

fcs week #9: the last crusade



matthew sluka rushed for 330 yards last weekend, which is 60 more yards than anyone else has in a single game this year. more surprisingly, matthew sluka is a quarterback, and those 330 yards are the most rushed by a qb in the history of ncaa d1 football. there have been a lot of triple option systems that have gaudy qb rushing stats over the totality of college football, but no one has ever gotten to 330 yards. most surprisingly though, matthew sluka lost.

holy cross had not lost in a patriot league game since 2019, a span of 19 consecutive wins. (oddly, that falls just short of a record because the patriot does not count its own impromptu championship game in the covid spring season of 2021.) moreover, sluka himself has never lost in conference. the holy cross qb has developed quite a reputation for clutch plays. slippery sluka has been nothing short of a highlight reel of mad scrambles and hail marys. last weekend looked like more of the same, when en route to his record setting performance, he engineered 4 tds on the final 4 drives of the game, 3 of which he personally scored. alas, the crusaders were still down by a field goal when time on this wild game finally expired.

the team that stood in sluka's way was lafayette, who has been perhaps the biggest surprise of all. the leopards have not been much of a factor in recent years. this marked their 6th win already. they had not experienced a 6 win season since 2009 (which includes the 2013 team that tie-broke its way into the playoffs, to date the only time a team with a losing record has made the field). they won this won on thanks to the performance of rb jamar curtis, whose 230 yards pale in comparison to sluka but still make the top 10 on the year. the victory ensures them a winning season and puts them very much in line for the patriot crown. coincidentally, the leopards were also the last patriot team to upset the crusaders, meaning that holy cross' two big streaks that were recently ended—regular season wins and in-conference victories—were both bookended by the same programs.

sidelines

- montana state took down sacramento state in a long awaited game between the big sky frontrunners. the two teams had not played since 2019, leaving a lot of room for debate over who was the real big sky champ. of course, the hornets were already stung by idaho, so this was not exactly the battle of undefeateds that had been promised. still the game had plenty of excitement with 5 4th quarter tds. touchdown tommy mellot returned from injury and, to the surprise of none, scored the difference making two touchdowns for the bobcats.
- princeton made 3 picks to upset harvard, and penn receiver jared richards caught 17 passes to stun yale, both of which created a logjam in the ivy. 5 of 8 teams are currently in an unbreakable tie for 1st, and surprisingly, defending champ and presumptive favorite yale is not one of them.

aps picture

w 1 aps last week

next week

<i>top dogs</i>					
<i>south dakota state jackrabbits</i>	6	0	456	beat #17 southern illinois (below)	@ #3 south dakota (below)
<i>ut martin skyhawks</i>	6	0	359	shutout charleston southern	@ last year's big south champ gardner webb
<i>south dakota coyotes</i>	6	0	336	smother indiana state	#1 south dakota state (below)
<i>lafayette leopards</i>	6	0	308	230 yards rushing from rb jamar curtis was enough to down previous 4 time patriot champ #20 holy cross	@ georgetown
<i>in the hunt</i>					
<i>delaware blue hens</i>	6	0	291	destroy hampton	@ towson
<i>albany great danes</i>	5	1	286	destroy rhode island	@ maine
<i>harvard crimson</i>	5	1	265	comeback bid falters with 3 picks by archnemesiis princeton	dartmouth
<i>furman paladins</i>	6	0	263	beat #11 western carolina. also knocked off defending champ samford in 9 sack explosion.	@ eastern tennessee state
<i>villanova wildcats</i>	5	1	254	bye	stony brook
<i>dark horses</i>					
<i>montana griz</i>	5	1	242	bye	northern colorado
<i>western carolina catamounts</i>	5	1	240	fall to #8 furman	mercier
<i>montana state bobcats</i>	6	1	228	knock off defending big sky champ sacramento state	@ #15 idaho
<i>central arkansas bears</i>	4	1	208	late comeback drive against stephen f austin	tarleton state
<i>north carolina central eagles</i>	5	0	208	hold off morgan state wth 4 th quarter outburst. follows big win over #22 elon.	defending meac champ south carolina state

<i>idaho vandals</i>	4	1	205	bye	#12 montana state
<i>penn quakers</i>	5	1	204	beat defending ivy champ yale	brown
<i>southern illinois salukis</i>	4	2	200	fall to #1 south dakota state (below)	western illinois
<i>florida a&m rattlers</i>	5	0	200	beat texas southern	prairie view

dropping back: a week after lighting up north dakota state, **north dakota** was shutout by #24 northern iowa. a 19 patriot game win streak was snapped when **holy cross** fell to #4 lafayette.

