

fcs week #7: quick change



western carolina prevailed in the highest scoring game decided in regulation this season, 52 - 50, over chattanooga. the mocs had surprised the catamounts with some chicanery, a rb jump pass for a go-ahead 2 point conversion, with less than a minute to go. that allowed just enough time for 4 snaps. the first 3 were deep balls to wr aj columbo, his first 3 catches of the game. the last was a game winning field goal. the catamounts, looking to break a now 40 year long playoff drought, would not need a whole minute.

these type of wild finishes were supposed to be on the way out this season. over the offseason, the ncaa made some rule changes to speed up the pace of play by eliminating the temporary clock stoppages that occurred when they reset the chains after a first down in the final minutes of a game. the idea behind that change was to push back against rising game times, which had ballooned to an average of 3 hours and 17 minutes. the residual impact of that, though, was supposed to be fewer snaps and less late game scoring. halfway through 2023, scoring is down an almost imperceptible 1.4 ppg, but snaps remain eerily consistent with last season, with 66 being the norm. what's more, actual game time has gone up by 3 whole minutes. some of that might be admittedly aided by another catamount game that, ravaged by electric storms, clocked out at nearly 8.5 hours.

this particular game had a perfectly average 132 combined snaps over 3 hours and 22 minutes, but don't blame the catamounts for that. they held up their end of the scoring pallooza by taking less than 50 snaps and holding the ball for less than 20 minutes. in the end, the ncaa could have used fewer rule changes and more catamounts for their pace of play concerns.

sidelines

- central arkansas rallied to score 32 points in the 4th quarter against southeastern missouri. the bears took their first lead of the game in the final 20 seconds. it was the biggest 4th quarter comeback in over a decade.
- morgan state's homecoming game against stony brook was cancelled in the wake of a mass shooting on the school's campus. 5 students were wounded leaving the school's homecoming coronation. while no arrests have been made, police indicated that the shooting was tied to an altercation taking place outside the event and the victims were unintended, just leaving the building at the wrong time.

aps picture

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next week

<i>top dogs</i>					
<i>south dakota coyotes</i>	4	0	400	crush murray state	youngstown
<i>harvard crimson</i>	4	0	328	handle cornell behind 360 yards of offense & 6 tds from qb charles deprima. coach murphy tied all time record for ivy league wins with 135.	howard
<i>south dakota state jackrabbits</i>	4	0	317	blowout illinois state behind 200 yards of isaiah davis running.	northern iowa
<i>ut martin skyhawks</i>	5	0	301	ot victory over eastern illinois. block a fg attempt at the end of regulation to force ot, then stop a 2 point conversion to seal the win.	bye
<i>idaho vandals</i>	4	0	297	roll over cal poly	bye
<i>in the hunt</i>					
<i>albany great danes</i>	4	0	253	edge towson thanks to 23 tackles from lb dylan kelly, the last of which came at the goal line to preserve the win	@ new hampshire
<i>lafayette leopards</i>	5	0	241	hang on against princeton thanks to tough d-line play. breaks a 12 game losing streak to the tigers and is only the 5 th win in the 53 game series going back to 1883.	bye
<i>dark horses</i>					
<i>north dakota state bison</i>	4	1	208	bulldoze missouri state	@ north dakota
<i>north carolina central eagles</i>	4	0	200	28 unanswered points to beat #15 elon and claim 500 th win all time	@ morgan state
<i>villanova wildcats</i>	4	1	198	dominate north carolina a&t	#15 elon (below)
<i>florida a&m rattlers</i>	4	0	182	qb jeremy moussa rallies for a 4 th quarter comeback over southern	bye
<i>delaware blue hens</i>	4	0	176	destroy duquesne	north carolina a&t
<i>holy cross crusaders</i>	4	1	175	blast bucknell	bye

<i>montana state bobcats</i>	4	1	167	bye	cal poly
<i>elon phoenix</i>	3	2	161	fall to #9 north carolina central	@ #10 villanova (below)

dropping back: southern illinois was manhandled by youngstown, surrendering 7 sacks in the blowout.

fcs game of week



last week: incarnate word cardinals (3 – 0, 67) survive southeastern louisiana lions (0 – 4), 33 – 26

the cardinals built up a big lead in the first half and then held on as the desperate lions made a run. cardinal qb zach calzada had a 300 yard passing game by the end of the 3rd quarter and seemed fully in control. most of those yards came thanks to 10 catches by wr brandon porter, who amassed 180 on the day including slipping past a few defenders for a 70 yard gain that would set the cards up with a sizeable lead. things changed in the final quarter when the offense managed just 2 yards on 3 drives. db ian goodly made several key stops (16 tackles on the day), broke up a 4th down pass, and made a strip near the cardinal goal line that would shortly thereafter narrow the cardinal lead to a single td. nevertheless, nearly a comeback is not a comeback. qb eli sawyer had led the lions downfield repeatedly, but mistakes seemed to doom their scoring chances. a fumble was returned 60 yards for a cardinal td. a botched flip on a 2 point attempt led to 2 the other way. down the stretch, sawyer twice got into the red zone only to see one ball fall incomplete and another picked off to end the game.



