

fcs week #11: heartburn



statistically speaking, the first week of november tends to be a good one for our collective heart health. the end of daylight savings time means an extra hour of rest for most of the country, which spread across the cohort population of the us equals a small but consistent drop in cardiac events. in upstate carolina, the furman paladins decided to cool the collective heart rates of socon fans even more by taking so much drama out of the stretch run. furman pulled off a gutsy win to claim the socon title and become the first team into the playoff field. the paladins did it with their usual gritty defensive play. they also benefitted from a pair of late td passes from a backup qb after losing their starter to injury. the rest of the fcs bubble breathed a sigh of relief, as furman and its ironclad playoff resume could have easily been upset by chattanooga and handed the marginal mocs an autobid.

not every conference frontrunner would rise to that challenge. delaware was ambushed early by elon, creating a 5 way tie atop the caa. lafayette was ambushed early by colgate, rallied to tie, then fell short in overtime, making the patriot race once again a race. eastern kentucky was in a snoozefest of a duel with united rival austin peay for 3 quarters, then suddenly the two erupted for 8 scores. the governors, not the colonels, would prevail in ot, giving them a clear path to the first ever united championship and leaving eastern kentucky's postseason chances very much in the gray murk.

of course, the most notable conference race shift came in the southland where the cancellation of northwestern state's season is having an unforeseen impact. incarnate word was widely expected to cruise through a down year for the southland but fell badly to nicholls state in a surprise. the colonels now own the tie break and need just one more win in their final 2 games for the most unlikely of playoff appearances. on the other side, the northwestern state cancellation leaves the cardinals with 6 d1 wins against a really bad schedule and just 1 more game to demonstrate that this 2022 semifinalist deserves a return visit to the playoff field. incarnate word gets an unplanned bye next week to mull things over, but don't expect the blood pressure to drop much with so much on the line and so little left to do about it.

sidelines

- illinois state coach brock spack earned his 100th missouri valley victory the hard way, relying up two replay reviews on the final game winning drive. his trailing redbirds were stopped on 4th down, only to have the spot overturned by video review, then had the 2 point pass attempt called incomplete, also overturned.
- order restored? just 2 weeks after an unprecedeted and unbreakable 5 way tie for 1st in the 8 team ivy, every one of those contenders have fallen by the wayside except harvard. the frontrunner crimson are now in sole possession of the top spot.

aps picture

w I aps last week

next week

<i>top dogs</i>					
<i>south dakota state jackrabbits</i>	8	0	669	defeat north dakota state (below)	@ youngstown
<i>south dakota coyotes</i>	7	1	409	prevail over southern illinois in defensive grinder. lb brandon webb collected 4 sacks and deflected a 4 th & goal pass to end the game.	#20 north dakota (below)
<i>albany great danes</i>	7	1	374	beat william & mary	@ stony brook
<i>in the hunt</i>					
<i>harvard crimson</i>	7	1	338	beat columbia for 900 th all time win	#23 penn
<i>furman paladins</i>	8	0	327	late score to knock off chattanooga & win socon title	vmi
<i>dark horses</i>					
<i>villanova wildcats</i>	7	1	311	defeat new hampshire	towson
<i>montana griz</i>	7	1	304	crush defending big sky champ sacramento state, making bobby hauck the winningest big sky coach of all time (124 victories)	@ portland state
<i>florida a&m rattlers</i>	7	0	304	beat alabama state	div 2 lincoln
<i>idaho vandals</i>	6	1	296	beat northern colorado	@ weber
<i>ut martin skyhawks</i>	7	1	295	survive in ot thriller by making one handed diving interception on a tipped ball in the end zone for 11 th consecutive victory over tennessee tech	defending ovc champ southeastern missouri
<i>gardner webb runnin' bulldogs</i>	5	2	290	survive in ot thriller with bryant by scoring two tds in final 4 minutes of regulation & stopping a 2 point attempt	@ tennessee tech
<i>austin peay governors</i>	7	1	286	survive in ot thriller with eastern kentucky where both teams combined for 8 scoring drives after start of 4 th quarter	utah tech
<i>lafayette leopards</i>	7	1	286	do not survive in ot thriller with colgate despite rallying to tie at the end of regulation	fordham

<i>delaware blue hens</i>	7	1	281	fall short in pass happy comeback attempt against #18 elon thanks to a late game fumble	@ campbell
<i>nc central eagles</i>	7	0	276	handle norfolk state	@ howard
<i>holy cross crusaders</i>	6	2	257	overcome turnover laden opening quarter and 3 td deficit to sink lehigh	@ army (fbs)
<i>montana state bobcats</i>	7	2	255	beat northern arizona (below)	eastern washington

also rans: elon phoenix (5 – 3, 234), western carolina catamounts (6 – 2, 218), north dakota fighting hawks (6 – 2, 211), northern iowa panthers (6 – 2, 201), central arkansas bears (5 – 2, 197), penn quakers (6 – 2, 192), alabama state hornets (5 – 2, 171)

fcs game of week



next week: south dakota state jackrabbits (8 – 0, 669, #1) dismantle north dakota state bison (6 – 3, 152), 33 – 16

the jackrabbits claim yet another dakota marker, winning their 5th straight over the team that spent the decade prior tormenting them. offensively, the jackrabbits could not be stopped, scoring on their first 5 possessions. they played rope-a-dope with the vaunted bison defense, initially coming out with a huge dose of rb isaiah davis and the power run at outset and following that with some downfield strikes as the half approached. almost all the passing yards came on mid-to-deep tosses to one of the janke twins, but it was jaden who would break the game open with a pair of td receptions, including a 50 yarder. by the 2nd half, the jacks were alternating davis up-the-middle to janke-in-the-flat so effectively, the game quickly became out of reach. qb cam miller tried to keep pace for the bison, but while he was effective on the ground, 3 turnovers would haunt his team, all deep in bison territory. jack lb jason freeman led that defensive effort, collecting a dozen tackles and making the pick that would effectively end the game. in a true turning of the tables, over the last 7 years, the bison have now lost 7 times to the jackrabbits and only 6 to everyone else combined.



