

fcs week #2: david & goliath & other david



labor day weekend is usually littered with money games, where fcs teams travel to a fbs stadium in exchange for a large sum of money. an exhibition game of sorts occurs where the big brother subdivision is supposed to dominate, but every now and then, the fcs team gets to steal the spotlight with an epic upset on an elevated stage. realistically, this happens between 5 - 10% of the time depending on the season. not likely 2023 though. the opening weekend saw the fcs go a combined 0 - 42 in these games. in fairness, 5 of those games were competitive down to the wire. albany even led most of the game, even carrying a 2 score lead until the closing minutes of the 3rd. none of those coin flips broke the fcs way.

yet the upsets did happen. div 2 has its own version of money games, where the lower level team travels to meet a fcs team for a modest-but-not-nothing sum of money. there were 13 of those this past weekend, and 3 were decided in favor of the d2 program. worse yet, 2 of the games were not particularly close.

fcs game of week



last week: florida a&m rattlers (1 – 0, 50) subdue jackson state tigers (1 – 1), 28 – 10

the rattlers finally got their vengeance after being smothered each of the last two labor day weekends by the tigers. marcus riley took the opening kickoff the length of the field to open scoring. the rattler d would then force a turnover on downs and recover a red zone fumble on the next 2 possession to set up 2 more tds. the rattlers were dominant on defense, smothering the tiger run game. dl anthony dunn in particular was highly disruptive with a pair of sacks and some critical hurries on 3rd down. wr jah'marae sheread caught an early td pass, helped convert a couple 3rd downs, and turned a quick out into a 70 yard gain (albeit after the game was out of hand) to keep the rattler offense on the field. the tigers were snakebitten, pun intended, all first half, falling behind 28- 0. wr rico powers did make a nice td catch on a 70 yard deep ball late to make the score a little more respectable, but it was far too little, too late.



next week: montana state bobcats @ south dakota state jackrabbits

christmas is coming early. the bobcats and the jackrabbits have duelled each other and split holiday week



playoff victories each of the last two years. the hype behind this game is well deserved. both teams have made at least the semis each of the last 3 years they played. the

bobcats will unleash a 2 qb set of wildcat like draws. the jacks will be more balanced, battering you up the middle on the ground before surprising over the top. both defenses are stout across the board. without the frigid december weather there to play 12th man this time around, one of those defensive players might have to step up. jack lb adam bock is the most dangerous on either team and, at home, may just be the difference maker.

richmond spiders (0 – 1)



last week: succumb to morgan state bears (1 – 0), 17 – 10



the bears stunned the spiders with unrelenting defensive pressure to eek out a huge upset. both teams traded long td drives to open the game, but then the offense basically evaporated. the bears finally pulled ahead in the 4th quarter after lb erick hunter made a strip sack to give them the ball at the spider 10. hunter was a force throughout, but he was not alone as the bear lbs blitzed continuously and the spiders struggled to pick it up. the bears would rack up 5 sacks and 8 tfl. more importantly, over the course of the 2nd half the spider offense failed to have a drive of more than 20 yards (save for a final hail mary at the buzzer). the bear offense fared little better. ever present, tristan wheeler led the way with 17 tackles, 3 tfl, and a sack, but the rest of the spider d played very well, keeping the bears to just 2 drives of any length all game. unfortunately, that was all it took. after the bears took the lead late, the spiders did blow a chance to respond, muffing a punt return with 2 minutes to play that effectively iced the game. it was the final frustration from a special teams unit that had missed 2 fg attempts and was pretty spotty on returns throughout.

next week: @ michigan state spartans (fbs)



the spartans were a dominant national force on the fbs level in 2021, but that was 2021. last year became an injury riddled descent back to the fat center of the big 10. hope has sprung eternal that 2023 was going to look more like a return to form until an exodus of top players after spring practice concluded raised questions over the program's direction. even upsetting a subar spartan team would be a massive undertaking for the spiders. the spartans are not exactly known for their defense, so this could be a good rebound game for rb savon smith and the rest of the reeling spider o. the spartans are also not the type of that will batter you between the tackles, which should free wheeler to go out and be wheeler. that said, this is still a big 10 power with an enviable pool of talent, so calibrate expectations accordingly. the spiders will look to move the ball more consistently and erase the stench of last week. if doing so puts the outcome in question at any point, the spiders are having a good week.

northern arizona lumberjacks



last week: steamrolled by arizona wildcats (fbs), 38 – 3



the lumberjacks were quickly shelved by a much stronger wildcats that were looking for vengeance. qb jayden de laura picked apart the l-jack d early, passing for 2 tds. he would add a 3rd on a 50 yard scramble in the 2nd half. in between, the wildcats would block a chip shot fg attempt and then return the ball 90 yards to effectively cement an easy win. the l-jacks offensively were able to move the ball through several outlet passes to wr owen coleman, but were otherwise stifled. db alex mcloughlin was the standout defensively, leading all in tackles, throwing in a sack, and single-handedly making a 4th and short stop when the game was still on the line. nevertheless, the cats were just too much this season.

next week: @ north dakota fighting hawks (1 – 0)



last season's loss to the fighting hawks was heartbreaking. the lumberjacks stormed back to take the lead in the final 2 minutes, just to see qb tommy schuster march downfield and take it right back. the highly efficient schuster is back at the helm of a hawks' offense that may not wow anyone with its overall numbers but managed to score on 92% of its red zone trips. the hawks take advantage of every opportunity allotted them the hawks also have an impressive special teams unit, highlighted by scary kr cj siegel. the hawks have been more clutch than dominant, so perhaps the lumberjacks—who have been far better on paper than when the game is on the line—can change the narrative and avenge last year's shortfall. owen is a special receiver and likely to be leaned on heavily in this game. should the rest of the offense around him live up to its potential, then schuster might have to be more than just timely in his passing attack.