next week: elon phoenix (3 – 2, 161, #15) @ villanova wildcats (4 – 1, 198, #10)

the wildcats have the pedigree to challenge for another caa title after a down showing last season. ordinarily a defensive



stalwart, the wildcats have found most of their success this year in up tempo shootouts. while the backfield still has lots of talent, qb connor watkins has offered the cats a new path to victory by finding wrs rayjuan pringle and jaaron halek downfield. the phoenix are often overlooked but they are coming off a 5th straight winning season and a playoff run. plus they have played the more difficult schedule to date. their front 7 has been phenomenal at keeping rushing offenses in check, so the real challenge is whether coverage ace db bo sanders can keep those wildcat receivers from doing big damage. a lower scoring game surprisingly favors the phoenix.

richmond spiders (3 – 2, -90)



last week: upend maine black bears (1 – 4, -219), 42 – 31

the spiders prevail in a first half shootout. fans of gadget plays had their fill of chicanery as both coaches went to the back of the playbook to pull out multiple

flea flickers, receiver options, reverses, and pass-backs. the black bears started it by opening the game with two big trick play tds, but the spiders were soon in pursuit, both in wild play calls and tds. wr nick degennaro would pull in a deep strike, dodge a defender, and sprint 60 yards to get the spiders within a fg. he would dominate thereafter, collecting 2 more tds. after first quarter, both

teams settled into more conventional—albeit very aggressive—play calling. the spider d kicked in at that point with several big stops. db d’angelo stocker made an interception on deep ball just before the half, later adding a deflection and forced fumble. lb donovan hoilette came up with a pair of 3rd down sacks that ended any significant threat of a bear comeback. meanwhile, the spider offense scored 5 tds before halftime. for his part, black bear qb derek robertson was outstanding, racking up 320 yards passing before being knocked out of the game in the 4th. wr joe gillette was his big go-to target with 8 catches and 180 yards. he caught a 70 yard flea flicker to open the scoring, added another 50 yard td in the 2nd quarter, and a 3rd against a goal line stand late. as the game slowed down in the 2nd half, the bears could not overcome their early defecits and folded.



spider of week—camden coleman

making his first collegiate start, the new spider qb (their 4th) had one of the best passing games in team history. he tied a record for td passes with 6. more importantly, those tds came on 6 consecutive drives, changing the game from being down multiple scores to being up multiple scores. 5 of those 6 drives were 70+ yards. during this stretch, he looked relatively unstoppable, throwing for 370 yards and routinely hitting receivers on deep routes in stride.

next week: @ rhode island rams (4 – 1, 119)



it has been nearly 40 years since the rams last made a playoff appearance, and while most of that time they were pretty deep under .500, recent improved play got them at least on the bubble in 2022. this year, the rams are off to a good start. qb kasim hill has been strong, and the o-line, marked by nick correia and lorenzo thompson, is among the best in the caa. while the rams do score points, the spiders lb duo of tristan wheeler and wayne galloway should once again contain the run and make them one-dimensional. the ram d is led by lb enan stewart and all-around solid. they excel particularly on passing downs, which should present something of a challenge for a spider team that has been airing it out for the last 6 quarters. the rams are by far and away the best fcs team the spiders have seen this season, but the “good not great” moniker looks apt again this year, meaning this team is beatable. that said, the rams know they can ill afford to lose games like this in october if they want to finally make the field in november.

northern arizona lumberjacks (2 – 3, 35)



last week: smother weber wildcats (2 – 2, 60), 27 – 10

the lumberjacks pull off another surprise by knocking off the wildcats in ogden thanks to a massive 2nd quarter. wr coleman owen was as usual a primary receiver with 10 catches, but his real breakthrough came on special teams with a 90 yard punt return to break the game open. that effectively fueled a 20 point swing in the lumberjacks' favor. offensively, the l-jacks rode rb devon starling and the run game to cement that lead. defensively, the l-jacks played havoc in the wildcat backfield. dl eloi kwete was frequently able to bring pressure. db alex mclaughlin was in on a lot of plays as well, including the game-ending pick. the wildcats' d lived up to its billing most of the game with outstanding performances from the d-line (keahnhast thompson's pressure), the lbing corps (winston reid's 16 tackles including some clutch tfl), and the secondary (colvin nasame's 13 tackles). none of that was enough to compensate for the 20 point burst in the 2nd quarter.



next week: vs portland state vikings (1 – 1, 6)



it has been a decade since affable bruce barnum took over the vikings, and while "barneyball" had its initial success, the only notoriety the coach has attained in recent years is inadvertently buying the city of portland a beer. on the field, the vikings will play a lot of qb option and wildcat. they win with defense though. lb parker mckenna is adept against the run and even better when he drops back into coverage. the lumberjacks are coming off perhaps the most challenging 3 game set of the last decade, and somehow finished just a point short of a sweep. chewing up time of possession and winning the battles in the trenches have been the keys to their success during that stretch. should the emerging starling be able to pound the ball again, this game is theirs for the taking. that said, the vikings are thirsty for a winning season, and barnum may still have a bar tab to repay.