

fcs week #8: closed due to gun violence



ronnie caldwell, a 2 year starter at northwestern state, died after suffering multiple gunshot wounds outside his apartment late last thursday. the demons cancelled their game last weekend against rival nicholls state as a result and are re-scheduling this week's game against

southeastern louisiana to accommodate the team's attendance at his funeral. it was sadly the 2nd fcs game cancelled due to gun violence in a week.

1300 mi northeast of natchitoches, morgan state cancelled its game against stony brook after a mass shooting outside a homecoming event that left 5 students wounded. the timing of these two incidents is eerily coincidental, but there are few similarities beyond that. morgan state is located in a very urban section of baltimore. northwestern state's campus is in a very rural, college town in louisiana. the morgan state shooting was completely random. two teenagers with no ties to the school were attempting to ambush someone else at just the wrong moment when students were leaving an assmebly. caldwell's murder was singular and appears to have been targeted. there has been arrest related to the morgan state shooting, and the other suspect has been identified. no news at all for the natchioches community.

a week removed from their shooting, morgan state has already adopted a plan to invest \$22 million to build an 8 foot wall around its campus with limited points of egress, a sad statement on the impact of these violent acts on campus life and tangentially fcs football.

sidelines

- north dakota returned the opening kickoff 100 yards and did not let up after that, absolutely thrashing rival north dakota state. it was the first time the fighting hawks had prevailed in the rivalry since both programs jumped to the fcs level, and their first win in 20 seasons. that said, because the programs had been in different conferences until recently, they had gone over a decade without facing each other. north dakota still leads the all-time rivalry 63 - 50. for the usually dominant bison, they have achieved the almost unthinkable distinction of losing to all 3 dakota teams in calendar year 2023.

aps picture

w 1 aps last week

next week

top dogs

south dakota state
jackrabbits

5	0	397	blowout northern iowa for 20 th consecutive win	@ #10 southern illinois (below)
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<i>south dakota coyotes</i>	5	0	362	surrender big lead to youngstown but rally for a buzzer beating fg to claim the win	@ indiana state
<i>harvard crimson</i>	5	0	312	trounce howard	@ archrival princeton

in the hunt

<i>ut martin skyhawks</i>	5	0	273	bye	charleston southern
<i>western carolina catamounts</i>	5	0	269	bye	#21 furman
<i>lafayette leopards</i>	5	0	252	bye	@ #13 holy cross
<i>delaware blue hens</i>	5	0	248	beat north carolina a&t	@ hampton
<i>villanova wildcats</i>	5	1	241	beat #23 elon (below)	bye
<i>montana griz</i>	5	1	239	pressure, pressure, pressure built a lead over #16 idaho, withstood a late comeback, and stopped a 2 point attempt to tie in the last 2 min	bye

dark horses

<i>southern illinois salukis</i>	4	1	225	dominate murray state	#1 south dakota state (below)
<i>north dakota fighting hawks</i>	4	1	220	crush #20 north dakota state	@ northern iowa
<i>central arkansas bears</i>	4	1	211	late comeback over stephen f austin	bye
<i>holy cross crusaders</i>	4	1	203	bye	#6 lafayette
<i>montana state bobcats</i>	5	1	198	destroy cal poly	@ sacramento state
<i>albany great danes</i>	4	1	197	fall to new hampshire late	rhode island
<i>idaho vandals</i>	4	1	191	edged by #9 montana	bye
<i>florida a&m rattlers</i>	4	0	189	bye	@ texas southern

dropping back: north dakota state was shellacked by in-state rival #11 north dakota. elon fell to #8 villanova. nc central had a bye and was overtaken.

also rans: penn quakers (4 – 1, 177), north carolina central eagles (4 – 0, 173), north dakota state bison (4 – 2, 169), furman paladins (5 – 0, 150), eastern kentucky colonels (3 – 1, 133), elon phoenix (3 – 3, 122)

fcs game of week



last week: villanova wildcats (5 – 1, 241, #8) shutout elon phoenix (3 – 3, 122, #23), 21 – 0



the wildcats dominated in a rain soaked, sloppy game by keeping the phoenix offense off the field. the weather more or less shutdown both passing attacks. the cats did the rest. their defense limited the phoenix to under a 100 yards total for the game. meanwhile, the offense racked up 440 yards on the ground, which amounted to a 2-to-1 advantage in top. normally far more of a passing threat, qb connor watkins effectively ran an option offense with a steady stream of quality backs. both he and rb isaiah ragland accounted for 130 yards rushing each.

symbolically, the game could be summarized in a single sequence early on. the phoenix had the ball 4th & short at midfield, ran up the middle, and were stopped. 3 snaps later, the wildcats had the ball 4th & short still at midfield, ran up the middle, and rb td ayo duroajaiye broke through for a 50 yard mad scramble to the end zone. it was the first of 3 tds for "td". lb brandon tyson led all defenders with 14 tackles and 2 tfl to keep the phoenix in the game, but the offense simply could not move the ball through the cats or the mud.



