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Volume 42 Issue 6

NFL Week 5, 2023



FEATURED GAMES MARYLAND at OHIO ST. WASHINGTON ST at UCLA AND THIS IS A BONUS ISSUE WITH EIGHT BEST BETS AND FIVE PREFERRED PICKS

NCAA LANDSCAPE:

Notre Dame responds

Notre Dame had prepared all offseason for the challenge of knocking off Ohio State, but the Irish's follow-up test Saturday night at Duke asked them to empty the tank for the second consecutive week. Duke quarterback Riley Leonard has first-round talent, and the Blue Devils' secondary has been one of the best coverage outfits in America through the season's first month.

This might've been the best pure pass defense Sam Hartman has played this season, and it showed. Notre Dame's veteran quarterback went just 15 of 30 for 222 yards through the air and dealt with pressure from Duke all game. However, on the final possession, backed up inside their own 10, Hartman and Notre Dame stayed patient, Duke backed off defensively for reasons it'll likely wonder about for a long time, and the Irish took advantage on the ground more than once.

Hartman's life-on-the-line fourth-and-16 scramble should etch him into Notre Dame lore, and Audric Esteime continued what's been an outstanding season for him with the game-winning touchdown run in the final minute. For Notre Dame, this was exactly the type of response Marcus Freeman was looking for after last week's crushing 17-14 loss to the Buckeyes. He would have loved better execution, but the resolve Notre Dame showed indicates this team is pointed in the right direction.

Duke, meanwhile, is going to be kicking itself about this one for a while. DJ is also kicking himself because he released Duke as his marquee pick of the week. It was looking real good and then oh yeah, a bad beat. The Blue Devils played so well

defensively throughout this game and couldn't finish. Leonard struggled to see the field from the pocket for most of the first half, and the Blue Devils' offense was mostly run-oriented. Even without left tackle Graham Barton, Duke managed 189 rush yards on 41 attempts and had a lead late in the fourth quarter at home, setting up the type of win Mike Elko could've built around. Now, it's just a tough loss and a bad bear for us, made more painful by the sight of Leonard leaving the field on crutches after appearing to suffer a lower-leg injury in the final seconds. Last week against Ohio St the luck of the Irish was missing, but it returned this week in full force.

The wild, wild SEC West

One week ago, Alabama's defense put Ole Miss in a blender. On Saturday night, Ole Miss put up 706 yards in a dramatic 55-49 win over LSU, the team many thought coming into the season could be a dark horse to win the conference.

What the hell is going on with the SEC West? Is LSU a fraud? The Tigers are a two-loss team before October begins, and they have serious questions to answer about their defense, which offered little resistance against the two best teams it faced in September.

Does Auburn have a pulse? Auburn is off to an 0-2 start in SEC play, but it gave Georgia all it could handle in a 27-20 loss.

Could Texas A&M be headed to Atlanta? The Aggies lost a tough game against Miami in Week 2, but they are 2-0 to start SEC play after handling Arkansas, 34-22. Texas A&M is set to face ranked opponents in three of its next four weeks. Is it possible the Aggies are beginning to wake up right on time?

Is Alabama the safest bet to win this division? We convinced ourselves the Crimson Tide were cooked when they lost to Texas and dealt with some early-season quarterback drama. But now that Nick Saban is rolling with Jalen Milroe and the team looked comfortable in its identity in a 40-17 win at Mississippi State, is Alabama going to find itself and just run away with the SEC West? The Tide go to Texas A&M next week, but take a look at the rest of the schedule, and there isn't a single game in which Alabama won't be favored.

The SEC West is all over the place, and week-to-week results haven't helped us form handicapping trends for the future. Buckle up.



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Baylor's record-setting rally

Baylor trailed UCF 35-7 late in the third quarter and I was counting this as a winner already. But they rallied for a 36-35 win to spoil the Knights' first Big 12 home game in the wildest comeback of the college football season. Oh yeah, another bad bear for us. It had been all UCF for three quarters, with backup quarterback Tommy McClain throwing three touchdown passes to build a comfortable Knights lead. A Baylor field goal with 3:20 to play in the third made it a 35-10 game, and the Bears' defense got an interception going into the fourth quarter, but nobody thought much of it.

Baylor scored a touchdown, forced a punt, scored another touchdown, then returned a fumble 72 yards for yet another touchdown to cut the deficit to 35-33. The Bears forced a three-and-out, then drove 61 yards to kick a field goal and take the lead.

UCF's last-ditch attempt included one of the craziest plays of the season, in which McClain ran from the 30-yard line back into his own end zone to avoid a sack and then completed a pass to convert a fourth down. The Knights got to the edge of field goal range, but a 59-yard attempt as time expired was wide and short.

UCF is now 0-2 in its first Big 12 season, while a Baylor season that was staring at 1-4 suddenly has new life with the win.

Brock Bowers big for Georgia

Georgia survived its first major second-half scare of the season with a 27-20 win at Auburn that required a seven-play, 75-yard go-ahead drive in the final minutes. It was the biggest moment of Bulldogs quarterback Carson Beck's starting career to date, and he wisely leaned on tight end Brock Bowers to help stomp out an upset scare at Jordan-Hare Stadium.

Bowers finished the game with eight catches for 157 yards; Auburn's entire team finished with 88 receiving yards. During an early drive in the fourth quarter, Brock had receptions of 37 and 28 yards to set up a field goal, and his 40-yard touchdown with 2:52 to play gave the Bulldogs the lead for good. On a day when Auburn did almost all of its damage on the ground, Georgia took to the air when it mattered most. That's the luxury of having the best tight end in the nation.

USC's defense again in question

Caleb Williams passed for 400-plus yards and six touchdowns against one interception as USC sneaked past Colorado with a 48-41 victory at Folsom Field. But if USC is to legitimately contend for a national championship — or even a College Football Playoff berth — the Trojans defense will have to be dramatically better than it was Saturday. Sound familiar?