next week: north dakota fighting hawks (6 – 2, 211, #20) @ south dakota coyotes (7 – 1, 409, #2)

every combination of a dakota team has become a game of the week, so why not this one? the fighting hawks are still fighting for their playoff lives, and the coyotes are looking to prove that they have truly earned a spot amongst the seeds. the matchup is a true strength on strength. after being sunk by a porous d last year, the coyotes have



developed into one of the stingiest scoring defenses in the entire country. lb brock morgenson and cb myles harden headline a solid corps that simply refuses to give up big plays, particularly taking away the vertical passing game. the hawks will counter with one of the most experienced and efficient qbs in the fcs, tommy schuster, who has found some extra special chemistry with a big play receiver in bo belquist. while the yotes have looked terrifyingly smothering, the hawks have more out cards here making an upset very much in reach. the hawks can slow play down by going to a conservative but capable run game. the hawks can also keep an anemic coyote o in check with a decent dose of pressure. if those things work out and schuster only needs to make a few big throws, the dynamic of this game is a lot different. even when the coyotes are fully in control, their style of play never puts the score too far out of reach.

richmond spiders (6 – 2, 67)

last week: bye.

next week: vs elon phoenix (5 – 3, 234, #18)

the phoenix enter each season woefully underrated. while never dominant, the phoenix have been eerily consistent. they are the only team to have held a winning record in the caa each of the last 6 full seasons despite somehow managed to pulling the toughest schedule in nearly all of them. thanks to an upset of frontrunner delaware last week, the phoenix actually have put themselves back on the bubble with a shot at the caa crown. the spiders are looking to follow that example with an upset this week to steal that same opportunity. thw two teams tend to find success in opposite ways. the phoenix live in the trenches. on offense, they will try to ride rb jalen hampton. on defense, they rely on aggressive play from their front 7, particularly run stuffer lb brandon tyson. the spiders have found their path through big plays. wr nick degennaro has been a force with clutch catches and the ability to escape, making him a big play threat regardless of who is lining up under center. freshman phenom camden coleman certainly is a big arm though his status after aggravating an injury two weeks ago is still unknown. original starter kyle wickersham has been, though, every bit as effective since his own return from injury. on the other side of the ball, the spider pass d has looked incredible of late, particularly making big stops and forcing turnovers. aaron banks and company rank in the top 2 in the fcs for turnovers, interceptions, and defensive scores. those factors make containing hampton and forcing some long 3rd downs all the more critical. both of these teams look fairly balanced on paper, but the spiders are on a tear with 4 straight wins. last year's match was a double ot thriller that the spiders let slip away. given the stakes, this would be a good time for a little vengeance.



northern arizona lumberjacks (3 – 5, -16)



last week: trampled by montana state bobcats (7 – 2, 255, #17), 45 – 21

the bobcats ran over the lumberjacks early and often. each of their 4 drives in the first half were long, meticulous, and ended in a td. the cats rolled through multiple rushers, but the



most dangerous was once again qb touchdown tommy mellott who carried the ball 10 times and averaged over 10 yards on those runs. all in all, the cats combined for 340 yards on the ground. the lumberjacks played a little desperate entering the 2nd half, and an interception by s blake stillwell that turned into a td the other way effectively ended any threat they could muster. the l-jacks did add two garbage time tds late in the 4th to make the score look a little more respectable, but the bobcat starters were already off celebrating by that point.

next week: vs northern colorado bears (0 – 8, -343)



a new year and a new coach, but the bears are still a miserable team. a year ago, this same miserable team still managed to take down the lumberjacks. this matchup once again seems to favor the l-jacks, but they will need to play a far cleaner game to ensure victory. the lumberjacks are definitely bigger on the line than the bears, so this could be a very big game for rb devon starling on offense.

defensively, the l-jacks should be able to control this game with their front 7. dl eloi kwete has burst through opposing o-lines at will, and lb heston lameta and the rest of the l-jacks have kept short games like the bears more or less in check.

playoff picture

projected autobids in ().

ticket punched: furman (socon)

near lock: south dakota state (mo valley), south dakota, albany (caa)

looking good: villanova, montana (big sky), idaho, ut martin, gardner webb (big south ovc), austin peay (united), lafayette (patriot), delaware, holy cross, montana state

boiling in: elon, western carolina, north dakota, northern iowa, central arkansas, north dakota state, youngstown

other conference leaders: nicholls (southland), duquesne (nec), drake (pioneer)

boiling out: incarnate word, mercer, southern illinois, rhode island, eastern kentucky, sacramento state, chattanooga, colgate