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AROUND THE AREA

LOCAL NEWS OF INTEREST

Mavs preseason broadcast schedule



Mavericks preseason broadcast schedule

The Dallas Mavericks announced their 2021 preseason broadcast schedule this week, which includes all four games on Bally Sports Southwest.

All four preseason games will be broadcast on 97.1 The Eagle (KEGL). Each exhibition game can also be heard in Spanish on Univision 99.1 FM (KFZO).

2021 Dallas Mavericks Preseason Broadcast Schedule

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (CT)
Oct. 6	vs. Utah	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 8	vs. L.A. Clippers	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 13	at Charlotte	5:30 p.m.
Oct. 15	at Milwaukee	7:00 p.m.



'Texas Throwback' Dirt Event kicks off NASCAR playoffs double-header weekend

While NASCAR's best will be competing in the NASCAR Playoffs at Texas

Motor Speedway's 1.5-mile oval on Oct. 16-17, some of the area's top sprint car and late-model drivers will be converging on the TMS Dirt Track for the "Texas Throwback" event on the same weekend.

The "Texas Throwback" will officially kick off the weekend's on-track action with the two-day event taking place Friday, Oct. 15, Oct. 16, and featuring sprint car and crate late-model competition both nights.

The aptly named "Texas Throwback" also will have an interesting twist to the benefit of competitors and fans alike. The event will host a contest where competitors can win cash prizes for a throwback paint scheme that incorporates a classic NASCAR paint scheme, Texas Motor Speedway history or history specific to the team or driver. The throwback winner will earn \$5,000 while the runner-up will take home \$1,000 and third will receive \$500. The paint schemes will be voted on by the fans through www.racexr.com.

Also, at stake each night will be \$5,000 for the sprint car winners and \$2,500 for the crate late-model competitors.

On both nights, the action begins with hot laps at 7 p.m. CT and followed by a full slate of racing in both divisions starting at 8 p.m. The competition will open with heats in crate late models followed by sprint cars and then B Mains and Features in the same order. The pit gate will open at 2 p.m. and the grandstand at 5 p.m. each day. The entry fee for competitors in either division is \$100.

The TMS Dirt Track is featuring a two-day ticket at \$45 for adults and \$15 for seniors, military and youth ages 13-18. Also available is a two-day suite pass for

\$75. Individual tickets for either night are \$25 for adults and \$10 for seniors, military and youth 13-18. Suite tickets \$40.



Volunteers of America CLASSIC

2022 Volunteers of America Classic to Take Place Sept. 26-Oct. 2; Returning to The Colony and Golf Clubs at The Tribute in North Dallas

Tournament officials announced today that the 2022 Volunteers of America Classic on the LPGA Tour, initially announced as September 19-25, 2022, will now take place one week later, September 26-October 2 at The Colony at Old American Golf Club, part of Golf Clubs at The Tribute.

The only official LPGA Tour event in the State of Texas, the 2022 Volunteers of America Classic will feature 144 of the world's best female golfers vying for a share of the \$1.5 million purse.

A number of Texans are expected to join the field once again in 2022. The event has crowned a Texan resident as champion the past three years: Cheyenne Knight (2019), Angela Stanford (2020) and Jin Young Ko (2021).

With the momentum from the 2021 event, fans can expect week-long programming to continue to grow and evolve. Tournament officials look forward to offering a variety of family-friendly events centered around youth programming, health and wellness, and culinary experiences.

NCAA FOOTBALL

AP	Coaches
1. Alabama	1. Alabama
2. Georgia	2. Georgia
3. Iowa	3. Iowa
4. Penn State	4. Penn State
5. Cincinnati	5. Oklahoma
6. Oklahoma	6. Cincinnati
7. Ohio State	7. Ohio State
8. Oregon	8. Michigan
9. Michigan	9. Oregon
10. BYU	10. BYU
11. Michigan State	11. Michigan State
12. Oklahoma State	12. Oklahoma State
13. Arkansas	13. Notre Dame
14. Notre Dame	14. Kentucky
15. Coastal Carolina	15. Coastal Carolina
16. Kentucky	16. Arkansas
17. Ole Miss	17. Ole Miss
18. Auburn	18. Florida
19. Wake Forest	19. Auburn
20. Florida	20. Wake Forest
21. Texas	21. Clemson
22. Arizona State	22. NC State
23. NC State	23. Texas
24. SMU	24. SMU
25. San Diego State	25. Arizona State