As exciting as the Trojans are offensively, defensive coordinator Alex Grinch's unit once again left plenty to be desired on an afternoon when Colorado racked up 564 yards of total offense and staged a late-game comeback. USC entered Saturday ranked tied for 72nd nationally for total defense, having given up an average of 364.5 yards per game. Give credit to Colorado quarterback Shedeur Sanders, who finished with 371 passing yards and four touchdowns with one pick, but the Trojans made this game much closer than it needed to be. Six times, USC gave up a passing play of at least 20 yards, including a 65-yarder from Sanders to wide receiver Omarion Miller, who finished with seven catches for 196 yards and a touchdown. And six times, the Trojans gave up runs of at least 10 yards, including a 25-yard scramble from Sanders for a late second-quarter touchdown.

USC's offense is producing 550-plus yards per game and Williams is again a Heisman Trophy contender. But are the Trojans going to have to score nearly 50 points every week to keep them in the Playoff hunt? In a Pac-12 featuring the nation's top two offenses in Washington and Oregon? Lincoln Riley and Grinch finished with the nation's No. 106 defense a season ago, making it fair to seriously question if this is a fixable issue or simply part of USC's identity.

Michigan makes it look easy on the ground

No. 2 Michigan still has all of its biggest tests left to navigate. But after a string of four nondescript victories to open the season, Jim Harbaugh's team looked more like its 2021 and '22 self in a 45-7 win at Nebraska Saturday.

The Wolverines had been struggling to find their usual — and very much Harbaugh-desired — run-pass balance. But they rolled out to a 35-0 third quarter lead behind two rushing touchdowns (one by Blake Corum, one by short-yardage back/converted linebacker Kalel Mullings), two J.J. McCarthy-to-Roman Wilson TD passes (Wilson's seventh and eighth scores of the young season), and a 21-yard McCarthy scramble to the end zone. All told, the Wolverines rolled up 249 yards rushing to 187 yards passing, while McCarthy took the last quarter-and-a-half off.

This, against a Nebraska defense that entered Saturday leading the FBS in rush defense (46.2 yards allowed per game, 1.83 yards allowed per attempt).

Harbaugh's recent Michigan teams have reclaimed Big Ten dominance by controlling the trenches. It had been a struggle to do so through four games, but Saturday might count as a turning point.

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Florida takes step back in loss to Kentucky

Just when it seemed Florida was turning the corner under Billy Napier, the same old problems appeared in a 33-14 loss at Kentucky: penalties, sloppiness and being out-toughed.

Kentucky running back Ray Davis rushed for 280 yards, the Wildcats moved to 5-0, and Kentucky earned its first three-game winning streak against Florida since 1951. Davis' day was highlighted by a 75-yard touchdown run late in the first quarter, which came right after Florida committed a leaping penalty on a Kentucky punt from its own end zone, giving the Wildcats a first down. Davis also scored a goal-line touchdown when Florida had 13 defenders on the field. Attempting to come back, Florida committed a false start on a fourth-and-1 in its own territory, resulting in a punt. The Gators finished with 10 penalties for 86 yards.

Florida next plays a Vanderbilt team that beat the Gators last year, just like Kentucky did. What looked like a potential 5-1 start after beating Tennessee now sees Florida absolutely needing a win against Vanderbilt to get to 4-2. For a program in its second year under a coach and such a massive staff, it's unacceptable for Florida to make so many continued basic mistakes. This isn't a Gators team that will contend for the SEC East, but it's one that needs to get to a bowl game to show progress.

Texas passes Top 25 test

Despite moving the ball up and down the field with relative ease and dominating the yardage battle, Texas only led Kansas 13-7 at the half. The final drive before the break resulted in Longhorns quarterback Quinn Ewers' first interception of the season, ending a streak of 245 consecutive pass attempts without a pick.

Eventually, the Longhorns did what they've done to most teams in the second half of games: dominate. Texas outscored Kansas 27-8 in the second half en route to a 40-14 win to stay perfect heading into next week's Red River showdown with Oklahoma. For the season, the Longhorns have outscored opponents 100-36 in the second half.

Although the Longhorns had a rough start offensively, the defense put together an impressive showing to keep the Jayhawks from taking a lead. Kansas was playing without starting quarterback Jalon Daniels, who was a late scratch because of back tightness, an injury he has dealt with dating back to the preseason. Bettors who played Kansas early were screwed when the news of Jalon Daniel's was released.



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COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Kansas St - 10½ Over Oklahoma St by 17 and Over 55 by 10

Both the Kansas State Wildcats and Oklahoma State Cowboys were off in Week 5, but Oklahoma State was the team that needed the hiatus much more. The Cowboys are 2-2 after a loss to Iowa State in Week 4. At least they've finally decided on a quarterback.

Kansas State and their quarterback, Will Howard, got to enjoy the bye week with a 3-1 record after beating UCF in a Big 12 matchup. We'll dive deep into this **Big 12 Friday night game**, but if you want to take a look at our guaranteed football picks go to <https://www.gridirongold.com/guaranteed-college-football-picks.html>

Kansas State awesome running back DJ Giddens: If you could only give one game ball out after the Wildcats victory over UCF, it would unquestionably go to Giddens. The sophomore running back carried the ball 30 times for 207 yards and four touchdowns, while also being the team's leading receiver. Giddens caught eight passes from Will Howard for 86 yards. Giddens leads the team with 530 all-purpose yards.

Oklahoma State QB Alan Bowman starts: Mike Gundy was taking his time deciding on a starting quarterback, but in Week 4 he finally settled on redshirt senior Alan Bowman. Against Iowa State he went 23/48 for 278 yards and two touchdowns, but also threw two picks.

Oklahoma State used to be a run-and-gun offensive team, but those days are long gone. Mike Gundy's team is 2-8 against the spread in their last 10 games and more surprisingly 9-1 to the under.

Some of that has to do with their pace of play which ranks 67th. That is a deviation from typical Cowboys teams, just a few years ago. Kansas State however, is 10th in plays per game and that fast pace lends itself to covering, especially with a great run-game led by Giddens.

The Wildcats are 14th in yards per game and 33rd in yards per play. They're rushing for 198.5 yards per game and 5.2 per carry which ranks 25th. The rushing attack is the star of the show for K-State and Giddens is running for 6.4 yards per carry. Oklahoma State defensively ranks 64th against the run and 75th in yards per play.

