

Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

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**5 NCAA & 4 NFL BEST BETS + PICKS FOR ALL GAMES
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Dennis Stagliano's Best Bets Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

Volume 44 Issue

CFB Week , 2025

NCAA Landscape:

COLLEGE FOOTBALL HATRED HAS NO BOUNDS. Texas kept Texas A&M out of the SEC title game with a Black Friday upset. Alabama outlasted Auburn in an Iron Bowl instant classic. Ohio State clobbered rival Michigan in The Game. Plus, we saw fireworks from the ACC, The Egg Bowl, and in the coaching carousel. It was a banger of a way to close out the 2025 college football regular season.

Ohio State dominates The Game

I hope Ohio State head coach Ryan Day enjoys a cold, adult beverage after Saturday's win. He deserves it.

After years of mockery, misery, and the type of painful losses against his arch rival that not even a national title can pave over, Day and the Buckeyes snapped a four-game skid against Michigan with a pronounced 27-9 win in Ann Arbor.

The Buckeyes survived a slightly shaky start on defense and an early interception from freshman quarterback Julian Sayin before imposing their will against the Wolverines. The early turning point in the game came when Sayin uncorked a beautiful ball to wideout Jeremiah Smith, which, after much deliberation, was ruled a touchdown (and not a touchback) to put Ohio State up 10-6.

After that pivotal play, the Buckeye defense took over, squashing any semblance of a Michigan passing game and making the Wolverines totally one-dimensional. Ohio State boasts arguably the best defense in college football, and they absolutely lived up to the billing on Saturday afternoon. Michigan mustered just 100 rushing yards, 63 yards in the air, and failed to put any touchdowns on the board.

Sayin shook off that early interception en route to a smooth-sailing afternoon, finishing with 233 yards and three touchdowns. He's been incredible all year, especially for a freshman, and has earned the right to be in New York for the upcoming Heisman Trophy ceremony.

Moving forward, Ohio State has a date with No. 2 Indiana in a behemoth of a Big Ten Championship game next week. That contest could have Game of the Year potential.

Meanwhile, Michigan will spend the offseason rueing this opportunity to play spoiler against the Buckeyes for a fifth-straight time. I'd love to see the Wolverines splash some NIL money on a few legitimate wideouts and turn quarterback Bryce Underwood loose in 2026.

The Iron Bowl delivers an instant classic

Heavens to Betsy, the Iron Bowl always seems to deliver.

In the cauldron of crazy that is Jordan-Hare Stadium at night, Alabama and Auburn played an instant classic that won't soon be forgotten. This game had it all: SEC title game stakes, a flurry of close calls, quarterbacks playing their rear ends off, and a gusty fourth-down call that will go down in Iron Bowl lore.

With the game knotted at 20-20, Alabama found itself facing a critical 4th and 2 with under four minutes to go in the red zone. Under pressure all night long, it would've been understandable for head coach Kalen DeBoer to take the ball out of quarterback Ty Simpson's hands and instead opt to kick the go-ahead field goal.

But fortune favors the bold, and with the game on the line, the Crimson Tide delivered. Simpson dropped back, stood tall in the face of pressure, and delivered a laser to Isaiah Horton to put Alabama up 27-20 for what would be the game-winning touchdown.

With mere minutes remaining, Auburn quarterback Ashton Daniels (who played a hell of a game in his own right) marched the Tigers down the field with hopes of tying the game. But a late Cam Coleman fumble squashed Auburn's comeback chances, icing the game for the Crimson Tide.

With the win, Alabama advances to the SEC Championship game to face Georgia, giving us a rematch of an excellent game earlier in the season. Alabama vs. Georgia with conference title stakes... you can't ask for much more than that!

Texas sits firmly on the CFP bubble after win over Texas A&M

Friday night's game against No. 16 Texas was straightforward for the undefeated Aggies: win and you're on to Atlanta for the SEC Championship Game.

But even the best laid plans have hiccups. And boy, did No. 3 Texas A&M look like a team still battling a turkey-fueled hangover for much of its 27-17 loss to rival Texas.

The Aggie offense came out sluggish, unrefined, and devoid of big plays for much of the first half. Quarterback Marcel Reed went down with a non-contact injury in the first quarter, but quickly recovered. Unfortunately for Texas A&M fans, I can't say the same about the offense as a whole.

Across the field, the Longhorns relied on workhorse back Quintrevion Wisner to keep them in the game. Wisner was a menace, churning out hard yards on his way to 155 yards on 19 carries, after rushing for 186 yards against the Aggies last season.

