne. They add a returning Calvin Ridley, who looked great in week one, along with rookie Tank Bigsby, who looks to make some nice contributions and scored a TD in week one. And it's understandable why people would prefer an offense with more clarity and, frankly, better overall talent. Whether it's enough to bridge the gap created by the Mahomes Factor is another matter, but this Jacksonville offense has really come together and with the stakes as high as they get, only lost by seven at Arrowhead in the divisional playoffs. You'd figure now at home, they could maybe make a run at this thing.

People can start to form storylines in their mind. They take a Chiefs team that is far better in reality, with a standardized NFL assessment not really doing justice. They come into a stadium of a team that has given the home faithful something to finally get excited about, as this is their home-opener. They have been red-hot and, since 2/3 through last season, have hardly experienced any setbacks, a narrow playoff defeat to KC in Arrowhead their only semi-recent loss. This is big for the Jaguars, who, with a win, will already distinguish themselves as a bonafide legitimate conference threat. In their home-opener, expecting anything other than an urgent Jags' bunch could be a mistake.

I anticipate a close game where having three points might come in handy. I can't help but think that this Jacksonville offense is better built to succeed at this time. I don't think they'll run over the Chiefs defense, nor will they completely subdue Mahomes. I just see them able to make this a close game, using their wealth of options and the fine play of Lawrence to take it to a Chiefs' defense that isn't that good. I see the Jags either keeping this really close or maybe even making a little run at the "W." I'll take the Jaguars in this one. This is a ballsy pick considering Mahomes is pissed off.

Projected Score: Jacksonville 27, Kansas City 23

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

Baltimore + 4 Over CINCINNATI by 5

The Baltimore Ravens and the Cincinnati Bengals meet Sunday in Paul Brown Stadium.

The Baltimore Ravens head into this game 1-0 for this season. In their last game, the Ravens faced the Texans and earned the victory with a final of 25-9. Lamar Jackson connected on 17/22 with 169 yds passing. He had a QB rate of 79.5 and walked away from the contest with 1 interception. Lamar Jackson was the leader on the ground for the Ravens with 6 attempts for 38 yds (6.3 yards per carry).

Zay Flowers had an average of 8.7 yards per catch by accumulating 78 yds on 9 receptions. The Baltimore Ravens ran the rock 32 different times and accumulated 110 yards, which came out to an average of 3.4 yards per tote. On the day, they had 58 plays which converted into 265 yds.

Baltimore allowed 28 pass completions on 44 tries for a total of 196 yds, and a completion percentage of 63.6%. Against the run, the Ravens gave up 72 yds on 23 tries, which averages out to 3.1 yds per rush allowed.

Cincinnati took on the Browns in their first game of the year. The Bengals would go on to fall in a blowout. The Bengals went home defeated by a final of 24-3 when they faced the Browns.

Joe Mixon carried the football 13 times for 56 yards, ending the contest with 4.3 yards per carry for Cincinnati.

Ja'Marr Chase was featured in the passing game for the Bengals, grabbing 5 footballs for 39 yds (7.8 yards per catch).

Joe Burrow ended the contest with 82 yds on 14/31 through the air while his QB rating was 52.2. He kept the ball away from the defense with no interceptions and his avg yards per attempt was 2.6 yds.

Cincinnati allowed 40 rush attempts for 206 yards (5.2 yards per carry).

The Bengals passing defense allowed a completion percentage of 55.2%, surrendering 144 yds on 16 out of 29 through the air. The Bengals ended up finishing with 142 yds and they ran 54 plays (2.6 yds per play).

Cincinnati rushed for 3.8 yards per carry, finishing the game with 75 yards on 20 carries.

Baltimore's offense wasn't exactly explosive in Week 1, and they played a very sloppy game. The Ravens posted just 18 first downs with two turnovers and a whopping 13 penalties for 106 yards. That said, there were some bright spots in the game, such as the offense's 8-of-15 on third-down conversions and the defense only allowing 3.7 yards per play. The Ravens ranked 1st in the AFC North for points allowed per game last season (18.5) and ranked 1st in the AFC North for total yards allowed per game last season 324.3.

As for the Bengals, there's not much to be happy about from the Week 1 loss. Cincinnati generated just 142 total yards (67 passing), six first downs, 2.6 yards per play and went just 2-of-15 on third-down tries. I expect the Bengals to take a step forward in Week 2 (they can't get much worse) during a Ravens win/cover.