It shouldn't be too hard for K-State to score, unless Gundy made big changes to his defense in the bye week. The Wildcats can have success through the air as well with Will Howard. Howard is averaging 7.7 yards per attempt and completing 65.5% of his passes. He has eight touchdowns passing and five on the ground with four interceptions.

Turnovers and short fields might be Oklahoma State's only chance in this one. They rank 102nd in yards per game and 117th in yards per play at 4.9. Their rushing attack is abysmal and their passing game isn't much better. They do attempt the eighth most passes per game which could expose Kansas State's weak secondary. The Wildcats are 115th in passing defense.

Kansas State is 7-3 against the spread in their last 10 games and I do like them to cover. Furthermore, their passing defense is one of the worst in the country and they're playing against a team that throws as much as any. So despite the 9-1 to the under for Oklahoma State's last 10. The over is 7-3 in K-State's last 10. **I'll take Kansas St -10.5 and over 55. Projected Score: Double Play: Kansas St 41, Oklahoma St 24**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Maryland at OHIO STATE Over 55 by 13

A bye week like the Ohio State Buckeyes had in Week 5 is nice, but a 44-17 win in Big 10 play might feel even better. That's what the Maryland Terrapins did to Indiana on Saturday and now, the Terps head up to Columbus at 5-0 to face the 4-0 Buckeyes.

The last time Ohio State took the field, Ryan Day's team took a 17-14 last second win over Notre Dame to vault themselves to No. 4 in the country. The Buckeyes are one of the biggest contenders in the country.

Maryland's wide receiver Tai Felton is hard to cover. The Terps are 15th in scoring offense and a lot of that is because of their passing game. Tai Felton is the No. 2 receiver for Taulia Tagovailoa, but in Week 5, he was the No. 1. Felton went for 134 yards and three touchdowns on seven catches against Indiana. He has 299 yards on 18 receptions this season.

Ohio State and quarterback Kyle McCord has plenty of weapons, but the biggest question is at quarterback. Their offense wasn't great against Notre Dame in their 17-14 Week 4 win, but McCord drove them down the field on the game-winning touchdown drive. So far, he's done just enough.

Ohio State struggled a bit with Indiana in Week 1, but back then it was still trying to figure out the quarterback situation between Kyle McCord and Devin Brown. Now, McCord is the entrenched starter with confidence from a victory over Notre Dame in South Bend and fresh off a week of practice without a game.

This feels like the perfect storm for the Buckeyes offense to really take off. The only problem with that is this Maryland team is good. The Terps are 28th in yards per play offensively and 27th defensively only allowing 4.8. They don't run the ball much, but are 29th in yards per rush and Taulia Tagovailoa leads a passing offense that is top 20 in the country. Tagovailoa is completing 65.7% of his passes and averaging 8.7 yards per attempt with 13 touchdowns and just three interceptions. He's only been sacked three times in five games.

Now, of course Ohio State's numbers are better, the Buckeyes rank fourth in defensive yards per play and sixth in total defense. Importantly, they are fifth in pass defense and only allowed Sam Hartman and Notre Dame to throw for 175 yards. Though, Notre Dame is 45th in passing offense compared to 19th for Maryland.

Ohio State is 1-3 ATS. The UNDER is 3-1 in Ohio State games. Maryland is 3-2 ATS. The OVER is 3-2 in Maryland games

I still do think this can be a great performance for McCord and his offense is loaded with talent.

However, Ohio State is 3-7 against the spread in its last 10 games and though the Buckeyes have an 8-0 record against Maryland all-time, they are just 3-5 ATS.

The trend that I'm going to back is the over which is 8-0 in those eight head-to-head games.

Both teams have great weapons at wide receiver and both are capable of having elite passing offenses. I'm betting over 55 in this matchup.

Projected Score: Ohio State 42, Maryland 24

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

FLORIDA ST – 24 & 52 Over Virginia Tech by 33 & Over By 13

It's been a trying year for the Virginia Tech Hokies with their 2-3 start, but they're 1-0 in ACC play after beating Pitt in Week 5.

Kyron Drones took over at quarterback for the Hokies and they won 38-21. Now, things are going to get a lot tougher against the No. 5 Florida State Seminoles who come into this matchup at 4-0 and well rested after a Week 5 bye.

Jordan Travis, Keon Coleman and Johnny Wilson have led Billy Napier's team to college football relevance, after some tough years for the Seminoles. They'll need to stay clean through the ACC, after already beating Clemson, to deliver on the hype.

Virginia Tech Kyron Drones, QB: The Virginia Tech Hokies have made the switch at quarterback and are going with Kyron Drones instead of Grant Wells. Against Pitt last week, Drones threw for 228 yards and three touchdowns on 12-for-19 passing. He also ran the ball a staggering 21 times for 41 yards.

Florida State's has one of the best wide receivers in the nation in Keon Coleman: The Seminoles have a great 1-2 punch at wide receiver and through four games it's clear that the transfer from Michigan State is the No. 1. Coleman is second to Johnny Wilson in yards, but has one more catch to lead the team with 17 and has six touchdowns to Wilson's zero. But let's not disregard Wilson, he's also a talented receiver.

It was a smart move for the Hokies to turn the keys of the offense over to Kyron Drones and it paid immediate dividends with a big win over Pitt.

However, Pitt is absolutely terrible at 1-4 and yet the Hokies only gained 5.5 yards per play to Pitt's 5.9. The Hokies gained 25 first downs to Pitt's nine, but they did still punt five times, just one less than the Panthers.

That one game isn't going to change my opinion of Brent Pry's team very much. The Hokies defense gave up 235 passing yards on just 11 completions from the worst quarterback in college football, Phil Jurkovec.

Virginia Tech's defense ranks 49th in total yards and 63rd in yards per play. Surprisingly, that unit is 10th against the pass, but that's because they have only faced the 12th fewest pass attempts and are allowing 11.3 yards per completion which is 46th. Really, Pry's defense has only faced run-first teams and once they see competent passing offenses, they will be picked apart.

This will be the best passing offense that Virginia Tech has faced, the Seminoles are 31st in passing yards and Travis averages 8.5 yards per attempt while completing 61.2% of his passes.