When it wasn't Wisner, Arch Manning did a nice job of exposing some busted coverages and finding big plays. Manning dished out a beauty of a touchdown pass to wideout Ryan Wingo in the back of the end zone in the third quarter to put Texas up three. Later, Arch did his best Archie Manning impression, scampering for a crucial 35-yard touchdown run that put the game out of reach.

Two late Reed interceptions doomed the Aggies and iced the game. Texas A&M will still play in the College Football Playoff; Texas, on the other hand, sits firmly on the CFP bubble and will surely ask some tough questions of the College Football Playoff committee.

You be the judge. Do the Longhorns belong in the Field of 12?

The coaching carousel spins out of control

Sunday was arguably the most impactful day of the college football calendar, and not a single game was played.

The Lane Kiffin saga came to an end with him accepting the LSU job and begrudgingly ceding control of the Rebels for the rest of the season. Between rumors of poaching existing player talent, taking away offensive coaches, and fans booing Kiffin at the Oxford airport, this saga was everything wrong (or right?) with college football wrapped in one neat bow.

Ole Miss DC Pete Golding was named the permanent Ole Miss head coach and will lead the Rebels on their 2025 College Football Playoff run.

The American Conference got a whole swath of its coaches poached in one fell swoop.

- Ryan Silverfield left Memphis behind for the Arkansas job
- Jon Sumrall accepted the Florida job, despite Tulane still being in College Football Playoff contention
- Alex Golesh traded the sunny South Florida skies for the crazy train that is the Auburn football program
- And earlier in the week, news trickled out that North Texas head coach Eric Morris accepted the job at Oklahoma State
- Then, news broke on Sunday evening that Jonathan Smith is out at Michigan State with his likely replacement being former Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald.
- And to top things off, Kentucky fired Mark Stoops on Sunday night. It'll be interesting to see what direction the Wildcats go with their head coaching search.

Sunday was a rollercoaster of a day — the type that only college football can provide... for better or worse.

Vanderbilt torpedoes in-state rival Tennessee

What can't the Pavia Mafia do at this point?

Despite a pair of early miscues, Vanderbilt quarterback Diego Pavia was once again the catalyst for the Commodores' revival. Vanderbilt went blow for blow with Tennessee before clamping the Vols for three second-half TD's en route to a dominant 45-24 win.

Pavia played like a man possessed. Pinging passes to open receivers. Scrambling with ferocity and vigor. He backpacked his team to victory, just like he's done all season. And there was something poetic about him scoring a late-game touchdown and striking the Heisman pose. Get the man to New York, damn it!

In the lead-up to this game, I asked whether a pronounced victory would be a landmark moment for head coach Clark Lea. It sure felt like it. Lea has now taken Vanderbilt, a perennial basement-dweller, and made them a 10-win program knocking on the College Football Playoff door. What he's done is nothing short of amazing, which is why Vandy just inked him to a six-year extension.

The Commodores will now wait to find out whether their resume is good enough to get them in the Field of 12.

The ACC loses its marbles

The ACC faced a simple proposition: have Virginia and SMU win, and both teams would be in the ACC title game. Sounds simple enough, right? Wrong!

Virginia held up its end of the bargain, cruising to a big 27-7 win over rival Virginia Tech to punch its ticket to Charlotte.

SMU, on the other hand... well, let's just say things got weird.

The Mustangs fell into an early, deep hole against Cal, cooked up a furious 21-point fourth-quarter rally, gave up a Cal touchdown with less than a minute to play, and then saw their kicker hook a 52-yard, game-tying field goal. It was the kind of ACC After Dark madness that would make the old Pac-12 smile.

With the loss, SMU misses out on the ACC title game. Instead, Duke (7-5) gets the nod and will face Virginia next week in Charlotte. This new-look version of the ACC never fails to deliver a big batch of weird, and there's a chance the conference could go without any representatives in the College Football Playoff. I can't wait to see what happens next weekend.

Miami makes a statement

The Hurricanes are squarely in the eye of the College Football Playoff storm. I hope the committee was watching on Saturday, because Miami stomped Pitt on the road, and in my opinion, is a worthy contender to make the playoff field.

The Canes dominated Pat Narduzzi's bunch from start to finish. Carson Beck played on schedule and with precision. Wideout Malachi Toney both caught and threw a touchdown, further staking his claim as the most dynamic freshman in college football. And the defense ate Pitt alive, holding the Panthers to 30 rushing yards, while racking up six tackles for loss and four sacks.

Mario Cristobal's boys played like they had a point to prove. Time will tell if it's enough to persuade the CFP committee.

