

## fcs week #10: the audition

if you have not heard, the fbs is looking for some teams. the fallout of conference realignment has left a former power player in the pac scratching for fresh blood to fuel its reboot, which in turn has left its neighbor and primary target, the mountain west, needing to shore up its own ranks. math dictates that, however the dust settles, the two conferences are a combined 3 teams short of the ncaa set minimums. that shortfall has ignited the rumor mill of which programs may be potential poaches from the fcs ranks.

the fbs jump was supposed to have cooled with the ncaa's implementation of a \$5 million fee to make the move. few teams have the kind of booster support needed to buy that ticket. nevertheless, 4 programs keep being floated: north dakota state, south dakota state, montana, and montana state. those 4 do have the on-hand capital, the built-in infrastructure, the rabid fan bases, and the deep history of success. the internet was so heated on their potential assumption into the fbs ranks that the pac itself felt obligated to put out a statement confirming that no conversations had with any of those 4 programs.

despite their combined on-field success and die hard followings, there is a reason none of those big 4 are in the running, at least for the moment. the problem is geography. over the last 2 decades, the only fcs teams to move up were south of newark, de and east of san marcos, tx. this quarter of the country had a dearth of fbs football programs relative to its population and a lot of interest in expanding. the north central is hard to get to. the weather is awful most of the season. despite sellout crowds, there is no real television market.



on the other hand, there is a contender that is unapologetically attempting to court an invitation to the fbs. sacramento state recently announced that it would be breaking ground on a 25k seat state-of-the-art football stadium, a big investment considering their current multi-use one averages only 13k in attendance. if there was any doubt what was motivating that decision, the athletics department recently launched an exploratory initiative entitled "sac-12". while the hornets certainly have been competitive in recent years, they are not exactly in the same breath as the longtime elite programs to the north. however, they are located in a pretty big city, adjacent to an even more massive tv market, and a mild northern california climate year round. plus they are wearing a "pick me" button.

## aps picture

top dogs	w	l	aps	last week	next week
north dakota state bison	8	0	571	blowout murray state	northern iowa
rhode island rams	7	0	393	beat maine	monmouth

<i>south dakota state</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>367</b>	defeat #11 south dakota (below)	murray state
<i>jackrabbits</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>363</b>	prevail in shootout over northern iowa	southern illinois
<i>missouri state</i>					
<i>bears</i>					
<i>villanova wildcats</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>357</b>	survive new hampshire, accruing almost all their yards in 2 td drives, but the only 2 for either team all game	@ hampton
<b><i>in the hunt</i></b>	<b>w</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>aps</b>	<b>last week</b>	<b>next week</b>
<i>tarleton state</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>341</b>	knock off reigning united champ austin peay	eastern kentucky
<i>texans</i>					
<i>southeastern</i>					
<i>missouri redhawks</i>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>322</b>	slip past reigning big south champ gardner webb	bye
<b><i>dark horses</i></b>	<b>w</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>aps</b>	<b>last week</b>	<b>next week</b>
<i>dartmouth big green</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>286</b>	survive late scoring surge from columbia	#22 harvard (below)
<i>montana state</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>274</b>	bye	@ eastern washington
<i>bobcats</i>					
<i>uc davis aggies</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>260</b>	bye	northern colorado
<i>south dakota coyotes</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>251</b>	fall to #3 south dakota state (below)	bye
<i>stony brook seawolves</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>248</b>	destroy william & mary	@ bryant
<i>incarnate word cardinals</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>242</b>	hold off southeastern louisiana with a pick 6 and a pair of last minute stops	houston christian
<i>mercer bears</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>216</b>	take out western carolina	#25 eastern tennessee
<i>montana griz</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>213</b>	shutout northern colorado	@ cal poly
<i>central arkansas bears</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>207</b>	outlast northern alabama with 2 <sup>nd</sup> half rally and a pair of last minute stops	@ utah tech
<i>delaware blue hens</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>206</b>	beat defending caa champ albany	bye
<i>idaho Vandals</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>206</b>	defeat eastern washington	bye

**also rans:** chattanooga mocs (5 – 1, 179), florida a&m rattlers (4 – 1, 175), north dakota fighting hawks (5 – 2, 168), harvard crimson (5 – 1, 166), jackson state tigers (5 – 1, 155), illinois state redbirds (5 – 2, 153), eastern tennessee buccaneers (4 – 2, 144)

**dropping back:** some slippage in the mo valley. **north dakota** fell in an overtime shocker to youngstown on yet another busted 2 win-or-go-home play. **illinois state** had a bye, and their strength of schedule stumbled in the meantime.