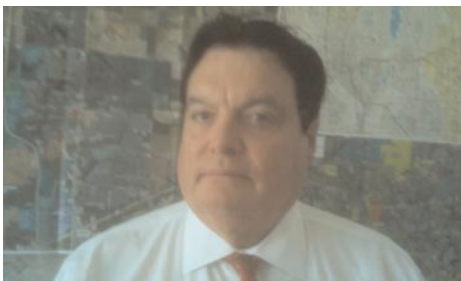
WEEKLY CALENDAR

	SEPTEMBER 8 FRIDAY	SEPTEMBER 9 SATURDAY	SEPTEMBER 10 SUNDAY	SEPTEMBER 11 MONDAY	SEPTEMBER 12 TUESDAY	SEPTEMBER 13 WEDNESDAY	SEPTEMBER 14 THURSDAY
			Dallas vs Giants 3:25 / FOX				
		SMU at Navy 2:30 / CBSSN					
		TCU at Texas Tech 6:00 / ESPN					
		Exhibition game at Colorado 6:00					Dallas at NY Rangers 6:00 / 96.7 fm
							NEXT: Oct. 20 vs LAFC 7:00

Rangers now look ahead to 2022



There is a possibility of some re-shuffling of duties among the rest of Chris Woodward's staff



BY DIC HUMPHREY
DHUMPHREY24@GMAIL.COM
MEMBER: USBWA

ARLINGTON, Texas – The Texas Rangers took their first steps toward next year when they announced that two coaches had been relieved of duty. Bench Coach Don Wakamatsu and hitting coach Luis Ortiz are no longer with the team. Assistant hitting coach Callix Crabbe and run production coordinator Alex Burg were told they are free to interview with other organizations, but that they might be retained at the discretion of whoever gets hired to be the new hitting coach.

Ortiz's dismissal comes as no surprise. The Rangers' team batting average was .232, the second lowest in baseball. The team was shutout a Major League high 15 times, including two games with no hits. Wakamatsu was the Rangers' bench coach from 2003-2007, serving with managers Buck Showalter and Ron Washington. He rejoined the Rangers as bench coach in 2018 and has been the bench coach under managers Jeff Banister and Chris Woodward. Ortiz was the Rangers' interim manager for the final 10 games of the 2018 season when Banister was fired. He managed the Seattle Mariners in 2009 and 2010, becoming the first Asian-American manager in baseball history. He is obviously an experienced pro, but the feeling is the team needed a new voice in this position.

There is also the possibility of some re-shuffling of duties among the rest of Chris Woodward's staff = third base coach Tony

Beasley, first base coach and field coordinator Corey Ragsdale, pitching coaches Doug Mathis and Brendan Sagura, catching coach Bobby Wilson, and run prevention coordinator Brett Hayes.

Last weekend, Woodward emphasized again that there will be plenty of changes to next year's roster. He mentioned that he didn't think too many players should be feeling comfortable about being here next year. He mentioned that there might be only ten "for sures" returning in 2022, and that "ten might be pushing it".

General Manager Chris Young and President of Baseball Operations Jon Daniels met with the media this week. Again, they emphasized that the team will be active this off season in both the free agent and trade markets. The Rangers will have competition as there are several teams that have indicated they expect to be active this winter. In general, the financial situation is much improved over last year when teams had no paying customers in the stands. There are also teams such as Detroit, Cincinnati and Seattle that have built a solid base and could be a couple of high profile players away from being a strong contender.

The bottom line is that there will be a lot of teams aggressively in the free agent market this winter. That is a problem for Texas. The dollars to sign big name players will significantly raise the Rangers' payroll if they land any. Most of the big name free agents are looking for situations where they have a chance to win now. Texas may have to significantly over-pay to attract top tier talent. The Rangers should be better next year if only because so many young players have a year of Major League experience under their belts, but Texas is nowhere near being a contender.

Most in the local media have been focused on the Rangers signing one of the high profile free agent shortstops expected to be available this off season. It was once

speculated that the number could be six, but now it appears the number could be down to three. Francisco Lindor signed with the Mets early this season after he was traded by Cleveland. Marcus Simeon and Javier Baez are likely to re-sign with their current teams, leaving Carlos Correa, Corey Seager and Trevor Story as the big names in the free agent market. There are a lot of teams looking for a middle of the order bat at shortstop. Put down the Yankees and Phillies for two. The hunch here is that Texas will not sign one of the high profile shortstops. They will cost too much, and the Rangers are not attractive enough for the upper end bats.

