

## fcs week #5: early classics



september is not usually a month for rivalry games. the oldest fcs matches with their dubious lore and oddball traditions are usually steeped in a fair amount of november chill. nevertheless, three century old ones resumed this past weekend to formally kickoff autumn. southeastern missouri scored the final 22 points in a “war of the wheel” showdown with southern illinois. the two teams once took mississippi riverboats between their respective campuses, so the visitor now arrives carrying the ship’s wheel. the “battle of the real hu” annually settles a debate over which school is the original hbcu and thus entitled to the acronym. historians could debate howard’s accreditation and formal recognition immediately following the civil war versus hampton’s origins as a then-still-illegal school for escaped slaves while the war was still ongoing, but fcs fans know hampton is in the right here if only because of their now 8 consecutive wins in the series. of course, both of those pale in frequency to the clash of eastern illinois and illinois state. at 112 games over 123 years, that contest is the most played non-conference football game all time. it probably receives less attention than most with its unassumingly dull name, the mid-american classic, and lack of weird prop trophy. this year’s belonged to illinois state, who won pretty handily.

### sidelines

- the unofficial socon-caa challenge ended this past week with a split. the socon teams got out to big leads. william & mary came back to thump furman with nearly 400 yards of rushing. the clock ran out well before elon could threaten east tennessee state’s lead.
- in the surprise upset of the week, the tigers from grambling feasted on the tigers from jackson state after the latter committed 10 penalties and 5 turnovers, 2 of which resulted in defensive scores.
- what a start! south dakota state’s kirby vorhees managed to score tds on the first 3 touches of his college career. though he was tackled short on his last 2, the freshman rb is still averaging 35 yards per carry.

### aps (very early) picture

it is still pretty early to draw much from this. while there has been a full month of play, with so many fbs games (and a smattering of d2 ones as well) as well as the delayed start of the ivy, there is not a tremendous amount of crossover fcs-vs-fcs play yet, so this is more driven by scheduling than on-field play. only about 60% of teams have actually netted any arbitrary points at all. nevertheless, a few teams have managed to beat other fcs teams who in turn have beaten other fcs teams, etc, etc. here are 3 that stood out in the early going. 2 will come as no surprise.

<i>top dogs</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>aps</i>	<i>last week</i>	<i>next week</i>
<i>north dakota state bison</i>	3	0	250	hammer towson in rematch of 2013 frisco championship	@ illinois state (below)
<i>north dakota fighting hawks</i>	3	0	200	controls san diego. still riding high after knocking off big sky champ montana.	murray state
<i>stony brook seamolves</i>	3	0	200	fend off campbell after going winless in 2023.	morgan state

## fcs game of week



last week: yale bulldogs (1 – 0, 25) beat holy cross crusaders (1 – 3), 38 – 31

the bulldogs prevailed in a back and forth game, where neither team led by more than a single score. as an example, there were three consecutive td drives in the final 8 minutes. the dogs had the final one, with just seconds to spare, to claim the victory. the crusaders appeared to have stopped that drive but were flagged with a pass interference on 4<sup>th</sup> down. wr david pantelis was the hero for the bulldogs, hauling 6 catches including a 30 yard td. the tandem of qb joe penansky and wr max mosey excelled in a losing effort for the crusaders. in fact, it was a deep post to mosey with 3 minutes to go that nearly salvaged the game. while the crusaders did hit on a lot of deep balls, they were also inconsistent and inaccurate throughout the game, and their defense has now allowed a team to score a game winning td in the closing minutes for already the 3<sup>rd</sup> time this season.



next week: north dakota state bison (3 – 0, 250, #1) @ illinois state redbirds (3 – 0, 100)

the bison are having a walk down memory lane. one week after dismantling the team they faced in the 2013 championship game, they have a showdown with the redbirds, the team they met in the 2014



championship game. (in a fun scheduling quirk, the bison managed to play 4 of the teams they faced in frisco over a 10 game stretch.) the redbirds are having a good start to this season and are thought by many to be a serious sleeper pick to make some noise in the always contentious mo valley. their key in the early going has been a power running game, led by rb mason king. despite a good early showing themselves, the bison have not been as dominant in the trenches as usual. they still have a smothering pass defense and force a lot of turnovers, so the pressure will be on king. the man assigned to bring him down though is lb logan kopp, who is among the top all-around defenders in the fcs.