If you back the Bengals, you're expecting a bounce back week and Joe Burrow to be back to his old form. That can surely happen and the line has ticked up a point as bettors bang the Bengals expecting a bounce back week.

The Bengals offense was stagnant last week and now they face a leading defensive unit. The Ravens have won six of their last seven games as underdogs following a home win and covered the spread in 13 of their last 14 Sunday games as underdogs. I'm not ready to bet the Bengals until I see improvement from their offense. The trend is your friend, take the points in a hard fought game.

Projected Score: Baltimore 26, Cincinnati 21

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

NY Giants - 5½ Over ARIZONA by 14

Following one of the worst offensive performances in recent memory, the New York Giants will attempt to get back on track this weekend when they travel to Glendale to face the Arizona Cardinals.

Last week, the Giants were embarrassed by the Dallas Cowboys in a 40-0 shutout in front of a Sunday night national audience. In that game, the Giants were beaten in every area of the field, primarily on offense, where they gave up two turnovers, one pick-six, and seven sacks.

Saquon Barkley was the rushing leader for the Giants with 12 attempts for 51 yds (4.3 yds per attempt).

Darren Waller had an average of 12.0 yds per catch by totaling 36 yds on 3 catches.

Daniel Jones went 15/28 with 104 yds through the air. He had a QB rating of 32.4 and ended the contest with 2 picks.

When it came to stopping the run, the Giants gave up 122 yds on 30 attempts, which is 4.1 yds per rush allowed.

New York surrendered 13 completions on 25 attempts for a total of 143 yds, and a completion percentage of 52.0%.

At the end of the game, they ran 65 plays which totaled 171 yards. The New York Giants ran the football 28 times and amassed 108 yds, earning them an average of 3.9 yds per attempt.

The Arizona Cardinals were expected to be among the worst, if not the worst, teams in the NFL this season, especially during the early weeks without QB Kyler Murray. However, Arizona was very competitive in last week's loss to Washington. The Cardinals covered the spread and honestly had every chance to win the game outright.

Similar to the Giants, Arizona simply could not find any success on the offensive side of the football. Despite getting a defensive touchdown, the Cardinals produced just 210 yards of total offense that resulted in 3 field goals in the 20-16 defeat.

Needless to say, this game against the Giants on Sunday will be a combination of two relatively poor offenses, which is the reason for the mere 40-point total.

The Giants can get back on track with a heavy dose of Saquon Barkley. Barkley did not get many opportunities last week against Dallas because things got out of hand pretty quickly.

However, Barkley still showed a strong burst, and the Cardinals were one of the worst defenses in the league last year, giving up just shy of 5 yards per carry. Arizona's defense will have a difficult time stopping New York's rushing attack.

I just don't know where Arizona is going to produce enough offense to keep this game within reach. QB Joshua Dobbs does not have the ability to stretch the field vertically, and I believe the Giants will keep everything in front of them by focusing on stopping James Conner. Either way, it's just not a strong match-up for Arizona unless they can capitalize off turnovers.

The Giants still have the highest ceiling based on talent, and I think they simply ran into an elite defense last week at Dallas. I don't see any immediate paths toward turning around this Arizona offense.

Therefore, I am going to lay the points with the G-Men. The Giants are 5-1 ATS in the last six games on the road. The Cardinals are 0-5 SU in the last five games at home. This week Daniel Jones plays the whole game in a winning effort.

Projected Score: NY Giants 24, Arizona 10

PRO FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Indianapolis at Houston 41½ - The Indianapolis Colts and Houston Texans both enter this weekend looking for their first win of the season, after both losing in week one. Both teams have inexperienced rookie quarterbacks in this game. **Take: Under 41½**

PRO FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Miami at New England 44 - Tua Tagovailoa is already the second favorite to win MVP, this should be no surprise by how dominant he was last Sunday. Keeping up with the offense of Miami is no easy task, but young quarterback Mac Jones showed improvement with Bill O'Brien calling the plays. **Take. Over 44**

PRO FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Cleveland at Pittsburgh 43½ - The UNDER has cashed in seven of Cleveland's last eight as well as in five of Pittsburgh's last seven. Cleveland gave up just three points in its opening victory of the season versus Cincinnati. The play here is UNDER. **Take: Under 43½**



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	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
NFL	Chargers - 3	Jaguars + 3½	Ravens + 4	Giants - 5½	

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET PREFERRED PICKS

NFL	Texans Un 41½	Patriots Ov 44	Browns Un 43½		
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