Isiah Kiner-Falefa, Nathaniel Lowe and Adolis Garcia look to be three position player "for sures" to return. If the Rangers do land a shortstop in free agency, Kiner-Falefa might move back to third base, where he won a Gold Glove Award in 2020, he could move to second base, or he could become the chief back-up infielder. Lowe had his ups and downs this season, but he is decent at first base. He might be challenged next year by a healthy Ronald Guzman. Garcia will return as one outfielder. DJ Peters remarkably hit 12 home runs and drove in 34 in 52 games after Texas claimed him on waivers, but he strikes out at an alarming rate and hit just .198. There is lots of upside with Peters, but he needs more consistency to become a fixture in the Rangers' outfield.

Leody Taveras will get a shot at being the starting centerfielder, but he simply must hit more to claim the job. He's an incredible athlete with plus-plus speed that makes him a defensive whiz and a dangerous baserunner. He stole 10 bases this season in 11 attempts, but he hit .161 with a strikeout every three at bats.

Willie Calhoun may get left out in the cold. He is not very good defensively, and injuries have curtailed his offensive production. His OPS was less than average at .691. Woodward likes to rotate regular players through the DH spot in the lineup to give them rest without taking their bat out of the lineup. Consequently, the Rangers aren't set up to have a permanent DH.

The Rangers seem satisfied with their catching situation. The combination of Jose Trevino and Jonah Heim was terrific defensively. A statistical case can be made that they were the best defensive tandem in baseball this year. Offensively, the Rangers need more. Sam Huff is thought to be the Rangers' catcher of the future, but his progress was slowed this season by injury. He did not catch at all and did not get on the field as a DH/first baseman until June. He is in this Fall's Arizona Instructional League to get more at-bats but is still not catching. He likely will be with the Rangers at some point next season, but it's

doubtful that he will be on the opening day roster.

Highly regarded prospect Josh Jung has a chance to be the starting third baseman next year on opening day, but if the Rangers decide he needs more seasoning, the Rangers could turn to Andy Ibanez or Yonny Hernandez. Ibanez and Nick Solak are the prime second base candidates.

GM Chris Young was asked this week which areas of the team they would look to improve this winter. "Everywhere," was his answer. In short, there is a lot of work to do, but pitching is the first place they should be looking. Taylor Hearn and Dane Dunning have probably pitched their way into next year's starting rotation. The Rangers should shore that up with at least two veteran pitchers. There is promise among young starters that Ranger fans saw this year – Glenn Otto, A. J. Alexy, Spencer Howard and Kolby Allard to name four. However, filling out the rotation from that crew is likely a formula for another 100 loss season.

The bullpen looks promising. Joe Barlow was outstanding as the closer in the final third of the season after Ian Kennedy was traded to the Phillies. Barlow saved 11 games in 12 opportunities with a 1.55 ERA. Projected closers in the past – Jose Leclerc and Jonathan Hernandez – are expected back at some point next season after undergoing Tommy John surgery but will not be ready until late May or June. Texas patched together a bullpen that was inconsistent but could be very good. Brett Martin would seem to be a fixture. Danny Santana, Spencer Patton, Josh Sborz, Jharel Cotton and John King showed a lot of promise. There will undoubtedly be a couple of newcomers, but the bullpen has a good foundation to build upon.

The Rangers have promised that there will not be a repeat of this year's 100 loss season. Hopefully, that promise gets kept. There is a lot of work to do and still a long way to go before this team contends again.

2021 RANGER AWARDS:

The Rangers announced team awards for the year. Adolis Garcia was named both Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year. Dane Dunning was awarded Pitcher of the Year, while the Harold McKinney Good Guy Award went to Jose Trevino. Taylor Hearn was given the Richard Durrett Hardest Working Man Award. Lastly, Ranger prospect Cole Winn was named Double-A Central Pitcher of the Year.

ROSTER MOVES:

The Rangers claimed right-handed pitcher Edwar Colina on waivers from the Minnesota Twins. He had been on the Twins' 60-Day Injured List and was placed on the Rangers' 60-Day IL. Pitcher Wes Benjamin cleared waivers and was assigned to AAA Round Rock.