also rans: north dakota state bison (5 – 2, 182), holy cross crusaders (4 – 2, 173), north dakota fighting hawks (4 – 2, 171), elon phoenix (4 – 3, 163), austin peay governors (5 – 1, 156), northern iowa panthers (4 – 2, 154)

fcs game of week



last week: south dakota state jackrabbits (6 – 0, 456, #1) edge southern illinois salukis (4 – 2, 200, #17), 17 – 10

the jackrabbits prevail in a defensive grinder, keeping the salukis off the scoresheet until the 4th quarter. rb isaiah davis was his usual dominant self on the ground, moving the ball just enough to build up a 2 score lead. the real story was the defense, with lb jason freeman leading the way, that smothered the salukis. their only drives of note prior to the final quarter ended in turnovers, one of which became 7 for the jacks. the saluki d made its own big stand late, forcing a fumble in their own red zone. it was the first time in 70 red zone attempts that the jacks did not score. wr d'ante cox would catch a deep ball a few snaps later to end the shutout and keep the game close. both teams traded field goals in the closing minutes, and the salukis ran out of time before they could mount another comeback bid.



next week: : south dakota state jackrabbits (6 – 0, 456, #1) @ south dakota coyotes (6 – 0, 336, #3)

few teams have been as pleasant a surprise this season as the coyotes. usually, they are just trying to remind people that there is actually a 4th fcs team in the dakotas, but their impressive start has them contending down the stretch for a mo valley crown. their once abysmal offense has increased per game scoring by over 60%, and the coyotes have found some crazy magic in the closing minutes of halves. their fantasy run may get a cruel dose of reality this weekend when their archrival and defending national champ comes to town. the jackrabbits are a defensive force, with lbs freeman and adam bock controlling the game up front and s cale reeder in lockdown coverage behind. when they have the ball, they do not like to give it back, hammering away with star rb davis. and if it really does come down to crazy magic in the



closing minutes, let me introduce the unflappable mark gronowski. the jacks still have not lost a game to another fcs opponent while he was playing qb. the coyotes have long been in the jackrabbit shadow and now have an opportunity to be the king of the hill, a position the jacks themselves were in with another dakota team just a year ago.

richmond spiders (5 – 2, 19)

last week: cruise past north carolina a&t aggies (1 – 5, - 57), 33 – 10



the spiders prevail in an odd game where both sides mustered most of their scoring from defense and special teams, and the offenses more or less went quiet. the spiders' 1st drive was the longest and only offensive td for either team, and by the end of the opening quarter, they already had all the scoring they would need. the spiders' d would come up with two pick-6s. the spiders would also block a punt for another td. the aggies would counter when taymon cooke returned a kickoff the length of the field. just before half,

they added a fg when lb avarion cole intercepted the ball. the aggie defense played well throughout, with lb bj turner putting on a clinic of critical tackles and pass break ups to keep the spiders from taking over, but their offense failed to mount any serious challenge and would be shutout in the 2nd half.



*spider of week—*aaron banks

the entire spider pass d is probably deserving of a shout out, having held the aggies to under 40 yards passing, kept them at less than 5 yards per completion, and made 3 picks to boot. db aaron banks was arguably the most visible and was rewarded with a pick 6, making a 30 yard return to ice the game.

next week: campbell camels (4 – 3, 49)



the camels are a bit of an enigma. a historically awful program which has never had a winning season against d1 competition, the camels only recently began offering scholarships, and quickly followed that up with upgraded facilities, two conference hops, and a stunning 18 fbs transfers this offseason in a very unquiet bid to become competitive. most of the way through their inaugural season in the caa, that elusive winning record is within their grasp. the team has an effective offense, which while balanced, really cranks up when the running game gets going. the o-line is anchored by half-human, half-mountain mike edwards at left tackle, and they have a host of rbs that like to run off that side. the spider d-line is quick and can come from all sides, which should give them an edge in the trenches, but that will definitely be the battle to watch. the camels do not have a lock-down defense, so this game could set up very nicely for likely starting qb camden coleman (assuming he plays). regardless of who is under center, wr nick degennaro should be a safe bet

for some big plays. the spiders are on a 3 game win streak and look a lot better in october than september, but the camels may well be the best team they have faced to date.

northern arizona lumberjacks (2 – 4, -54)



last week: bye.

next week: uc davis aggies (4 – 2, 29)



the aggies are often mistaken for a big sky contender only to be exposed when the competition gets a little stronger. 2023 threatens to be a repeat of that scenario, with a lot of close games early against teams that turned out to not be all that strong. the aggies still have miles hastings at qb, who may be the best offensive player in the conference, and that alone should give the lumberjacks concern. however, some of the matchups look favorable for another big upset. the kwete brothers should be regular disruptors in the aggie backfield, and heston lameta and the rest of the l-jack front 7 look well poised to control the runs and short passes. hastings can beat you deep, but making the aggies a one trick pony definitely makes them vulnerable. the l-jacks would be wise to heavily feature rb devon starling too, who has been at his best against better competition. the aggies are not as strong up front defensively. if all that comes to be and the lumberjacks can control the pace of play, hastings may be sweating a tight one down the stretch. both of these teams are coming off bye weeks and should be well prepared for each other.