Jordan Travis with Coleman and Wilson on the outside will absolutely torch this defense. I do worry some about Florida State's defense which is allowing 5.7 yards per play which is 82nd.

The over is 7-3 in Florida State's last 10 games and 4-1 in the last five head-to-head matchups between the Hokies and Seminoles. So that's why I'm making this a double play.

Take FSU -24 & Over 52.

Projected Score: Florida St 49, Virginia Tech 16

WISCONSIN - 13 & 47 Over Rutgers by 20 & Under by 7

It hasn't exactly been a gauntlet of a schedule, but the Rutgers Scarlet Knights have worked their way to 4-1. The Scarlet Knights only loss has come to Michigan, 31-7. Now, they'll get a test against a team that is closer to their level, the 3-1 Wisconsin Badgers.

Wisconsin took down Purdue in Week 4, 38-17, but were idle last week. They're two touchdown favorites in Madison in Week 6.

Rutgers Kyle Monangai, RB: Rutgers has a really strong run-game and Monangai is the biggest reason why. He has rushed for 471 yards and six touchdowns while averaging 5.4 yards per carry. Last game against Wagner he went for 87 yards and a touchdown on 19 carries.

Wisconsin Braelon Allen, RB: The Badgers got a huge win over Purdue in Week 4 and Allen carried the ball 16 times for 116 yards and two touchdowns in that one. This season, Wisconsin has changed their offense a lot under Phil Longo, but Allen is still dominating. He's averaging 7.1 yards per carry through four games.

The fun thing about this matchup is that each team seemingly has an answer for what the other one does well. That also makes it a bit tough to score.

For example, Rutgers is a run-first offensive team that is 28th in rushing yards per game and 22nd in rushing attempts. Behind Kyle Monangai, the Scarlet Knights go for 4.8 yards per carry which is 48th best in the country.

The problem is, Wisconsin is 45th in run defense and only allows 3.8 yards per rush. The Badgers are more susceptible through the air where they rank 107th in pass defense. Gavin Wimsatt and Rutgers are not going to be able to exploit that weakness.

On the other side, Wisconsin is a very efficient run offense that ranks 23rd, but Tanner Mordecai attempts a lot of passes, many of them for short completions.

The Rutgers defense is 10th in total defense and 15th in yards per play. That group is 28th in yards per rush at 3.2.

This is the game where we find out about this Rutgers team. They have been a great defensive team against a lot of bad competition, and then gave up 6.8 yards per play to Michigan and only made the Wolverines punt once the entire game.

Wisconsin is 1-2-1 ATS. The OVER is 2-2 in Wisconsin games. Rutgers is 4-0-1 ATS. The UNDER is 3-2 in Rutgers games

Because Rutgers is a strong running team with a solid defense, they have covered all four times they've been a favorite, but pushed as an underdog.

In fact, since the start of 2022, the Scarlet Knights are 6-1 against the spread as a favorite and 3-5-2 as an underdog.

The team tends to take care of business when expected to, but struggles against a step up in competition. Wisconsin has the better quarterback and a big home field advantage. Give me Wisconsin to cover and the tick. Tick, tock, go under 47. **Play Badgers -13 & Under 47..**

Projected Score: Wisconsin 30, Rutgers 10

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Washington St + 4 Over UCLA by 7

The Pac-12 is loaded with quarterbacks, but one name that is often forgotten is Cameron Ward. The Washington State Cougars quarterback has led his team to a 4-0 start and No. 13 in the country after a big 38-35 win over Oregon State in Week 4. Last week, the Cougars were on a bye.

UCLA might have the next great quarterback out west in their freshman starter Dante Moore. The Bruins are 3-1 with a loss to Utah and were also off last week. This isn't the only great matchup in Week 6 of college football, so for a wide look around the country, check out our college football picks at <https://www.gridirongold.com/guaranteed-college-football-picks.html> and don't forget to check for our free picks in our blog at <https://www.gridirongold.com/blog/>.

Washington State's wide receiver Kyler Williams was great in Week 4 with seven catches for 174 yards and a touchdown in Washington State's win over Oregon State. So far he's the third receiver on the team with 16 grabs for 301 yards and four touchdowns.

UCLA has Dante Moore at quarterback. Chip Kelly started the year with Ethan Garbers at QB, but made the switch to his highly touted freshman. Moore is only completing 54.7% of his passes but is averaging 9.9 yards per attempt, so he's aggressively pushing the ball downfield and only has two interceptions to eight touchdowns.

When you think Chip Kelly, you think offense, but this UCLA team is led by their defense and Laiatu Latu. The Bruins are first in defensive yards per play only giving up 3.8 and are eighth in total defense. That unit is 3rd in yards per rush and 15th in yards per pass completion, so they don't allow much through the air or on the ground. Latu has four of UCLA's 15 sacks this season.

The Bruins have not played the best schedule of opponents, and do have a loss already, but their defense seems to be one of the best in the country. Offensively, they're going to be even better now that they've made the switch to Dante Moore as their full-time starting quarterback over Ethan Garbers.

Against Utah, Moore went 15/35 for 234 yards, one touchdown, and one pick. He's leading an offense that ranks 12th in yards per play at 7.3, 10th in yards per rush at 5.9, and sixth in yards per completion at 16.7.

They push the ball downfield aggressively and have a strong run game with Carson Steele. Utah stifled that part of their attack, but Washington State is 61st in run defense, so the Cougars will not. Washington State is also 83rd in yards per play defensively.

Cameron Ward is a great quarterback and leads the No. 2 passing attack in the country. He's averaging 347.5 passing yards a game with 13 touchdowns and no picks. So, he could win this one on the road almost by himself.

UCLA is 2-2 ATS. Washington State is 3-1 ATS. The OVER is 3-1 in Washington State games

This is the type of game where you have the ranking next to Washington State's name and it's very enticing to grab the No. 13 team as an underdog. The Cougars defense isn't good enough to hold onto that ranking for long. Conversely, the Bruins have played a weak schedule. I'm taking the prolific passing offense in this matchup. Cougars covers.