Clean, Old Fashioned Hate turns into a field goal fest

If the 2024 eight-overtime thriller between Georgia and Georgia Tech was a fireworks show, the 2025 rendition was a dark, quiet night. The two powers of the Peach State combined for just one touchdown and six field goals as the Bulldogs held on for a 16-9 win.

Georgia quarterback Gunner Stockton had arguably his worst outing of the season, finishing with a measly 70 yards on 11 attempts. Georgia Tech's Haynes King wasn't much better, mustering just 181 yards and an interception.

Where was this game won and lost? With the Georgia run game and defense.

The Bulldogs ran for 190 yards on a jaw-dropping 46 carries, a big jump compared to their usual output on the ground. On the other side of the ball, Georgia allowed just 69 rushing yards and did an excellent job of squeezing the life out of the Yellow Jackets' high-powered offense.

With the win, Georgia moves on to the SEC title game, where it'll be a rematch against Alabama. Getcha popcorn ready!

Ole Miss cruises in big Egg Bowl victory

The Egg Bowl notoriously teeters on the absurd. By those lofty standards, Friday's version felt relatively tame.

Despite the circus surrounding Lane Kiffin's job status and drunken Mississippi State fans stealing Trinidad Chambliss' jersey, the 2025 Egg Bowl was largely one-way traffic. The Rebels offense picked apart a struggling Bulldogs defense and cruised to a calm 38-19 win.

Ole Miss looked like the better team from start to finish. Chambliss threw for 349 yards and four touchdowns, running back Kewan Lacy got his with 143 yards and one score, and the defense did enough to fluster a new Bulldogs' quarterback.

Perhaps the most entertaining part of the game (especially if you're an MSU fan) was the mid-game scuffle that looked like a cross between a football fight and something you'd see at 3 AM at Waffle House.

With Alabama's narrow Iron Bowl victory Saturday night, the Rebels were eliminated from SEC Championship contention. Lane Kiffin is off to be the next head coach at LSU, while Ole Miss DC Pete Golding was named the permanent head coach of the Rebels. I can't wait for the oral history of the Lane Kiffin saga.

Iowa dishes out a Black Friday beat down

The sobering reality of the Matt Rhule Era is that progress is rarely linear.

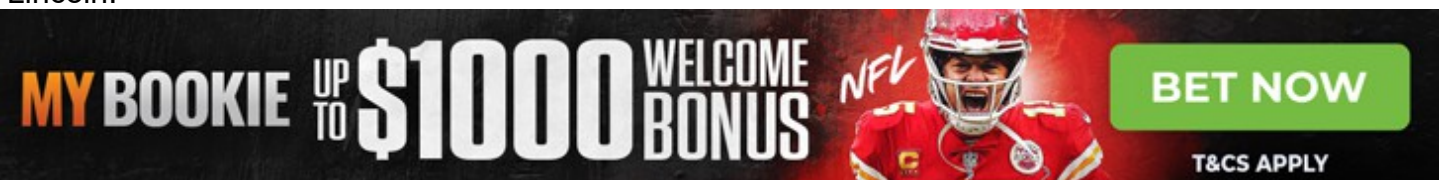
After a strong start (in part because of a weak schedule), Matt Rhule's Huskers faded down the stretch and lodged what many would say is a disappointing season. The same problems identified early persisted late. The offensive line couldn't pass protect, the defense struggled to stop the run, and the Huskers still came up short in big games against good opponents.

Most of those problems reared their ugly head in an embarrassing 40-16 beat down at the hands of rival Iowa on Black Friday. The Hawkeyes have won 10 of 11 against Nebraska. And Hawkeyes coach Kirk Ferentz officially passed Matt Rhule, Scott Frost, and Mike Riley for second-most Big Ten Conference wins in Memorial Stadium history.

On Friday, Iowa largely got what it wanted against the Huskers defense. The Hawkeyes ran for 213 yards and four touchdowns on the afternoon. When it wasn't a ground-and-pound approach, quarterback Mark Gronowski made some nice throws in the play-action passing game. He had a big touchdown pass early that took some steam out of the Huskers' sails.

The lone bright spot for Nebraska remains running back Emmett Johnson, who rushed for 217 yards and one touchdown on 29 carries. It'll be interesting to see if he's back next year or decides to test the NFL waters.

Many questions remain for Nebraska in the short and long term. It should be a busy off-season in Lincoln.

A promotional banner for MyBookie. On the left, the text "MY BOOKIE" is in orange and white, followed by "UP TO \$1000 WELCOME BONUS" in white. In the center is a red and white NFL football player in a helmet. On the right, there is a green button with the text "BET NOW" in white, and below it, "T&CS APPLY" in small white text.