Resistance training to improve your swing



TOM WARD

TOMPWARD@SBCGLOBAL.NET

One of the best ways to work on your golf swing and physical conditioning at the same time involves nothing more than an elastic cord, also known as resistance bands. Resistance Bands can be purchased at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or Academy Sports to name a few.

In the photo is one of my adult students demonstrating the exercise. When we did this exercise I attached a resistance band around one of the columns at the Golf Center of Arlington where we were training. If you do this at home you could use a tree in your backyard.

Next, I had the golfer get into his stance like he was about to address the ball. Then handed him the grip end of the resistance band as shown in the top left photo. I had him grip it only with his left hand.

In the photo on the top right I asked him to stay bent over from his waist as he pulled the cord back with his left hand to slightly above waist level high. I had him hold that position for a few seconds before letting the cord release to where he started. When trying this you won't be able to hold that position very long because it's exhausting and the laws of physics will automatically bring it back down. He did this 10 times with his left hand only initially before switching to the right hand.

In the middle left photo, the golfer now has the grip end of the resistance band in his right hand. As he pulled it back I made sure he kept his head still as there is a tendency to want to use the upper body for leverage which is only natural.

In the middle right photo he has reached his maximum ability pulling the cord back. I've circled the right hand because he took it back as far as he could as the strength of the resistance band is quite strong. I would have liked it if he had allowed his right elbow to fold instead of being too far extended. I have to give him some slack here because this was the first time he tried it. In the subsequent efforts he did start to allow his right elbow to fold which is ideal. Again, I had him do the exercise 10 times in a row which is quite taxing.

The final resistance move is highlighted in the bottom two photos. This time the golfer has both hands holding onto the grip



end of the resistance band. He pulled back the cord which is slightly above waist level high as seen in the bottom left photo. He held that position for a few seconds before the tension created began to pull the band back down. I've drawn a line in the bottom left photo to show that the player has maintained a good solid extended arm action.

The bottom right photo is the payoff from winding up the swing to maximum coiling capability. The energy he created going back is dynamic and powerful. I've drawn a circle around the golfer's hands to pinpoint how well he has allowed the arms to be automatically pulled back down

towards the target. Checkout how well his right leg has kicked in on the follow-through which indicates great footwork. His head is still looking down well after a shot would have been hit and he has maintained great balance throughout the drill.

After doing these 3 types of resistance training he took short break to recover because his arms felt like spaghetti. I had him grab a golf club and he proceeded to hit some great, powerful shots with seemingly little effort because of the efforts he put in doing the exercises. This type of resistant training can reap quick and effect results if you give it a chance.

Throughout the drills the golfer is learning how his arms work in the golf swing. Also, more importantly the exercise is correlating how the core of your body reacts to how you use your arms. They work in unison together to create a spring-like action that is the nucleus of your golf swing.

So if you want to maintain consistence and get more distance in your game I highly recommend you try resistance. Tom Ward can be contacted at www.teetimetom.com

This week: Shriners Children's Open



tage of the familiar setting... The first couple of events on the PGA TOUR schedule are perfect opportunities for rookies to test their mettle against some of the best in the world and also earn valuable FedExCup points... This year's Shriners marks the 25th anniversary of Tiger Woods earning his first PGA TOUR win at TPC Summerlin. He defeated Davis Love III in a playoff to win in just his fifth start as a pro.

72-HOLE RECORD: 260, Ryan Moore (2012), Webb Simpson (2013).

18-HOLE RECORD: 59, Chip Beck (3rd round, 1991 at Sunrise GC). TPC Summerlin record: 60, J.J. Henry (1st round, 2013), Rod Pampling (1st round, 2016)

LAST TIME: In the field on a sponsor's exemption, Martin Laird broke a seven-year PGA TOUR victory drought at the Shriners Children's Open. If you recall: Laird was on the tee box when Jonathan Byrd ended the 2010 tournament with a walk-off ace in a sudden-death playoff. This time around Laird, on the second playoff hole, drained a 23-foot birdie putt

to defeat Austin Cook and Matthew Wolff. This was Laird's fourth career TOUR title. His final round included a shot-of-the-year candidate eagle hole out on No. 9 (he popped one in from a plugged lie in the bunker). This was the Scotsman's second win at TPC Summerlin. He also won here in 2009. Abraham Ancer finished fourth, while Peter Malnati, James Hahn, and Will Zalatoris rounded out the top five. Fifty-four-hole leader Patrick Cantlay finished T8 alongside Bryson DeChambeau, amongst others.