Projected Score: Washington St 34, UCLA 27

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICKS

Michigan - 19 at Minnesota - The Wolverines lead the FBS in scoring defense (5.8), and they have allowed seven points or less in their five games this season. Minnesota is 3-0 S/U at home this season, but they have allowed 30.7 points per game in their last three games. Michigan has won the last three meetings – including a 49-24 victory in 2020. Minnesota has allowed 400-plus passing yards twice this season. This will be a big game for J.J. McCarthy.
TAKE: Michigan

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Syracuse at North Carolina - 8 - The Orange had three turnovers in a 31-14 loss to Clemson in Week 6. Now, they face the Tar Heels – who had a bye week to prepare for Garrett Shrader. Clemson took away Shrader as a running threat, and that led to problems. The Tar Heels are 3-0 ATS when favored by single digits this season. **TAKE: UNC - 8**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Fresno St - 6 at Wyoming - The Mountain West gets a prime-time spotlight game between the Bulldogs and Cowboys. Wyoming beat Texas Tech and Appalachian State at home in non-conference play, and running back Harrison Waylee averages 8.3 yards per carry. How will the Cowboys slow down Fresno State quarterback Mikey Keene, who has a 151.3 passer rating? The Bulldogs have shut out the Cowboys each of the last two seasons. **TAKE: Fresno St**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Oregon St - 9 at California - Oregon State grinded out a 21-7 victory against Utah, and they had an extra day to prepare for the Golden Bears. Watch the turnovers here. Cal has a +5 turnover margin, but they had three turnovers in losses to Auburn and Washington. D.J. Uiagalelei protects the football, and the Beavers score another Pac-12 victory on the road. **TAKE: Oregon St**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

USC - 21.5 at Arizona - USC has won 10 in a row in the series, but the last three victories against the Wildcats have been by an average of 6.3 points per game. Noah Fifita filled in well for Jayden De Laura last week, and Arizona is 2-0 ATS as an underdog in a pair of one-score losses this season. The Trojans are 2-3 ATS this season despite an offense that averages an FBS-best 53.6 points per game. **TAKE: Arizona**

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	Kansas St -10½	Ohio St Ov 55	Florida St - 24	Wisconsin-13	Wash St + 4
CFB	Kansas St O55		Florida St O52	Rutgers U 47	

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET PREFERRED PICKS

CFB	Michigan - 19	N Carolina -8	Fresno St - 6	Oregon St - 9	Arizona + 21½
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3-0 Last Week. Total 7-0 Against The Spread**

NFL LANDSCAPE:

49ers and Eagles are the only unbeaten teams left in the NFL. Plus: Chiefs hold off Jets and Zach Wilson; injured Justin Herbert helps Chargers beat Raiders; Bills quarterback Josh Allen and receiver Stefon Diggs hand the Dolphins their first defeat; Lamar Jackson dominates in Ravens's win; Broncos and Vikings get their first victories.

The Jaguars and Falcons kicked off Sunday's action at London's Wembley Stadium, with Jacksonville evening its record at 2–2.

Then, in the early window, the Bills sent a message with a 48–20 win over the previously unbeaten Dolphins, while the Ravens went into Cleveland and dominated from the start. Browns rookie quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson made his first NFL start in place of Deshaun Watson, and tossed three interceptions.

In the late window, the Raiders and Chargers mixed it up at SoFi Stadium, with rookie Aidan O'Connell throwing a late interception to spoil Las Vegas' comeback bid, while Ezekiel Elliott and the Patriots were rolled by the Cowboys, earning quarterback Mac Jones time on the bench.

Finally, the Chiefs and Patrick Mahomes wrapped up Sunday by holding off the Jets and Zach Wilson.

Chiefs 23, Jets 20

Chiefs coach Andy Reid got his 250th regular-season victory against the Jets in Week 4 on Sunday night.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid tied former Cowboys coach Tom Landry for the fourth-most regular-season wins in NFL history after recording his 250th against the Jets on Sunday night.

Ugly, ugly, ugly ... but a win. The real concern isn't the defense getting beaten up by Zach Wilson, but the receivers. Kansas City only had seven catches for 65 yards by its wideouts. That's not going to work against better teams. The Chiefs (3–1) lead the Chargers in the AFC West, but Kansas City has to start making some plays on the perimeter.

There are no moral victories in the NFL, but this is close. New York (1–3) should be thrilled

about the performance by Wilson, who completed 28-of-39 attempts for 245 yards and two touchdowns, outplaying Patrick Mahomes. If Wilson plays like this, New York is a playoff contender.

49ers 35, Cardinals 16

Arizona (1–3) isn't going to win many games, but it's showing real fight. The Cardinals were overwhelmed in all areas against San Francisco, and yet Arizona was within five points at the start of the fourth quarter. Jonathan Gannon deserves real credit in his first year as the team's coach.

It might be time to start talking about Brock Purdy in a different way. Yes, he's surrounded by incredible talent and he plays in a perfect scheme. Still, to be 20 of 21 for 283 yards and a touchdown is tremendous. He's not just a passenger for the Niners (4–0), but a big part of an undefeated team.

Cowboys 38, Patriots 3

It's time to start grinding tape on quarterbacks in the 2024 draft. New England (1–3) can't move forward with Mac Jones, who was benched for Bailey Zappe during Sunday's blowout. Whether Bill Belichick goes back to Jones or not is irrelevant. The Patriots can't win anything of note until they upgrade at the most important position.

Dallas (3–1) showed its strength after losing to the Cardinals last week. The defense scored two touchdowns while Dak Prescott completed 28-of-34 passes for 261 yards and a pair of scores. The Cowboys also ran for 124 yards and a touchdown, something we should expect more of as the line gets healthier.

Chargers 24, Raiders 17

The offensive line is a mess. Las Vegas (1–3) allowed seven sacks, directly leading to three fumbles (two lost). Also, The Raiders have to figure out how to gain yardage when not targeting All-Pro receiver Davante Adams or handing off to Josh Jacobs.

There were a few noteworthy individual performances, most notably Khalil Mack's six sacks against his former team. However, Los Angeles (2–2) has clear issues. The Chargers only gained three first downs in the second half. Once again, coach Brandon Staley went for a fourth-and-1 deep in his own territory late and turned the ball over on downs. It's a win, but the Chargers need to clean up all kinds of issues during their upcoming bye.