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Kennesaw State at Jacksonville State — Friday 7:00 PM

This matchup features two teams whose styles both point toward a lower-scoring game than the number suggests. Jacksonville State thrives on controlling tempo through a physical run game, which naturally shortens contests and reduces total possessions. They are comfortable leaning on long, methodical drives, especially when protecting a lead. Their offensive approach often results in extended clock drainage even when drives stall.

Kennesaw State, meanwhile, prefers a similarly ground-heavy structure, but they lack the explosiveness needed to produce quick scoring against disciplined fronts. When they face aggressive defenses capable of winning at the point of attack, their offense tends to become one-dimensional and bogs down between the 20s. That plays directly into Jacksonville State's strengths, as JSU defends the run well and forces opponents into uncomfortable passing situations.

Another factor pushing this matchup toward the Under is red-zone efficiency—or the lack of it. Both teams rely on run-centric schemes that compress even further near the goal line, often leading to field-goal attempts or turnover-on-downs. A game with fewer than average possessions combined with a high probability of stalled red-zone drives is a classic recipe for an Under.

Finally, Jacksonville State's defense is fundamentally stronger than what Kennesaw has faced in several weeks, making sustained scoring drives unlikely. And while JSU can produce chunk plays, they are more likely to rely on ball control once they establish a lead, tightening the pace even more as the game progresses.

With both teams leaning heavily into the run, limited explosiveness on one side, and clock-draining tendencies on both, this total sits too high for the expected style of play.

TAKE: Under 58.5

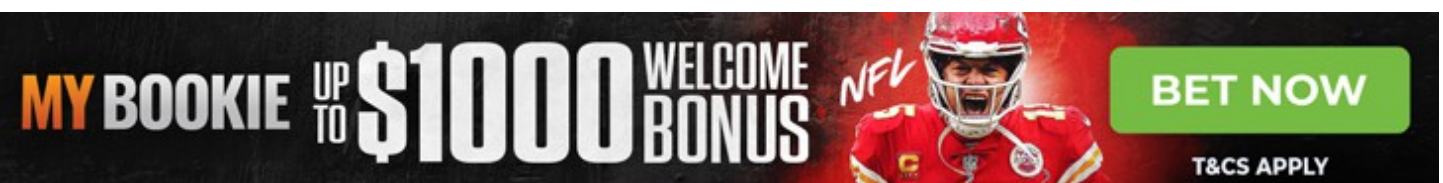
North Texas at Tulane — Friday 8:00 PM

The matchup points squarely toward a lower-scoring game than the number suggests. Tulane is far more defensive-leaning this season and tends to play in controlled, possession-oriented scripts against teams that lack the explosive depth to stress them consistently. North Texas, despite laying the small number, has been inconsistent finishing drives, and their red-zone efficiency remains a glaring issue. Against a disciplined Tulane defense, settling for field goals or stalling inside the 30 is a very real risk.

Pace also favors the under. Tulane is comfortable bleeding clock with extended drives and leaning on their run game to stay balanced. That style naturally limits total possessions and shortens the game, forcing opponents into narrower scoring windows. North Texas has had trouble sustaining long scoring drives, meaning Tulane can dictate tempo from the opening quarter. A projected total of 59 reinforces the idea that the market has inflated this number based solely on brand perceptions rather than matchup reality.

In a contest likely controlled by Tulane's structure and discipline, the posted total is simply too high.

TAKE: Under 68

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UNLV at Boise State — Friday 8:00 PM

Boise State enters this matchup in a far better situational spot than most will recognize. While UNLV has been one of the more entertaining offenses all season, their production tends to lean heavily on rhythm, tempo, and playing from ahead. Boise State's defense is built specifically to disrupt that comfort, especially at home on the blue turf, where they traditionally generate more pressure and force offenses into predictable second- and third-down situations. UNLV has struggled when pushed off schedule, and Boise's front can win enough early downs to force the Rebels away from their preferred balance.

UNLV's defense has also been prone to giving up explosive runs, and Boise State's ground game is finally showing cohesion after inconsistent stretches earlier in the year. Boise tends to wear down opponents through physicality, and this matchup favors them late as UNLV's defense has repeatedly shown slippage in the fourth quarter against teams that stay committed to the run. The Broncos should own the time-of-possession battle and limit the number of possessions UNLV needs to stay within striking distance.

Boise's home-field edge is not just environmental—it's historical. They perform with more consistency and discipline in this building, especially in close-spread games where a handful of key stops make the difference. UNLV's road performances have been more volatile, and asking them to go into Boise and win at the line of scrimmage is a tall order.