## fcs game of week



last week: south dakota state jackrabbits (5 – 1 , 367, #3) edge south dakota coyotes (5 – 1, 251, #11), 20 – 17 (ot) a wild finish compensates for a painfully slow slog of a game, and the national champs emerge on top. the score was essentially deadlocked at 21 - 14

jackrabbits from early in the opening half until the final minutes of regulation.

the coyotes would then drive into the jackrabbit red zone, where the teams would exchange turnovers. in the end, coyote db dennis shorter was able to make a desperation strip which dl miquise grace recovered for the score. the yotes would make yet one more 3 and out stop thanks to lb nate ewell to force a jack punt, giving them a final shot at winning the game in regulation. the kick sailed wide, and the game went into overtime. there, down by a fg, the jacks elected to forego the kick and make a play at 4<sup>th</sup> & inches. they would succeed, setting up their game winning td. neither team could really move the needle offensively, but the yotes managed to convert only 25% of 3<sup>rd</sup> downs, while the jacks had 50% (plus the 4<sup>th</sup> down conversion that won the game). that alone was the difference in this squeeker.



next week: harvard crimson (5 – 1, 166, #22) @

dartmouth big green (6 – 0, 286, #8)

if either of these brand new coaches forgets who preceded him, he merely needs to look up. coach aurich can spy tim murphy's record



10 title banners that he won over 30 years with the crimson and 200+ victories (both also ivy records). it is even more obvious for coach corkle. they named the stadium after legendary big green coach buddy teeveens who tragically died in a bike accident last year. nevertheless, both successors are succeeding in their first full season at the helm, and this weekend's clash sets up to be a potential title bout. the crimson passing attack has been lighting up scoreboards, thanks to the chemistry between qb charles deprima and wr cooper barkate. the big green have a slower tempo, ball control style of play, and when it does let opponent offenses on the field, lb braden mullen—now fully health after having his banner year cut short last season—is there to escort them off. one extra difference maker on the big green side is k owen zalc. at over 75%, he has been one of the most effective fg kickers in the fcs for years, and with kicks under 50 yards, he splits the uprights over 90% of the time.

## richmond spiders (6 – 1, 128)



last week: decimate bryant bulldogs (1 – 6, -223), 41 – 14  
the spiders would score tds on each of their 6 first half drives to shelve this one early. they then used two 2<sup>nd</sup> half drives to eat up most of the playing time.  
spider qb camden coleman was electric, missing on only 1 pass all game long.  
he accumulated 280 yards and 4 tds through the air despite  
being pulled shortly after halftime. defensively, the spiders  
kept the undermanned bulldogs in check and on the run all  
day. db quantraill morris walker picked up his 3<sup>rd</sup> pick in as many  
games on a pass deflected at the line to set up another scoring drive and all  
but cement the win early.



### *spider of the week—nick degennaro*

the wr had his statistically strongest outing ever. he was targeted 7 times. he  
caught all 7 pass. one was a deep ball where he broke free for a 60 yard gain,  
but even the slightly less spectacular ones all contributed to spider scoring  
drives.

## next week: vs towson tigers (4 – 3, 124)



the tigers are a deceptively talented team. they routinely hover just beyond  
the playoff bubble and tend to give better known contenders more than their  
fair share of scares. this season, they have played one of the most  
challenging schedules so far in the fcs, yet somehow have kept themselves  
afloat. they will enter this weekend's homecoming match as the far more seasoned team.  
the tigers, though, are not particularly exceptional in any facet and have even struggled  
defensively. the game could set up nicely for the combo of coleman and degennaro again, as  
their deep threats are likely more than the tigers can keep contained. rb zach palmer smith  
should also be able to do some damage on the ground. defensively, the spiders will need some  
pressure from their banged up d-line and a big game from jeremiah grant, who is leading the fcs  
in sacks. the spiders are likely the more talented of these two, but the tigers are the first team  
that they have faced all year with playoff aspirations and a habit of punching upward, so beware.

## northern arizona lumberjacks (3 – 3, 15)



last week: bye.

## next week: vs weber wildcats (3 – 4, -84)

the wildcats were not long ago the crème de la crème  
of the big sky, garnering success behind a bruising d  
in a conference that has often veered towards explosive offenses. more  
recently, the cats have scuffled, unable to separate from the middle of the



pack. coincidentally, they have also taken a turn toward the explosive themselves during this downturn. qb richie munoz leads an offense that can beat you a lot of ways. the key for the lumberjacks will definitely involve containing munoz, and another huge game from clutch db alex mclaughlin could go a long way in aiding that cause. this matchup looks to be a toss up so making the most of each possession will be paramount. should qb ty pennington be able to conjure up another mistake free game, the d only needs to slow munoz, not outright stop him. the l-jacks have shown the ability so far this season to do just that.

## playoff outlook

*if the season ended today. conference frontrunners in ()*

**near lock:** north dakota state (mo valley)

**looking good:** rhode island (caa), south dakota state, villanova, tarleton state (united)

**bubbling in:** southeastern missouri (big south ovc), montana state, uc davis, south dakota, stony brook, incarnate word (southland), mercer (socon), montana, central arkansas, idaho, chattanooga, north dakota, illinois state, eastern tennessee, drake (pioneer), ut martin, richmond, duquesne (nec)

**other conference leader:** holy cross (patriot)

**potential party crashers:** florida a&m, jackson state (jackson state likely to advances to swac championship)

**bubbling out:** abilene christian, towson, william & mary, southeastern louisiana, maine, new hampshire, tennessee state, mcneese, eastern kentucky, merrimack, stephen f austin, robert morris, youngstown, western carolina, southern utah, nicholls, tennessee tech