

## fcs week #8: 2 for the show



dartmouth can claim the biggest comeback of the fcs season overcoming a 23 point deficit. the big green rallied to score 3 tds in the final 7 minutes of regulation, and that was just to tie defending ivy champ yale. their unlikely rally could not have happened during those closing minutes without an onside kick recovery and a pair of shanked field goal attempts from the bulldogs. the big green then added a td in ot to go up by 7. the bulldogs responded with a td of their own but then quizzically went for 2 and watched in horror as a misfired pass sailed out of the end zone. perhaps the earlier botched kicks or having to see an amped up big green offense come back out on the field were weighing on the coach's mind, but would it not just have made sense to take the pat and keep the game going?

west georgia very nearly could have had the biggest comeback of the fcs season. the wolves, who are in their very first season, were trailing united frontrunner central arkansas by 24 points late in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. they would score on each of their final 4 drives, the final td coming with just seconds remaining in the game. alas, the wolves also would go for 2 rather than see the game continue, and the bear defense came out of hibernation to deflect the pass. maybe the hype of pulling out a massive comeback against a top tier opponent just 6 games into their existence got the better of them, but would they not have been better served trying their luck in ot?

hindsight being 20/20, the answer is obviously "yes" to both questions. however, it does reflect a recent trend that seems to be on the rise where teams elect to go for 2 in all or nothing situations. it is something of an odd tendency in recent years as the overall number of 2 point conversion attempts in the fcs has fallen to near historic lows, with the average team lining up for one about once every 4 games. over the past decade, the conversion rate for the 2 pointer is 41%, while the average fcs kicker hits on 92% of pats, so statistically coaches should be risk averse in do-or-die situations. odder still is that coaches who throw caution to the wind wait until the drama has reached its crescendo. in either of these 3 td rallies, the trailing team could have attempted a 2 after touchdowns #1 or #2. in the event it is successful, then they are kicking a pat after td #3 to win the game in regulation. even if it fails, they still have a final opportunity to convert the needed 2 to keep the game alive in overtime. yet in almost no situation with a multiple td deficit does a coach think to do that. it is only when the chance to win becomes a serious possibility does the choice to lose become an inviting temptation.

### **sidelines**

- in the month since upsetting kent state (fbs), the st francis red flash have struggled, fumbling the ball a cringe worthy 20 times resulting in 14 turnovers.

- dayton held onto a narrow 2 point victory over davidson by blocking an astounding 4 kicks: 3 fgs and a punt!

### aps (early) picture

<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>	6	0	509	smother southern illinois	#3 south dakota state (below)
<i>tarleton state texans</i>	6	0	374	blowout utah tech	bye
<i>south dakota state jackrabbits</i>	4	0	334	destroy youngstown	@ #1 north dakota state (below)
<i>southeastern missouri redhawks</i>	6	0	319	obliterate tennessee tech	@ charleston southern
<i>villanova wildcats</i>	5	0	304	bye	@ maine
<b><i>in the hunt</i></b>	<b><i>w</i></b>	<b><i>l</i></b>	<b><i>aps</i></b>	<b><i>last week</i></b>	<b><i>next week</i></b>
<i>south dakota coyotes</i>	4	0	276	decimate northern iowa	@ youngstown
<i>missouri state bears</i>	4	1	268	beat #18 illinois state (below)	indiana state
<i>delaware blue hens</i>	6	0	261	cruise past maine	@ richmond (below)
<b><i>dark horses</i></b>	<b><i>w</i></b>	<b><i>l</i></b>	<b><i>aps</i></b>	<b><i>last week</i></b>	<b><i>next week</i></b>
<i>montana state bobcats</i>	6	0	232	dominate #20 idaho	@ portland state
<i>rhode island rams</i>	5	0	228	defeat brown	@ new hampshire
<i>dartmouth big green</i>	4	0	225	rallied with 3 tds in the closing minutes to tie ivy champ yale, then held on for an ot victory thanks to 2 missed fgs and a botched 2 pointer	central connecticut
<i>mercer bears</i>	6	0	223	blowout princeton thanks to 3 tj moore interceptions	@ samford
<i>uc davis aggies</i>	6	0	214	rout cal poly. qb miles hastings threw for 460 yards with just 3 incompletes.	@ eastern washington
<i>mcneese cowboys</i>	4	2	178	bye	@ incarnate word
<i>drake bulldogs</i>	4	1	164	defeat butler	@ presbyterian
<i>central arkansas bears</i>	5	1	159	hold off brand new fcs team western georgia after building up a seemingly insurmountable 24 point lead thanks to a botched 2 pointer. previously, avenged the loss against united champ austin peay which cost them last year's title.	bye

<i>north dakota fighting hawks</i>	4	1	158	bye	northern iowa
<i>illinois state redbirds</i>	4	2	156	lost to #7 missouri state (below)	@ murray state

**also rans:** montana griz (5 – 2, 139), idaho vandals (3 – 2, 128), chattanooga mocs (3 – 1, 124), southeastern louisiana lions (3 – 2, 123), duquesne dukes (3 – 1, 115)

**dropping back:** *idaho* was bowled over by #9 montana state and slipped a little. *eastern kentucky* was stunned by southern utah and slipped a lot. *stony brook* had a bye and was simply lapped by teams with stronger wins.