If Boise stays patient offensively and limits UNLV's early explosives, the Broncos should gradually separate as the game progresses. This matchup leans heavily toward Boise's strengths and exposes UNLV's defensive vulnerabilities in a tough road environment.

TAKE: Boise State -3.5

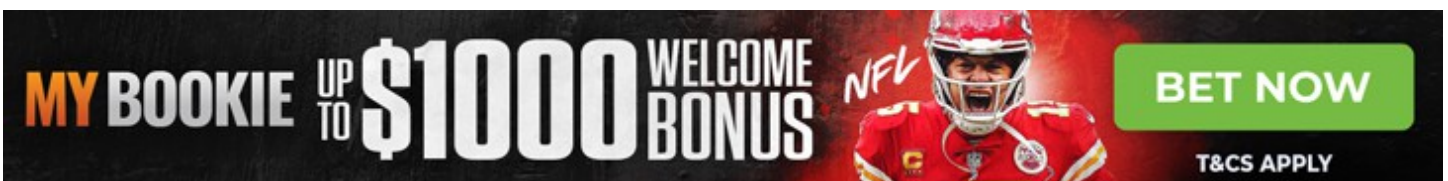
Miami Ohio vs Western Michigan — Saturday 12:00 PM (Ford Field)

This total comes in artificially suppressed given the venue, matchup flow, and projected scoring profile. Ford Field has long been one of the most favorable indoor environments for clean offensive football, and both teams come in with advantages that encourage tempo and efficiency. Western Michigan's offense has shown far more balance and big-play capability as the season progressed, and they face a Miami defense that bends more than the market realizes when it steps up in class. Miami's secondary can be attacked vertically, and Western Michigan has the quarterback play to exploit those windows.

On the other side, Miami's offense has improved substantially with better red-zone execution and a more structured run-pass mix. Western Michigan's defense has had difficulty preventing moderate drives from turning into points, and they've repeatedly surrendered momentum in short fields. Indoors, those flaws tend to compound: drives stay alive, kickers are more reliable, and close games find a way to push past numbers in the mid-40s.

With a projected total of 51 and a clear track toward efficient possessions on both sides, the posted number is simply too low for the matchup and the environment.

TAKE: Over 43

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Indiana vs Ohio State — Saturday 8:00 PM (Lucas Oil Stadium)

Ohio State's offense always commands attention, but the real value here comes from Indiana's ability to contribute meaningfully to the scoring column. Indiana's offense stabilizes when given a neutral site surface and predictable conditions. Their tempo tends to rise indoors, and Ohio State's defense, while strong, does allow occasional explosive plays in the passing game when forced into extended coverage. Indiana won't need sustained drives to do their part—just a handful of successful scripted plays, red-zone conversions, or short-field opportunities caused by pressure.

Meanwhile, Ohio State can exploit Indiana's secondary consistently. Indiana has struggled to match up with physical receiving groups and tight ends, and they have a history of giving up yards in chunks when forced into man coverage in big games. Indoors, Ohio State's precision passing and spacing advantage becomes even more pronounced. Once Ohio State establishes rhythm, drives finish with touchdowns rather than field goals.

Given my projected total of 58 and both offenses carrying real paths to consistent scoring, this number sits too low for a controlled indoor environment with elite offensive talent.

TAKE: Over 48

COLLEGE FOOTBALL QUICK PICKS

Troy at James Madison – Friday 7:00 PM

Line: James Madison -22.5, **Total:** 47.5

James Madison's defensive front should overwhelm Troy's inconsistent offensive line, allowing the Dukes to control field position all night. Troy will compete early, but JMU's physicality and red-zone efficiency usually widen the margin late.

TAKE: James Madison -22.5

BYU at Texas Tech – Saturday 12:00 PM

Line: Texas Tech -13.5, **Total:** 50.5

Texas Tech has advantages in pace and passing efficiency, but BYU can shorten the game with long drives and a conservative defensive shell. The line feels inflated for the expected possession count.

TAKE: BYU +13.5

Georgia vs Alabama – Saturday 4:00 PM (Atlanta)

Line: Georgia -2.5, **Total:** 47.5

Georgia's defense has tightened as the season progressed, while Alabama remains volatile offensively. Expect a lower-variance game that stays under the totals line.

TAKE: Under 47.5

Duke at Virginia – Saturday 8:00 PM

Line: Virginia -3, **Total:** 57.5

Virginia has more explosive potential, but Duke's ability to drain clock and avoid mistakes keeps this game real tight. **TAKE: Duke +3**

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THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
Jack St. Under 58.5	Tulane Under 68	Boise St -3.5	Miami O Over 43	Ohio St Over 48



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