Bills 48, Dolphins 20

The offense is incredible, but the defense is an issue. Miami (3–1) held down the punchless Broncos and Patriots, but gave up a combined 82 points against the Bills and Chargers. It's been far too easy for opponents to throw downfield, getting chunk plays. The Dolphins have to figure out their passing defense soon.

Josh Allen was flawless, and has largely been since his Week 1 debacle against the Jets (three interceptions). Against the Dolphins, Allen went 21 of 25 for 320 yards and five total touchdowns, leading Buffalo (3–1) to a blowout win and first place in the AFC East. Bills receiver Stefon Diggs had six receptions for 120 yards and three touchdowns against the Dolphins. When Allen avoids the hero-ball mistakes, Buffalo's offense is as good as it gets.

Eagles 34, Commanders 31, OT

The offensive line continues to be a disaster for Washington. Sam Howell was sacked 19 times over the first three weeks, six more than anybody else. Against the Eagles, Howell was sacked five times while being hit on nine occasions. It's become a crisis for the Commanders.

The play has been far from perfect for the defending NFC champs (4–0), and yet they're leading the NFC East. Philadelphia finally got the passing game going, as Jalen Hurts threw for 290 yards and two touchdowns. If Hurts regains his 2022 form, the Eagles will once again have elite units on both sides of the ball.

Rams 29, Colts 23, OT

When the Rams (2–2) get Cooper Kupp back, it's going to be a scary tandem alongside rookie Puka Nacua. Nacua had another monster game after totaling 25 catches for 266 yards over the first two weeks, notching nine receptions for 163 yards on Sunday. Los Angeles needs to win quickly with the offensive line being a question mark, and that duo is capable of doing so.

This off-season for Indianapolis (2–2) has to be about signing Michael Pittman and adding firepower on the outside. Rookie quarterback Anthony Richardson has talent, but he's been limited in the passing game, throwing for 479 yards across three starts. A big part of the problem is a lack of targets, forcing him to take off or hold the ball far too often.

Ravens 28, Browns 3

Lamar Jackson is playing fantastic football under new coordinator Todd Monken. Despite being without receivers Rashod Bateman and Odell Beckham Jr., Jackson threw for 187 yards and two touchdowns, while running for another 27 yards and two scores in the lopsided victory. Baltimore (3–1) is leading the tight AFC North, and Jackson is the biggest reason. The numbers aren't eye-popping, but he's doing it all for an injury riddled offense.

The defense can't always win the game. After three phenomenal performances which often masked a lackluster offense, Jim Schwartz's unit had to be perfect. But it couldn't hold up. Quarterback Deshaun Watson should be back quickly from a shoulder contusion, giving the Browns (2–2) a boost, but the offense has to pitch in.

Texans 30, Steelers 6

Pittsburgh (2–2) has to be concerned about both the health and growth rate of Kenny Pickett. After throwing for 689 yards on 6.6 yards per attempt in three games, Pickett struggled again in Houston. Against the Texans, Pickett was 9 of 14 for 35 yards and an interception in the first half, putting the Steelers in a 16–0 hole. Then, in the third quarter, Pickett was forced out with a knee injury. Hopefully, there's good news coming.

C.J. Stroud might be the answer for Houston (2–2) after years in the abyss. Stroud can make any throw and he's showing excellent poise in the pocket. Expecting the No. 2 pick to be great every week is unrealistic, but of all the rookie quarterbacks, Stroud is clearly the best in the early going. He looks like a potential star.

Titans 27, Bengals 3

It's time to rest Joe Burrow, who can't drive the ball downfield, and Cincinnati (1–3) has three offensive touchdowns in four weeks. Burrow has been awful, throwing for 728 yards over that span, clearly limited by a calf injury sustained in July. The Bengals are in major trouble, but

there's no way they can get in playoff contention unless Burrow gets back to form.

Tennessee (2–2) still has a winning formula when it gets a clean game from quarterback Ryan Tannehill. The Titans ran for 173 yards on 5.2 yards per carry, with Derrick Henry pacing the team at 122 yards and a touchdown. It's not pretty or explosive, but coach Mike Vrabel knows his team can win if mistakes are avoided.

Buccaneers 26, Saints 9

Tampa Bay should be thrilled with Baker Mayfield to this point. The Buccaneers (3–1) and Mayfield have only turned the ball over once in four games. With the defense allowing 17 points or fewer in each victory, Mayfield is being asked to play smart and make a few plays. He's doing so, and Tampa Bay is all alone in first place in the NFC South.

Safe to say Derek Carr shouldn't have played through a shoulder sprain. He was miserable throughout against a tough Tampa Bay defense, throwing for 127 yards on 3.4 yards per attempt. New Orleans (2–2) finally allowed more than 20 points for the first time in 13 games, putting pressure on Carr to execute. He didn't. Ultimately, the Saints are still in good position considering the division, but the offense must step up and get healthy.

Vikings 21, Panthers 13

Minnesota (1–3) got into the win column, and it was because the defense showed life after a hideous showing against the Chargers. The Vikings found five sacks, including three by safety Harrison Smith. The only downside of the day was quarterback Kirk Cousins, who threw a pick-six along with another interception. But Minnesota should be happy with the all-around showing.

Bryce Young needs support. Carolina allowed five sacks to a porous Minnesota defense, while scoring six offensive points. Young was 25 of 32 but for just 204 yards. At 0–4, the Panthers have to accept reality. This season isn't about winning. It's about developing Young. So far, Carolina has failed in that capacity.

Broncos 31, Bears 28

What a second half. It appeared Denver was done for the year, trailing 28–7. Instead, the Broncos found a miracle, scoring 24 unanswered points to win 31–28. The defense was a disaster for the most part, allowing Justin Fields to go 28 of 35 for 335 yards and four touchdowns, but the Broncos scored a touchdown and held Chicago scoreless on its last four drives, including a game-ending interception.