### fcs game of week



last week: missouri state bears (4 – 1, 268, #7) humiliate illinois state redbirds (4 – 2, 156, #18), 41 – 7

the bears did not take long to grasp control of this game, jumping out to an early lead and carrying a shutout until it was time to rest the starters. qb jacob clark was spectaculr with 340 yards passing with top target wr dash luke pulling in 6 of those catches to put the bears comfortably out in front. the redbird passing attack looked threatening enough, tahnks mainly to some big grabs by wr xavier loyd, but midfield fumbles in the first half kept them from capitalizing. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, s tavier williams made a pair of interceptions, one of which he returned to the redbird goal line to effectively quell any offensive noise. the redbird defense did manage to make the bears one dimensional, with lbs lavoise deontae mccooy and tye niekamp able to stuff the run throughout. unfortunately, that one dimension was the clark show, and he did not disappoint.



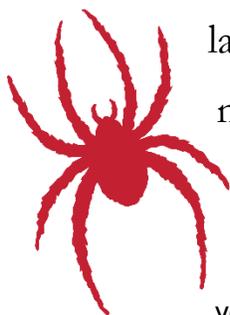
next week—the dakota marker: south dakota state jackrabbits (4 – 0 , 334, #3) @ north dakota state bison (6 – 0, 509)

for those unfamiliar with the dakota marker—a giant slab of granite for which these two fcs powers annually duel—seriously, where have you been? the primary storyline running through all of fcs football since 2010 essentially hinges on this game. it has gotten so much attention that espn decided to bump a slew of fbs games to give this one a primetime slot. since the fcs moved its championship to frisco 15 years ago, the first year either was playoff eligible, these two titans have combined for 14 appearances in the finale. the bison claimed 9 of 11 national championships, while their archenemy jackrabbits have nabbed the last 2. the mo valley winner is usually annointed during this rivalry game with one or the other going onto win each of the last 13 titles. the bison dominated this clash for most of the 2010s, winning 9 in a row before 2016 then going 6 - 2 through 2021. the tide has certainly turned since then with the jacks claiming the last 6 including the 2022 frisco finale. this year’s matchup has



“epic” written all over it. the bison have been seasoned by a tough early schedule and persevered. the jacks have essentially cruised unchallenged through the soft part of their schedule. both teams have all american candidates at virtually every position. dakota markers tend to get settled in the trenches, and if there was one advantage that the jackrabbits might be able to press, it is a stalwart offensive line featuring nfl prospects gus miller and evan beerntem. otherwise, the game is a virtual coin flip.

### richmond spiders (4 – 1, 25)



last week: bye.

next week: vs delaware blue hens (6 – 0, 261, #8)

this is likely to be the last meeting of longtime foes ever. the blue hens are transitioning to the fbs next season and already have exceeded the fcs scholarship limit, making them ineligible for any postseason play this year. while that sounds like it should give the hens a



significant advantage, most of the other major programs in this position tend to hold back a little in essentially a lame duck season and conserve resources and red shirts to make a splash on the next level down the line. so far, it does not look like the hens are going that direction. instead, they have been racking up dominating wins. the blue hens are a little hobbled by injuries. their starting qb ryan o’connor has been out with an upper body issue, and their top defender lb dillon trainer has missed time with nagging knee problems. nevertheless, neither their pass happy offense nor their balanced d has seemed to lose a step. if the spiders want to pull off the upset, they are going to need another big game from rb zach palmer smith. he has been pretty consistent in waring down opponents until a seam opens up, and then he is gone. while it would be good for the spiders to find their passing game, this was never the opponent to get into a shootout with, so if they are to win, it will likely be 5 yards at a time.

### northern arizona lumberjacks (2 – 3, -46)



last week: undone by montana griz (5 – 2, 139, #19), 31 – 20

the lumberjacks were surprisingly controlling this game, carrying a 2 score lead most of the way through. then the griz awoke and simply took



over. s alex mclaughlin would make a strip-sack at midfield on the opening drive, which the l-jacks would return for a td. later, wr kolbe katsis would slip his man on a quick out and burst up the sidelines for a 90 yard td. meanwhile, lb tommy ellis had the vaunted griz running game stifled, holding them to a mere 30 yards in the opening half. things would change after halftime

though. the griz would score on 4 of their 5 possessions, racking up a more griz-line 130 yards in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. the lumberjack offense would go quiet, only able to pick up 40 yards passing outside of the katsis td. as the final minutes ticked off, griz lb riley wilson would make the critical stop on 3<sup>rd</sup> & short deep in l-jack territory that set up the game winning drive. after the griz cashed in that short field, their first lead with just 6 minutes to play, the l-jacks immediately fumbled the ball, allowing the insurance score. though the l-jacks certainly gave sold out griz stadium reason to panic, they would not be able to repeat the same shocking result from last season.

next week: vs idaho state bengals (2 – 3, 9)



the bengals are traditionally a struggling program, but they do occasionally pull off a surprise season. the results so far this year have been a mix of closer than you might expect outcomes. still, mediocrity seems to be their glass ceiling. they have stayed dangerous thanks to two way threat qb hunter hays, who seems very adept at getting the offense out of jams. the lumberjacks will need another strong game from mclaughlin and company on defense to break up those chunk plays. the bengal defense, led by s mason young, forces a lot of bad plays too, so the l-jacks are likely well served to rely on rb darvon hubbard to push the pile and keep the chains moving. the l-jacks have had a roller coaster ride over the past several weeks largely because, against the elite programs, they have not been able to keep pace for the full 60. the bengals are not among the elites, so take control early and don't ease up.