

1. RHYME & REASON

Offense sells tickets and defense wins championships, right? Well, let's see if this phrase has some truth to it in FCS Football.

Here are the Top 5 Offenses from 2010, (avg yards per game), average game attendance, and previous year change in attendance:

1. Jacksonville (486.27 yds).....3,761 avg attendance.....up 13%
2. Liberty (459.91 yds).....14,630 avg attendance.....down 3%
3. Western Illinois (457.23 yds)....11,096 avg attendance.....up 15%
4. Montana State (451.83 yds).....14,298 avg attendance.....up 7%
5. Murray State (449.73 yds).....5,989 avg attendance.....up 25%

Clearly, with top offenses averaging 461 yds a game last season, these teams witnessed a boost in attendance. Although Liberty dropped a bit from the previous year, they have been ranked in the top 15 in FCS attendance in 2009 & 2010 seasons. Three of the five conferences represented above dropped in attendance from the previous year: Pioneer, Big South, and Big Sky. The other two, Missouri Valley and Ohio Valley conferences, improved attendance marks. This is no coincidence as these teams are destined to improve offensively, however. Western Illinois won 7 more games than the previous year and saw their best record since 2003. The other four teams have key players on the Walter Payton Award watchlist with passing and running yardage waiting to explode.

Here are the Top 5 Defenses from 2010, (average yards allowed), and their accomplishments:

1. Texas Southern (204.92 opp yds).....SWAC conference champion
2. South Carolina St (209 opp yds).....MEAC conference champion
3. Hampton (271.45 opp yds).....highest defensive player in 2011 NFL Draft from FCS
4. Penn (272.90 opp yds).....Ivy League champion
5. Delaware (280.73 opp yds).....CAA conference champion

Texas Southern led the FCS and won their first SWAC title since 1968. Although the MEAC had 3 conference champs in 2010, the Bulldogs of SC State were in the number and were the two-time defending conference champs outright. Hampton sent Kenrick Ellis (DL) to the NY Jets in the 3 round of this year's draft. ([See the full list of FCS players drafted in the NFL and CFL](#)). Penn is the two-time defending Ivy champ with 99 pts allowed in 2010 conference play- the lowest of the Ancient Eight. Delaware shares similar accolades with 119 pts allowed in 2010, which topped the CAA conference.

Who will be atop the offensive and defensive ranks for 2011? [The Underdawg](#) welcomes your opinions.

Bonus:

- Appalachian St led the FCS in attendance for 2010 (25,715 avg)
- SWAC has led the FCS in attendance in the last 20 years (14,605 avg in 2010)
- FCS conferences have improved avg attendance by 11,011 from 2009 to 2010
- Other 2 conferences with declining attendance (in addition to 3 mentioned): Great West and Patriot.

2. FCS REPORT CARDS

Outside the grit, grind, and glamour of the gridiron, football players are students first. Academic achievement and progress are imperative to an institution's ability to recruit and retain athletes while maintaining credibility to participate in NCAA events.

[The Underdawg](#) has provided some basic points and current stats regarding the **Academic Progress Rate (APR)**, which is the measuring stick of success for teams in moving student athletes towards graduation. Where does your FCS team stand?

1. What is an acceptable scoring range? 925-1000. Teams that fail to achieve 925 (equivalent to a 50% graduation rate) may be penalized with the loss of scholarships.

2. When? Established in February 2005 by the NCAA. Every Division I sports team calculates its APR each academic year.

3. How does it work? Points are allocated in 2 categories- eligibility and retention (considered as the best indicators of graduation). Each player on a given roster earns a max of two points per term, one for being academically eligible and one for staying with the institution. A team's APR is the total points of a team's roster at a given time divided by the total points possible. Adjustments can be made on a student-by-student basis, in two circumstances-when a player transfers to another school with a sufficiently high GPA, or leaves for a professional sports career while still in good academic standing.

4. Why? To establish a common language and expectation around academics for student athletes of NCAA institutions. It is designed to measure semester-by-semester academic progress.

5. What are the penalties? Teams scoring below certain thresholds can face penalties, such as scholarship losses and restrictions on practice and competition. Rates are based on the past four years' performance. The first penalties under the APR system were scheduled to be announced in December 2005. Starting with the 2008-09 academic year, bans from postseason competition were added to the penalty structure. The most severe penalty available is a one-year suspension of NCAA membership, which has not yet been assessed as of 2010-11.

[The Underdawg](#) compiled current (as of 2010) and 5 year APR averages and scores for each FCS Football conference and team.

Here are some highlights of our research below:

- What is the average APR of all FCS Football teams? 943 (Bonus: FBS Football team avg is 949)
- Which top 3 schools have the highest 5 yr APR averages?
Univ of Pennsylvania.....994
Univ of Dayton.....981.6
Bryant University.....981
- Which schools have the lowest 5 yr APR averages?
Texas Southern847.6
Savannah State.....864.5
N.C. A&T865
- Which schools have the highest APR scores (any of last 5 years)?
Univ of Pennsylvania.....996
Davidson Univ.....992
Bucknell Univ.....984
Richmond, Furman, & Bryant Univ.....983
- Which top 3 schools have the highest, current APR scores (as of 2010)?
Univ of Pennsylvania.....995

Davidson Univ.....992
Bryant Univ.....983

- Which FCS school has the most penalties (last 5 yrs)? Weber State & UT-Chattanooga.....12
- Which FCS conference has the most penalties (last 5 yrs)? Big Sky.....41
- Which FCS conferences have no penalties (last 5 yrs)? Colonial Athletic, Ivy League, Patriot League
- Which FCS conference has the highest 5 year APR average? Ivy League.....986.7
- Which FCS conference has the lowest 5 year APR average? SWAC.....899.5
- Which HBCU school has the highest 5yr APR average? N.C. Central931
- Which HBCU school has the highest current APR score (as of 2010)? Norfolk State.....947
- Which teams are banned from postseason competition? Idaho State, Jackson State, & Southern U.
- Which team is banned with a conditional waiver? N.C. A&T
- Which school was the first ever to receive APR-related postseason bans in 2 sports? Southern U.

3. MEDIA DAYS

To add to your preseason itch for the 2011 season kickoff, conference media days are here! For a complete commentary of each FCS conference, follow the [Sportsnetwork](#) to get the inside scoop on coach, player, and overall team updates. Visit [The Underdawg](#) under "FCS Hodge Podge" for a list of conference preseason polls and all-conference team lineups.

Below is the FCS Conference Media Day Schedule:

Big Sky Media Day - July 19
SWAC Media Day - July 19
Ohio Valley Media Day - July 25
Southern Conference Media Day - July 26
Colonial Athletic Media Day - July 27
Southland Media Day - July 27
Big South Media Day - July 28
MEAC Media Day - July 29
Missouri Valley Media Day - August 1
Patriot League Media Day - August 2
Northeast Media Day - August 3
Pioneer Media Day - August 8
Ivy League Media Day - August 9
Great West Media Day - August 10

Trivia Results: Congrats to Jeremy Johnston of Buffalo, NY for answering last week's trivia. North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania each have 8 FCS schools.

Trivia Question: What FCS schools have the shortest distance between them (mileage)?

Visit [TheUnderdawg.com](#) and enter your answer in the "Contact Us" section. Trivia answer and winner will be announced on the next digest.