HOW TO FOLLOW

Television: Thursday-Sunday, 5 p.m.-8 p.m. ET (Golf Channel).

PGA TOUR LIVE: Thursday-Friday, 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. (Featured Groups).

Radio: Thursday-Friday, 2 p.m.-8 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 3 p.m.-8 p.m. (PGA TOUR Radio on SiriusXM and PGA-TOUR.com/liveaudio).



Shriners Children's Open
October 7 - October 10, 2021
TPC at Summerlin
Las Vegas, Nevada
Purse - 7,000,000
Winners Share - 1,260,000
2020 Champ - Martin Laird

By Adam Stanley
 PGATOUR.COM

Martin Laird looks to continue his love-affair with TPC Summerlin as he defends his title at the Shriners Children's Open. A handful of Ryder Cuppers from the victorious U.S. side will also make their return to the PGA TOUR for the first of two consecutive events in Las Vegas. THE CJ CUP @ SUMMIT will be conducted the following week.

FIELD NOTES: Eleven of the top 25 in the Official World Golf Ranking are scheduled to compete, led by No. 8 Louis Oosthuizen... Brooks Koepka and Ryder Cup teammates Harris English and Scottie Scheffler also will play at TPC Summerlin, while two former Ryder Cuppers, Rickie Fowler and Patrick Reed, will make their return to action. Each will be making their first start of the season... Masters winners Danny Willet and Hideki Matsuyama are competing in Las Vegas... In all, nine major champions are set to play TPC Summerlin... A few members of Team

Europe are returning to action on TOUR, as well, including Ian Poulter and Viktor Hovland and vice captain Graeme McDowell... Will Zalatoris, recently named the PGA TOUR's Rookie of the Year, will look to build off his T5 in Las Vegas a year ago... Martin Laird returns to defend his Shriners victory from 2020 (captured after a dramatic playoff). Laird finished 75th in the FedExCup standings last season... Sponsor exemptions this year include Harry Hall, Kevin Yu, United States Air Force captain Kyle Westmoreland, and three-time European Tour winner Rasmus Hojgaard, who is just 20 years old. Yu finished fourth in this year's PGA TOUR University rankings and parlayed that status into two top-10s in eight Korn Ferry Tour starts, including a runner-up.

FEDEXCUP: Winner receives 500 FedExCup points.

COURSE: TPC Summerlin, par 71, 7,255 yards. For nearly 20 years TPC Summerlin has hosted the PGA TOUR's Shriners Children's Open. Bobby Weed designed the course – which is carved through rugged desert terrain – alongside Fuzzy Zoeller as the player consultant. It boasts raw landscape features, lush bentgrass greens, numerous water features, and meanders through canyons and arroyos.

STORYLINES: Funny enough, the winning score the last two years has been 23 under, with both the 2019 and 2020 editions of the tournament going into playoffs... Twelve golfers with ties to the Las Vegas area, including two-time Shriners winner Kevin Na, will look to take advan-

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Tiger Woods' first win in Las Vegas



Woods earned the first of his record-tying 82 victories in Las Vegas

By Sean Martin
PGATOUR.COM

An anonymous veteran and inclement weather thwarted Tiger Woods' first two opportunities to win on the PGA TOUR. He wouldn't be stopped in Las Vegas, however, overcoming a muscle strain and an indifferent opening round to beat one of the TOUR's top players. This year's Shriners Children's Open is being played at TPC Summerlin 25 years after Woods earned his first PGA TOUR title there.

The tournament was 90 holes back then, and Woods needed a 91st to beat Davis Love III after they tied at 27 under par. The mano-a-mano nature of the sudden-death playoff took Woods back to his amateur days – which had ended just a few weeks earlier after his third consecutive U.S. Amateur victory.

Woods hit a 9-iron to 20 feet on the first hole of sudden-death, two-putted for par and could only watch from the side of the green as Love's 8-foot par putt slid by the hole. No one knew that 81 more wins would follow, tying Woods with Sam Snead for the most in PGA TOUR history. At the time, Woods was in the midst of a furious sprint to simply earn his playing privileges for the following season.