Fields was 16 of 17 for 231 yards and three touchdowns in the first half, showing all of his talent. Then, a disaster. It's time for Chicago to start selling any veteran worth something to a contender. Additionally, does coach Matt Eberflus survive another loss with the Bears playing on Thursday night against the Commanders?

Jaguars 23, Falcons 7

Throwing for 72 yards and two interceptions in the first half, Desmond Ridder took Atlanta out of the game early. At 2–2, the Falcons have to consider whether Taylor Heinicke is their best option in the hopes of making the playoffs. To this point, Ridder has made very few plays.

Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence was nearly perfect against the Falcons in Jacksonville's win over Atlanta in Week 4. Lawrence was 23-of-30 passing for 207 yards and a touchdown. Forget about the offense. This is the kind of defense Jacksonville needs to be a

threat in the AFC. The Jaguars totaled four sacks (three by Josh Allen) and seven quarterback hits, harassing Ridder into key mistakes, including a pick-six. Next week, Jacksonville continues the International Series against the Bills, and the Jags will need to get home often against Josh Allen.

Thursday

Lions 34, Packers 20

Every contender needs a strength to rely on every week. Detroit's is its dominance up front on both sides of the ball. Against the Packers, the Lions rushed for 211 yards while sacking Green Bay quarterback Jordan Love five times. Winning both sides of the line of scrimmage has become normal for Detroit.

Green Bay needs to do better around Love. While he struggled with two interceptions, the line was a disaster throughout, allowing 11 quarterback hits. With left tackle David Bakhtiari sidelined for a while and Elgton Jenkins working back from a knee injury, the Packers are going to have to get creative on offense.



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PRO FOOTBALL BEST BET

DETROIT - 9 Over Carolina by 24

The Carolina Panthers and Detroit Lions meet Sunday in week 5 NFL action at Ford Field.

The Carolina Panthers are still looking for their first win of the season. The Panthers look to avoid their first 0-5 start since 2010 when they won 2 games on the year.

Bryce Young is completing 65 percent of his passes for 503 yards, 2 touchdowns and 2 interceptions.

Adam Thielen and DJ Chark Jr. have combined for 416 receiving yards and 3 touchdowns, while Terrace Marshall Jr. has 16 receptions.

The Carolina Panthers ground game is averaging 95.3 yards per contest, and Miles Sanders leads the way with 158 yards and 1 touchdown.

Defensively, Carolina is allowing 25.5 points and 313 yards per game. Vonn Bell leads the Carolina Panthers with 24 tackles, Brian Burns has 3 sacks and Deion Jones has 1 interception.

The Detroit Lions won their second home win to improve to 4-1 on the season. The Lions have won 5 of their last 7 home games.

Jared Goff is completing 69.5 percent of his passes for 1,029 yards, 6 touchdowns and 3 interceptions.

Amon-Ra St. Brown and Sam LaPorta have combined for 473 receiving yards and 3 touchdowns, while Josh Reynolds has 12 receptions.

The Detroit Lions ground game is averaging 136.5 yards per contest, and David Montgomery leads the way with 262 yards and 5 touchdowns.

Defensively, Detroit is allowing 20.8 points and 280.5 yards per game. Jerry Jacobs leads the Detroit Lions with 25 tackles, Aidan Hutchinson has 3.5 sacks and Brian Branch has 1 interception.

The Lions have lost each of their last nine games in October. The Lions have failed to cover the spread in each of their last eight home games in October. The Lions have won the first half in each of their last seven Sunday games at Ford Field. The Lions have scored the first touchdown in 13 of their last 16 games as home favorites against NFC opponents. The Lions have lost the first quarter in three of their last four games as heavy favorites (>-7.0 points).

The Panthers have lost each of their last eight games when playing with a rest disadvantage. The Panthers have failed to cover the spread in each of their last six road games following a home loss.

The Carolina Panthers just aren't ready to win at this stage, and they've looked bad in two previous road games, where they're losing by an average of 12 points. The Detroit Lions have had extra time to prepare for this contest after playing last Thursday, and they have the offensive firepower to give a below average Carolina defense fits. The Lions defense is also first against the run, so it's going to be even tougher for that Panthers offense and rookie quarterback Bryce Young. Give me the Lions in a home blowout.

Projected Score: Detroit 34, Carolina 10

PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

MIAMI - 10 Over NY Giants by 25

The New York Giants and Miami Dolphins meet Sunday in week 5 NFL action at Hard Rock Stadium.

The New York Giants need a win to rebound from a rough 1-3 start. The Giants have lost 5 of their last 7 road games.

Daniel Jones is completing 68.7 percent of his passes for 765 yards, 2 touchdowns and 6 interceptions.

Darren Waller and Darius Slayton have combined for 285 receiving yards on 26 catches, while Jalin Hyatt has 4 receptions.

The New York Giants ground game is averaging 94 yards per contest, and Jones leads the way with 173 yards and 1 touchdown.

Defensively, New York is allowing 30.5 points and 341.5 yards per game. Bobby Okereke leads the New York Giants with 32 tackles, Kayvon Thibodeaux has 3 sacks and Xavier McKinney has 3 pass deflections.

The Miami Dolphins look for their second home win to improve to 4-1 on the year. The Dolphins have won 7 of their last 9 home games.

Tua Tagovailoa is completing 71.3 percent of his passes for 1,306 yards, 9 touchdowns and 3 interceptions.

Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle have combined for 680 receiving yards and 4 touchdowns, while Braxton Berrios has 13 receptions.

The Miami Dolphins ground game is averaging 176.8 yards per contest, and De'Von Achane leads the way with 309 yards and 4 touchdowns.

Defensively, Miami is allowing 29.8 points and 374.5 yards per game. Jevon Holland leads the Miami Dolphins with 39 tackles, Andrew Van Ginkel has 3 sacks and Xavien Howard has 1 interception.

We have the best scoring offense in the Dolphins against the worst scoring offense in the Giants. Neither defense has been good through the first 4 games, so I'd consider looking at the over.

However, I'm laying the chalk with the Dolphins. The Giants offensive line remains absolutely horrendous, and they'll have less time to patch things up after playing last Monday.