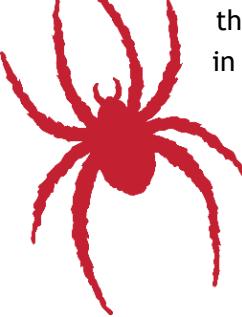
next week: south dakota state jackrabbits (5 – 0, 397, #1) @ southern illinois salukis (4 – 1, 225, #10)



the salukis are back. after a down year in 2022, the salukis look like the same throw-caution-to-the-wind team that had evolved from underdog spoiler to outside contender in the mo valley. largely, this resurgence can be attributed to some big plays from their fierce defense. this week, it will no doubt be tested by the defending national champs. the jackrabbits are still built upon a mantle of strong defensive play too. anchored by now healthy lb adam bock and s cole reeder, the jacks have very, very few vulnerabilities. while the saluki d may slow things down enough to keep this one competitive, they may be out there for a long time defending a short field. the jack d seems to just shut opponents down, so the offense may not need to be as explosive as usual.

richmond spiders (4 – 2, -10)

last week: surprise rhode island rams (4 – 2, 85), 24 – 17

 the spiders played an all-around solid game and dispatched a promising rams team in the process. the spiders got out in front in the opening half by forcing a pair of key turnovers and near immediately tossing tds to wr nick degennaro on both of them. the 2nd of those, following a sack and fumble when the rams were threatening, was a 70 yard bomb. though the rams would keep pace throughout, the lead from that big turnaround held up. qb kasim hill was dangerous, throwing for 370 yards including a couple downfield strikes himself, but neither hill nor the ram running game seemed to be able to make much push on the ground. the ram d played very well, particularly on 3rd down, where the spiders struggled heavily. db brent jackson knocked down one 3rd down pass and intercepted another, fellow db jordan colbert added his own interception and some key stops, and lb aj pena added a pair of tfl and a strip sack. nevertheless, the offense could not seem to capitalize until very late. the desperate rams did pile on a lot of yards and a td in the final 5 minutes, but that was only after trailing by 2 scores.



spider of week—jeremiah grant

the spiders' d-line was tremendous at hemming in the mobile hill with 6 sacks, including 5 before halftime. grant accounted for half of them. coming off the edge, grant was also instrumental in taking away the outside rushing game.

next week: **@ north carolina a&t aggies (1 – 4, -4)**



the aggies were a dominant force in the hbcu universe a few years ago, cruising past relatively weak meac schedules and routinely winning the celebration bowl. thinking of themselves a rising national contender, the aggies made the surprising move of foregoing that money and prestige, instead scheduling elite teams out of conference and making two upward conference jumps (first the big south, now the caa). in the midst of this, covid temporarily shut the program down, and upon their resumption, it appeared icarus flew a little too close to the sun. the aggies have not been bad, rather just disappointingly mediocre. despite the abysmal record, 2023 could be more of the same. they played tough teams and fared poorly, but spiders beware, the aggs are likely coming in with a chip on their shoulder. aggie kryptonite has been run-first teams. the spiders are not a run-first team. the aggies have had a pretty decent secondary, anchored by cb karon prunty who has just been itching for an opponent to finally throw his way. where the spiders may match up better is on defense. the spider d-line between grant and zander barnett have been generating a lot of pressure, which is definitely a vulnerability of the home team. the spiders rank in the top 5 in the nation for takeaways with 16 and top 10 for giveaways also with 16. if they can keep forcing those defensive game changers, they can win. if they can simply clean up the offensive play, they can win. if ever both happen, the spiders should win easily.

northern arizona lumberjacks (2 – 4)



last week: pounded by portland state vikings (2 – 1, 50), 45 – 21

the vikings ran all over the lumberjacks, literally. the vikings ran the ball for 370 yards and scored tds on 5 consecutive drives midway through the game to bury the l-jacks. rb quincy



craig led all rushers, thanks to a 70 yard burst that set up a td, and caught 2 screens for scores as well. lb heston lameta made an impressive number of tackles (13), but he and the rest of the l-jack d just could not keep the vikings from converting 3rd downs and keeping drives alive. to counteract this, the l-jack offense began throwing the ball downfield, finding both wrs coleman owen and hendrix johnson for some big gains. eventually, this came back to bite them. db duhron goodman, in particular, was able to shutdown a lot of would be targets, making a big interception and breaking up a 4th down pass to keep the l-jacks from clawing back into it.

next week: bye.