"It's really hard to describe the feeling," Woods told ESPN's Andy North, who called the win golf's biggest story since Jack Nicklaus at the 1986 Masters. "It's been a hard struggle all the way, and then I got lucky and won it in the end."

Woods arrived in Las Vegas still outside the all-important top 125 on the money list

with just three events remaining. By the end of the week, he'd earned a two-year exemption on TOUR and invitations to the following year's Sentry Tournament of Champions and Masters, both of which he won.

The win in Las Vegas was worth \$297,000. Woods earned a reported \$60 million the moment he turned pro, but his first winner's check was still a momentous sum for a 20-year-old who left Stanford after two years and wasn't old enough to gamble in Las Vegas' casinos. Woods stayed in a penthouse at the MGM Grand, John Strege wrote in his biography "Tiger," but also had to borrow \$20 from his mother, Kultida, to buy a Big Mac and fries.

At the trophy ceremony, the master of ceremonies tried to make light of Woods' status as a young superstar who'd just earned a princely sum.

"I was thinking of something clever to say," longtime Las Vegas golf historian Jack Sheehan told the Las Vegas Review-Journal five years ago. "So we get to the ceremony and I said, 'How about a round of applause for the wealthiest college dropout?' ... He comes over to me and whispers in my ear, 'I think Bill Gates got me on that one.'"

The Associated Press' Tim Dahlberg remembers returning from Love's post-playoff press conference to find Woods sitting at his desk, reading over the story that would soon be released to papers around the world.

"I said to Tiger, 'Anything you like?' Dahlberg told the Review-Journal, "and he

pointed to the number in the story (the \$297,000) and said, 'I like that.'"

Woods has admitted not knowing where all 82 of his PGA TOUR trophies are but the oversized check from his victory in Las Vegas still hangs in his office. The well-timed win also fulfilled a goal Woods had expressed just a week earlier.

"He said, 'One of my goals is to beat you down the stretch,'" Love recently told PGATOUR.COM. "I said, 'Well that's great kid. I hope you get the chance.' Well, (a week) later it was a playoff and I didn't finish him off. I always say I helped create the monster that beat us so many times over the years."

The two shared a swing coach in Butch

Harmon and were frequent practice-round partners. Love was 32 when Woods turned pro and owned 10 PGA TOUR titles.

The 1996 Shriners was Woods' fifth PGA TOUR start after he turned pro by famously saying, "Hello, world," in Milwaukee. He steadily improved with each start, from a T60 in his debut to an 11th-place finish in Canada before back-to-back top-5s at the Quad City Classic (now known as the John Deere Classic) and B.C. Open.

Woods is golf's greatest closer but he couldn't convert the first 54-hole lead of his career. One shot ahead entering the final round in the Quad Cities, Woods made a quad and a double-bogey in a four-hole stretch on the front nine. The big numbers opened the door for Ed Fiori, 43, to win his fourth PGA TOUR title and first since 1982. Woods was in third place the following week before rain canceled the B.C. Open's final round.

Citing fatigue, he withdrew from the following week's Buick Challenge, where he was scheduled to receive the Haskins Award as college golf's top player. He returned to his new home in Orlando and didn't touch a club for several days before departing for Las Vegas.

"My mind has been carrying me and you can only do that so long before your mind gets tired," Woods said in his pre-tournament interview in Las Vegas. "That's what happened to me."

He started the tournament with a pedestrian 70 that left him eight shots off the lead and in a tie for 97th. A second-round 63, the low round of his nascent career, had him on the cusp of the top 10. "I'm still in the hunt, kind of," he said. "I need a few more of these."

He aggravated a groin injury, first suffered at the U.S. Amateur, during Friday's third round, however. He limped on the final few holes and spent much of that night receiving treatment for the injury. On

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Tiger Woods poses with his mom Kultida Woods and the trophy after his first TOUR win. (J.D. Cuban/Allsport)

Tiger Woods' first win by the numbers

By Justin Ray
PGATOUR.COM

This week marks the 25-year anniversary of Tiger Woods' first PGA TOUR victory, a play-off win over Davis Love III at the Las Vegas Invitational – now known as the Shriners Children's Open.

