

fcs week #5: walk off weekend



idaho's ricardo chavez technically did not kick a walk off field goal. the vandal nailed the game winning kick with still one second left on the clock, so he still had to kick off. sacramento state attempted to lateral their way back on the return, but the vandals nabbed a loose ball and carried it back the other way, meaning that the home team had achieved the rare feat of scoring

9 points in the final second of the game. for the hornets, the loss was bittersweet. days earlier, they had traveled to stanford (fbs) where they had upset coach troy taylor, the architect of their program who had left this past offseason. that victory seemed to signal a clear path to a 3rd straight big sky title for a team that had a regular season win streak that went back 22 games. those hopes were dashed just one game into the conference schedule. but again, not by a walk off. at least, technically.

there were several other traditional fcs powers who did fall prey to actual walk off kicks this past weekend. ivy league champ yale fell to cornell at the buzzer. bryant's ethan gettman downed ivy league runner up princeton by hitting a last minute fg to tie the game and then walking it off with another in ot. that kick broke the tigers' 17 game win streak against non-ivy opponents and marks the first time they lost before halloween in 5 years. eastern kentucky connected on a nearly 50 yarder to topple defending ovc champ southeastern missouri as time expired. though no one is exactly ready to crown st francis a "power", the red flash did represent the nec in the playoffs last year and also were dispatched by a walk off fg, this one from sacred heart.

sidelines

- sad news. coach buddy teevins passed away this week, a result of complications he had suffered after a really bad bike accident this offseason. teevins was dartmouth's winningest coach with 117 victories and 5 ivy titles in 2 stints with the big green. he will also be remembered as an advocate of player safety and one of the first coaches to hire women onto his staff.
- a changing of the guard is under way in the south. last year's socon and southland champs are still winless. still cursed samford was manhandled by chattanooga, and southeastern louisiana was completely ambushed by houston christian. a little too early to write any team off, but both of these have looked like a shadow of their 2022 selves.

aps (very early) picture

maybe a little premature, but here's a few teams that are already out in front having beaten some teams that have also already beaten some team, so worth keeping an eye on.

top dogs	w	l	aps	last week	next week
ut martin skyhawks	3	0	226	beat north alabama. 2 nd consecutive 200 yd rushing game from sam franklin eliminated from playoff contention last season by a coin flip & determined not to let that happen again.	tennessee state
florida a&m rattlers	2	0	200	beat alabama state. still cruising from opening win over nemesis jackson state.	@ mississippi valley state
north dakota state bison	3	0	200	3 easy wins & a bye. no surprise for the national runner up and 9 time champ.	south dakota

fcs game of week



last week: montana state bobcats (3 – 1, 90) dominate weber wildcats (1 – 1, 31), 40 – 0

the bobcats had little trouble disposing of one of their chief rivals. dominant in all facets of the game, the bobcats quickly amassed a 20 point lead in the 2nd quarter, then put the game completely out of hand with 3 straight td drives in the 4th. rb julius davis fueled most of the bobcat run heavy offense with 130 yards on the ground, but it was the 4 clutch tds from qb sean chambers (2 rushing, 2 passing) that would put this game out of reach. the shutout from the defense was pretty outstanding too, a first against big sky competition in 17 years. the wildcats would throw caution to the wind and go for broke on 4 consecutive 4th and shorts. 3 were deep in bobcat country, and the other was a fake punt. the bobcat front 7 featuring lb nolan askelson and de ben seymour stuffed each attempt. those shortfalls erased a strong game from dl brayden wilson, disruptive enough to keep the bobcats off balance at least during the odd numbered quarters. it also made bobcat fans forget about the 4 short kicks that were missed (2 pats, 2 fgs), which might be a reason—the only reason—for concern if the game had been closer.



next week: north dakota fighting hawks (2 – 0, 47) @ south dakota state jackrabbits (2 – 0, 100)

there are very few teams that are expected to challenge



the defending national champs for the mo valley crown. the hawks may be one of them. that other team from north dakota has been quietly putting together a very solid program for several years. qb tommy schuster is among the most efficient passers in the fcs, and when he gets some chemistry going with wr bo belquist, it looks like they are just out there playing catch. the hawks will try to control the clock and give their offense every chance to win late. the jackrabbits know

a thing or two about controlling the clock too. they prefer to dominate on the ground, with explosive rb isaiah davis leading the way. despite all the offensive potential, both teams are at their best when grinding out lower scoring games, and that presents some advantage for the jacks. lb adam bock leads an all-star front 7 that is quite accustomed to making big stops. schuster will need to make some timely throws because this d is unlikely to give him too many chances to look downfield.