## richmond spiders (2 – 1, 28)



last week: defeat delaware state hornets (1 – 2, -28), 38 – 24  
the spiders were able to take control of this game offensively as it wore on, but it was not without a surprising amount of drama and a lot of counterpunches from the hornets. qb camden coleman threw for over 300 yards, and while it was far from a clean performance, he took enough deep strikes to more than compensate, averaging nearly 20 yards per completion. wr landon ellis caught the deepest pass, a 60 yard td up the middle, and was otherwise coleman's best weapon, picking up 6 more catches. the spiders struggled out of the gate to fall behind early. the offense started clicking late in the first half, and only a pair of unfortunate interceptions kept the hornets alive. the spiders were able to bring pressure pretty consistently, thanks in large part to dl jeremiah grant. however, hornet qb marqui adams turned into something of an escape artist using both his legs and his arm for some big gains late, first scrambling for 50 yards to set up one td and then catching a breaking receiver for another one. that burst would make it dangerously close, but a blocked fg attempt and a late scoring drive of their own put the spiders ahead to stay.



*spider of week—zach palmer smith*

the spider rb was a workhorse, carrying the ball 25 times (close to 40% of all spider snaps). he had already racked up 100 yards and 2 tds in that effort before sealing the outcome with a 60 yard outburst down the sideline in the final 2 minutes.

next week: @ elon phoenix (1 – 2, -108)



the phoenix have been quietly good for a long time, often overlooked because they tend to either fall just outside the playoff bubble or are haunted by some early exits. record-wise, they are 2<sup>nd</sup> only to villanova in the caa since the covid season. 2024 has not been kind to them so far, having dropped a pair of important games to socon squads and not looked great doing so. against this incarnation of the phoenix, the spider advantage may be in the trenches. the ability to run the ball much more consistently this season, the emergence of palmer smith as a starter, and the impressive play of a finally fully health o-line should make a difference in this matchup. on the other side, the phoenix o-line does not look quite capable of handling grant, who already has more sacks and tfls than he did all of last season, and the spider pressure. the last time the spiders made their way down to elon, the phoenix rose from the ashes to deal them a stunning double ot loss. the spiders will want to snuff out any hopes of a repeat disappointment by jumping on this one early.

## northern arizona lumberjacks (1 – 1, -42)



last week: implode against incarnate word cardinals (2 – 2, -22), 38 – 14

the lumberjacks played a sloppy game, surrendering the final 31 points of the contest. they would fumble 4 times, all recovered by the cardinals.



they went for it on 4<sup>th</sup> down 7 times, but only converted twice. they were in the red zone 3 times with no points to show for it. the cardinals simply made them look bad. lb mister williams penetrated the l-jack o-line all day, forcing 2 of those fumbles himself. in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, the wheels came off completely. the lumberjacks fumbled a punt on their own goal line for one cardinal td. they then drove the length of the field on the ensuing possession only to drop an 4<sup>th</sup> down pass during a stand on the cardinal goal line. on the very next snap, wr dekalon taylor would run the ball the nearly 100 yards back to score again. taylor added a 40 yard td sprint, ending the day with just short of 200. rb darvon hubbard broke free for a 50 yard td run very early on to give the lumberjacks the early lead and did manage to average 7+ yards per carry on the day, but that early bright spot faded pretty quickly after 3 quarters of poor play from the rest of the team.

next week: vs sacramento state hornets (2 – 0, 50)



coach andy thompson's inaugural season in 2023 was objectively very good, but given the hornets had swept their big sky competition during the two years prior, you can understand why he is hoping for far more this season. their aggressive defense has been excellent and dominating scrimmage, and they force a lot of turnovers. that spells bad news for the lumberjacks. the hornets have been uncharacteristically sloppy offensively too, so the key for the l-jacks might be returning the favor by bringing their own pressure and forcing some turnovers themselves.