Of his 82 PGA TOUR titles, Woods' breakthrough victory in the desert has some anomalies about it. Firstly, it's the only time Woods won a 90-hole event in his PGA TOUR career. The Shriners Children's Open played as a five-round event through 2003, before reverting to a traditional 72-hole format in 2004. The last official 90-hole event contested on the TOUR was the 2011 Bob Hope Classic.

It also marks the worst opening-round position by Woods in any of his 82 PGA TOUR wins. After the opening round, Tiger was in a tie for 97th place, eight shots behind leader Keith Fergus. The only other time Woods was outside the top-60 after round one and won a PGA TOUR event was at the 2009 Buick Open, when he was tied for 95th place after the opening day.

Let's look back on Woods' first victory – and the bolt of lightning that was his Rookie of the Year campaign in the fall of 1996.

Woods' first career victory came at the age of 20 years, 9 months and 6 days old – making him the youngest winner on TOUR in more than five years. In a precursor of the ties that would bind their careers for a generation, Woods was the youngest to win on TOUR since Phil Mickelson, who did it about 2.5 months younger as an amateur at the 1991 Northern Telecom Open. Woods was the youngest professional to win on TOUR since Raymond Floyd, who was 20 years, 6 months old when he picked up his first title, the St. Petersburg Open.

Woods' second win, the Walt Disney World /Oldsmobile Classic later that month, made him the youngest two-time PGA TOUR winner since Ralph Guldahl in 1932. Woods was – and remains – the youngest player to win twice in the same PGA TOUR season since World War II.

Woods' youth stuck out even more dramatically in 1996 than it would have today. That season, only 14 of 44 official PGA TOUR victories were claimed by players in their 20s. Woods himself accounted for two-thirds of the PGA TOUR wins that season by players under age 25 (Justin Leonard, age was 24).

In the fall of 1996, Woods joined Ben Crenshaw as the only players to win the individual NCAA Championship and a PGA TOUR event in the same year. Since then, Matthew Wolff (in 2019) has joined the legendary duo. Woods remains the only player to win twice on the PGA TOUR and win the NCAA Division I individual title in the same year.

Woods won the 1996 U.S. Amateur earlier that year, his third consecutive victory in that event and sixth consecutive USGA title after winning the U.S. Junior Amateur in 1991, 1992 and 1993. Woods is the only player in the modern era of the PGA TOUR to win the U.S. Amateur and a PGA TOUR event in the same

year. The overall lack of victories by U.S. Amateur champions in recent years speaks to the magnitude of this achievement: since 2010, Bryson DeChambeau (2015 champion) and Viktor Hovland (2018 champion) are the only players to win the U.S. Amateur and go on to win a PGA TOUR event at any point – let alone in the same season.

The week of his victory in Las Vegas, Woods averaged 322.6 yards off the tee. Not only was that a then-record for longest average driving distance by a winner on TOUR, it hammered the old mark by nearly 10 full yards. Before Woods, the official record was 312.9 yards by Greg Norman at the 1986 Kemper Open. At the time, Woods was just the fourth PGA TOUR winner to average more than 300 yards off the tee that week.

Woods' iron play showed a glimpse of what was to come, as well. Tiger hit 80% of his greens in regulation for the week, and 16 in each of the last two rounds. Woods has 15 PGA TOUR wins where he hit 80% of his greens in regulation or more. Over the last 40 seasons, no other player has more than 8 (Phil Mickelson).

His short game was equally sharp that week in Nevada, as he scrambled successfully 14 of 18 times. It would be nearly 20 years before another player would average 320 or more off the tee, hit 80% or more greens in regulation, and scramble at a clip of 75% or better in the week they won a PGA TOUR event. Over the last 40 seasons, there have been more than 1,700 official PGA TOUR victories recorded. Only 3 of them pulled off that trifecta: Woods, Jason Day at the 2015 NORTHERN TRUST, and Dustin Johnson at the 2019 WGC-Mexico Championship.

Tiger did not play in enough rounds to officially qualify for statistical titles in 1996, but if he did, he would have obliterated what was then the record for single-season driving distance average. Woods averaged 302.8 yards off the tee in his abbreviated campaign, 14 yards longer than the official 1996 leader, John Daly (288.8). The difference between Woods' average and Daly's was the about the same as the official differential between Daly and No. 30 on the list, Andy Bean (274.7 yards). Daly would not pass 300 yards as a single-season average until the 1997 season.