If anything, this is a chance for the Dolphins defense to build some confidence. The Giants offensive line couldn't block me from getting in the backfield, let alone Bradley Chubb, Christian Wilkins and Andrew Van Ginkel. Daniel Jones has been sacked 22 times in 4 games. No, thanks. Give me the Dolphins in a beat down.

Projected Score: Miami 42, NY Giants 17

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PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

ARIZONA + 3 Over Cincinnati by 7

The Cincinnati Bengals and Arizona Cardinals meet Sunday in week 5 NFL action at State Farm Stadium.

The Cincinnati Bengals need a win to rebound from a 1-3 start. The Bengals have won 5 of their last 8 road games.

Joe Burrow is completing 57.6 percent of his passes for 728 yards, 2 touchdowns and 2 interceptions.

Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins have combined for 413 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Tyler Boyd has 17 receptions.

The Cincinnati Bengals ground game is averaging 70 yards per contest, and Joe Mixon leads the way with 247 yards and 1 touchdown.

Defensively, Cincinnati is allowing 23.5 points and 364.3 yards per game. Dax Hill leads the Cincinnati Bengals with 34 tackles, Trey Hendrickson has 3.5 sacks and Logan Wilson has 2 interceptions.

The Arizona Cardinals also need a win to rebound from a 1-3 start. The Cardinals have lost 5 of their last 6 home games.

Joshua Dobbs is completing 70.7 percent of his passes for 814 yards, 4 touchdowns and 0 interceptions.

Marquise Brown and Michael Wilson have combined for 476 receiving yards and 4 touchdowns, while Zach Ertz has 20 receptions.

The Arizona Cardinals ground game is averaging 143.5 yards per contest, and James Conner leads the way with 318 yards and 2 touchdowns.

Defensively, Arizona is allowing 25.5 points and 374.5 yards per game. Kyzir White leads the Arizona Cardinals with 37 tackles, Dennis Gardeck has 4 sacks and Zaven Collins has 1 interception.

The Cincinnati Bengals are the more talented team, but they've been a mess through 4 games, and that includes being 32nd in total offense and 31st in scoring offense. It doesn't help,

Tee Higgins is dealing with a broken rib and could miss time. The Cardinals have to improve defensively, but their offense has been better than expected, and guys like Dobbs and Conner bring an edge on the offensive side of the ball.

The Cardinals have covered the spread in eight of their last nine games as underdogs before a Division game. The Bengals have failed to cover the spread in seven of their last eight games. The Bengals are in no position to be favorites given their current form, especially on the road. I'll grab the free field goal with the Cards at home.

Projected Score: Arizona 24, Cincinnati 17

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PRO FOOTBALL BEST BETS

MINNESOTA + 6 Over Kansas City by 3

The Kansas City Chiefs and Minnesota Vikings meet Sunday in week 5 NFL action at U.S. Bank Stadium.

The Kansas City Chiefs look for a fifth straight win to improve to 4-1 on the season. The Chiefs have won 5 straight road games.

Patrick Mahomes is completing 64.3 percent of his passes for 1,006 yards, 8 touchdowns and 4 interceptions.

Justin Watson and Travis Kelce have combined for 318 receiving yards and 2 touchdowns, while Rashee Rice has 13 receptions.

The Kansas City Chiefs ground game is averaging 137 yards per contest, and Isiah Pacheco leads the way with 270 yards and 2 touchdowns.

Defensively, Kansas City is allowing 15 points and 294.5 yards per game. Drue Tranquill leads the Kansas City Chiefs with 3 tackles, Chris Jones has 3.5 sacks and Mike Edwards has 1 interception.

The Minnesota Vikings need a statement win to rebound from a 1-3 start. The Minnesota Vikings have won 8 of their last 11 home games.

Kirk Cousins is completing 68.8 percent of his passes for 1,214 yards, 11 touchdowns and 4 interceptions.

Justin Jefferson and T.J. Hockenson have combined for 746 receiving yards and 5 touchdowns, while Jordan Addison has 13 receptions.

The Minnesota Vikings ground game is averaging 83.5 yards per contest, and Alexander Mattison leads the way with 250 yards on 56 carries.

Defensively, Minnesota is allowing 23.8 points and 344.8 yards per game. Camryn Bynum leads the Minnesota Vikings with 43 tackles, Danielle Hunter has 5 sacks and Theo Jackson has 1 interception.

The Chiefs should be the obvious favorites here, and them blowing the doors off wouldn't be surprising.

However, the Vikings are better and far more talented than their record indicates, and this feels like a spot at home where they could get their act together.

Of course, beating the Panthers last week to get in the win column helps their confidence.

The Vikings have the offensive firepower to keep up, and they're third in passing offense. As previously mentioned, the Minnesota Vikings have won 8 of their last 11 home games.

The Chiefs are coming off a win where they were taxed by the Jets. Zack Wilson had success against the Chief secondary. This feels like it could be a shootout where either team could win, and I want the points in my pocket. Give me the home dog Vikings.

Projected Score: Minnesota 27, Kansas City 24

PRO FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

Houston at Atlanta - 1½ - Houston's run defense remains terrible. Atlanta's rushing offense is their bread and butter with Bijan Robinson and Tyler Allgeier. When they control the action they take pressure off Desmond Ridder and they win. C.J. Stroud will stay hot vs. the Falcons' pass defense and have his moments. **Take: Atlanta - 1½**

PRO FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

NY Jets at Denver - 2½ - It's Zach Wilson vs. Russell Wilson. It's Nathaniel Hackett vs. Sean Payton. It's still a tough defense vs. now an atrocious defense. Zach will need to force less to win here because of having the speed of Garrett Wilson and Breece Hall on his side. Russ won't like the matchups for his wideouts with Sauce Gardner and D.J. Reed in coverage. **Take: NY Jets + 2½**

PRO FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICK

New Orleans at New England 40 - This is a tough draw for New England as it faces a tough defense. The Patriots are crumbling through ground and air around Mac Jones and the Saints' defense will respond well on the road. **Take: Under 40**



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	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
NFL	Detroit - 9	Miami - 10	Arizona + 3	Minnesota + 6	

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET PREFERRED PICKS

NFL	Atlanta - 1½	NY Jets + 2½	N Orleans U40		
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