richmond spiders (2 – 1, -44)



last week: overcome stony brook seawolves (0 – 3), 20 – 19

the spiders had gotten very used to disappointment on their previous trips to long island, but fighting their way through a gusty drencher of a night, the team made a last minute comeback. the win was made even more impressive by how hobbled the spiders became. by the 2nd half, they were down to their 3rd string qb and missing half the o-line. the spider offense looked pretty rough, but it had managed some big plays, most notably when wr nick

degennaro broke free to catch a 60 yard strike in the 2nd quarter. the seawolves could not manage to move the ball with any consistency against the spider d, but they were able to stay competitive because of turnovers, 5 in all including a pick 6, that led to 13 of their 20 points. a blocked pat, though, gave the spiders an opportunity to rally for a win with a late fg drive. that drive would be their longest of the game, one peppered with many clutch catches from degennaro. prior to that, the sea wolf d had kept them mostly hemmed in. nevertheless, the game was made very sloppy by the weather. at one point, db jalen hoyle made a pick and took it back to the spider red zone, only to watch his own team fumble the ball right back 2 snaps later. shortly after that, the spiders made their own pick and returned the ball to the seawolf goal line, only to be stuffed on 6 rush attempts up the middle (twice each by lb aidan kaler & hoyle) and come away with just a fg. that was the kind of night it was. alas, there is still reason to celebrate, as the team overcame the storm, the injuries, and their history of choking in lavelle to eek out a heart thumper.



spider of week—savon smith

while the running game certainly had its struggles, the spider rb would carry the day with some clutch running plays in the 2nd half. after being effectively smothered most of the 1st half, smith found a hole and exploded for a 40 yard td. he would later add a 20 yard burst to put the spiders in range for the game winning fg. given the weather and the injuries, the spiders relied heavily on smith. he carried the ball 22 times for 110 yards, which gave him as many touches than the spiders had pass attempts.

next week: vs hampton pirates (2 – 1)



the pirates have only won onecaa game since jumping to the conference last season and are not expected to be much of a challenge in the short term. still, the spiders have learned the hard way that these are the games they cannot look past. against a weaker out of conference schedule, the pirates have found some success playing big between the tackles with some power runs. not ideal for the spiders who are essentially the walking wounded on the d-line with both jeremiah grant and zander barnett questionable. the advantage will come in the pass d, where the spiders' secondary should be dominant, even with s bryson parker also ailing. if they are dominant enough for s aaron banks to even sneak up toward that line, things are going well. the spider offense is obviously under the microscope, but against the pirates, they likely do not need too many points, so whether the hobbled d can keep up their strong season might be the biggest question mark this weekend.

northern arizona lumberjacks (1 – 2, -27)



last week: stun montana griz (2 – 1, -24), 28 – 14

the lumberjacks did not just pull out a surprise win against their archnemesis. they basically controlled the game from start to finish. the primary reason for this dominance was dl eloi kwete. with 4 sacks and 4.5 tfl, kwete brought pressure throughout. most importantly, he was key on 3 consecutive turnovers-on-downs forced in the 4th quarter. he also made a strip fumble at midfield that would put his team ahead for good. immediately after recovering the ball, the l-jacks employed a trick play, pitching to the halfback who stopped, turned, and lobbed the ball 50 yards downfield for the score. the lumberjack offense would see their long opening drive come up empty when lb braxton hill made a clutch interception but kept things moving early to take a rare lead into halftime. in the 2nd half, the desperate griz would be shutout. wr keelan white would haul in 9 catches, but the secondary play of db alex mclaughlin and george steele prevented him from making any big gains. mclaughlin would add an athletic pick followed by a 30 yard return to end the griz' best 2nd half drive and set up the lumberjacks with a short field. the ensuing td was all the insurance they would need.



next week: @ sacramento state hornets (2 – 1)



out of the proverbial frying pan and into the home of the big sky champs. the hornets have been one of the most dominant regular season programs for the last several seasons, though a bit of a disappointment come playoff time. this year, they look a lot different with a brand new coach and a lot of transfers in starting roles, but they remain a solid bet to challenge for yet another title. their offense excels in all facets, and against the lumberjacks, the short-to-mid passing

attack could be a problem. specifically, the l-jacks have to find an answer for marshel martin, perhaps the top te at this level. the hornet d is pretty sound too and forces a lot of turnovers, a challenge for the l-jacks thus far this season. a clean game, another big defensive stand, and some timely plays could set the lumberjacks up for a 2nd miracle, but it would still be a bit of a miracle.