

Issue No. 24 - Week of 12/17/2011

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THE FRISCO ROAD

The Underdawg was 4-0 in third round predictions and 12-4 overall in the playoffs. Down to the "final four" this week with 4 of the top 5 FCS teams.

Here's a brief recap of the third round games:

Montana 48, Northern Iowa 10....Since the NCAA began playing FCS games on Fridays in 2000 (mainly the championship final), the Grizzlies were 1-4 in the playoffs on Friday nights. Their first Friday night victory came in 2001 in the championship against Furman, winning 13-6. Well, if you tuned into ESPN last Friday, it was a flashback to almost 10 years to the date when Montana cruised over Northern Iowa, 38-0 in Missoula. Friday's contest against the Panthers was another 38 point victory as Grizz QB, Jordan Johnson ran for one and passed for 3 TD's afront a chilly but crazy crowd of over 23,000. Montana iced Panthers stand-out QB Tirrell Rennie to only 93 yds passing and 2 int's. Everything went right for the Grizzlies as they make their way back to the semi's since 2009.

Sam Houston State 49, Montana State 13....Triple-threat was the key term in Saturday's kick-off game romp of #1 ranked Sam Houston State over the Big Sky champion, Montana State. Where most defenses have targeted star RB, Tim Flanders, it was SHSU's QB Brian Bell and RB's Torrance Williams and Richard Sincere who attributed 322 combined yds and 4 of the 7 total TD's. Despite a 272 yds passing performance from Big Sky all-conference QB, Denarius McGhee (21 of 36), it was the home team that moved the ball effeciently and put up 501 total yds on Saturday. Not to mention a top 3 defense that held the Bobcats, who averaged 32 pts/game, to their second lowest scoring output of the season. Big win for the Southland!

Georgia Southern 35, Maine 23....Well, I suppose history did repeat itself after-all. The Maine "dirty south" tour of the Maine Bears from North Carolina through southern Georgia came to a halt Saturday in Allen E. Paulson Stadium. The Eagles were led by RB, J.J. Wilcox who rushed for 99 yds on 8 carries and 2 TD's. Maine was in the game throughout, with an electrifying 91 yd kickoff return from Roosevelt Boone that hushed the crowd towards the end of the 1st quarter. But giving up 3 int's and going scoreless in the 4th quarter was not in the cards for Maine to come out with a win. What appeared to be the closest of all the games (score-wise), Georgia Southern did it again.

North Dakota State 24, Lehigh 0...Defense wins games- and that is what the Bison stood for last Saturday in a surprising shut-out against visiting Lehigh. North Dakota State recorded its first shutout since 2006 [vs. Mississippi Valley State (45-0)], and its first shutout in the playoffs since the 1990 Division II quarterfinals against Cal Poly. Coach Craig Bohl attributes his team's defense to rattling the league's top QB, Chris Lum on several key drives. Lum managed to complete 25 of 52 for 288 yds and 2 int's. Scorecards would look fairly even with 19 and 20 first downs and 356 and 384 total yds for Lehigh and NDSU, respectively. But the Bison once again played a balanced game and continued to run the ball well as Ojuri and McNorton combined for 188 yds on the ground. 2 down and 1-to-go in Fargo!

Quick facts:

- This is the 3rd straight year that Lehigh's had a shut-out loss
- Georgia Southern is 30-3 at home in the playoffs
- Last and only time Sam Houston State went undefeated was in 1956 (10-0)
- Montana is 3-1 against Sam Houston State and 0-1 in Huntsville, TX
- North Dakota State is 1-0 versus Georgia Southern (won in Statesville, GA in 2006)
- Largest attendance: Northern Iowa at Montana - 23,049
- Smallest attendance: Montana State at Sam Houston State - 9,077

Semifinal FCS Conference representation....

Big Sky, Southland, Southern, & Missouri Valley - 1

Semifinal predictions:

Montana at Sam Houston State, Friday 12/16/2011 at 8pm ET on ESPN.

Expect a defensive battle with offensive swings. After witnessing the smacking the Bearkats put on Montana State last week, with a healthy lineup and home field backing, Sam Houston State should pull out a close one and be on their way to Frisco. *Sam Houston State 33, Montana 27*

Georgia Southern at North Dakota State, Saturday, 12/17/2011 at 2:35pm ET on ESPNU.

This has been the matchup awaited for. Both teams held the #1 spot during the regular season. This will be a matter of which defense will show up to stop the other's rushing attack. No weather implications in the Fargo Dome- just solid football between, in my opinion, the best teams in FCS all year consistently. Edge favored to the home squad in a low scoring, defensive standoff.

North Dakota State 17, Georgia Southern 13.

[If you miss the games on tv, check the scores with TSN](#)

SWAC CHAMPIONSHIP

Grambling State 16, Alabama A&M 15....Just when the Bulldogs thought they had it won, big plays saved the day for Grambling. Jacardi Carter recovered a fumble and returned it 66 yds to the house early in the 4th quarter which proved to be the dagger to seal the deal. Special teams play was dire as Grambling struggled to move the ball- putting up only 183 total yds for the game. Defense tightened up in the 2nd half as A&M was held scoreless. Hats off to the SWAC champs, Grambling State!

Few SWAC facts:

- Alabama A&M has only 1 SWAC title, 2006
- Grambling State has 27 SWAC titles, including 6 since 2000
- The SWAC is the oldest FCS conference- formed in 1921

OCCUPY "500"

In a year that featured several high powered offenses around the FCS, we'd like to recognize the first 2011 member of the '500 Club"- Sam Houston State. Last week's game put the Bearkats at 517 cumulative points. This is the first 500+ scoring season since 2009 for FCS teams.

Here are the other FCS teams in the top 5 in 500+ scoring for the season:

Stony Brook - 494 pts

Georgia Southern - 485 pts (still playing)

Old Dominion - 477 pts

Montana - 446 pts

[Here's an all-time list of FCS teams with 500+ scoring seasons](#)

HBCU ALL-STAR BOWL

This Sunday, 12/18/2011, the Georgia Dome will host the 3rd annual game between East and West all-stars of HBCU football. The game is not scheduled to be televised, but it begins 3pm ET in Atlanta!

Trivia Results: The FCS teams with the most overtimes in 2011 was Campbell vs. Davidson (Pioneer League) who played 3 overtimes on 10/29/2011.

Trivia Question: In 2011, what FCS team is considered to have had the toughest schedule (based on cumulative opposition %) overall?

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