Woods also hit more than 71% of his greens in regulation in the 1996 PGA TOUR season, which would have ranked him sixth on TOUR if he had enough rounds to qualify. No player would officially average 300+ yards off the tee and hit 70% or more greens in regulation on the PGA TOUR until eight years later, when both Vijay Singh and Chris Smith did it.

The wiry 1996 version of Woods was like nothing golf had ever seen before. The following April, in his first major championship appearance as a professional, he would turn the sports world upside-down with a dozen-shot runaway victory at Augusta National. It took Woods less than a calendar year to ascend to No. 1 in the Official World Golf Ranking. While the fall of 1996 wasn't the quite the legend in full flight, it gave the golf world a sampling of what was to come.

Saturday, he ducked into the clubhouse to receive treatment at the turn and after finishing his round.

"All the golf I've been playing, I never gave it a chance to heal," said Woods, who had his groin wrapped for the final round. He said the injury may prevent him from playing in the next two events.

He started Sunday four shots behind leader Ronnie Black, who looked to reprise Fiori's role in Woods' story. Black had last won 12 years earlier and was battling for his TOUR card, arriving in Las Vegas at No. 123 on the money list after just one top-10.

Woods birdied Sunday's opening hole, then made his fourth eagle of the week on the third hole. He reached the par-5 ninth hole in two with a 6-iron (from 230 yards) while playing partner Keith Fergus hit two drivers just to roll his ball into a bunker short of the green.

"He was hitting some shots that you weren't accustomed to seeing," Fergus told GolfChannel.com. "At that stage, he was the best ball-striker I'd ever seen."

The birdie put Woods at 23 under par, and in the midst of a crowded race for the top spot. He made a 35-foot birdie putt at 11 that pulled him within one of the lead, which Love lost after taking an unplayable lie when his approach to No. 10 sailed over the green.

Woods grimaced and grabbed his groin after reaching the par-5 13th in two with a 2-iron. It was an opportunity for Woods to display the toughness that he prides himself on.

"It was hurting all the way in," Woods said of the injury, "but being the son of a former Green Beret, I know those guys can suck it up. A strain is nothing."

He made a 6-foot birdie putt on 13 to tie the lead. A 12-footer for birdie on the next hole put Woods alone atop the leaderboard. ESPN commentator Frank Beard compared the scene to the enthusiastic galleries that once followed Arnold Palmer.

"They are absolutely going crazy running down the fairways," Beard said.

Woods made an easy birdie on the par-5 16th – he played TPC Summerlin's four par-5s in 5 under in the final round – before parrying the final two holes.

"Just do it? He might have just done it," North said after Woods tapped in on 18 for a final-round 64. Woods declined an invitation to watch the finish of Love's round from ESPN's broadcast booth.

"Don't celebrate yet, and don't talk to the media," Harmon recalled saying in his book, "The Pro." "You're probably going to be in a playoff with Davis Love III."

Harmon was correct. Love recovered from the miscue at No. 10 by making birdie on the next hole and going eagle-birdie on the drivable, par-4 15th and the reachable 16th. Harmon and Woods headed to the driving range to prepare for the potential playoff. Woods hit several cut 3-woods off the practice tee, and it took a moment for Harmon to realize why.

"If it came to a playoff, he wanted his opening tee shot to be in the fairway, but behind Davis' ball," Harmon wrote. "That would allow him to play first. If he struck the ball close to the hole, he could get the gallery into it and shift the momentum his way."

"It was a masterful strategy, one that showed a level of maturity I could never have imagined from a 20-year-old."

Woods' strategy worked to perfection. His tee shot came to rest just a few yards behind Love's. Woods' approach safely found the green on the water-guarded hole. Love, hitting second, pulled his approach shot into a bunker long and left of the green. When he couldn't get up-and-down, it was all over.

"We all knew he was going to win, but I didn't want it to be today," Love said. "We know how good he is. We know he's the next force on TOUR."

He was, indeed, and it all started 25 years ago in Las Vegas.

OU hopes to make it four straight



Oklahoma has won the last three contests

#6 Oklahoma (5-0) vs #21 Texas (4-1)
Time / TV: 11:00am / ABC
Line: Oklahoma -3.5 / 63.5

Oklahoma’s offense needs a tune-up. It’s fine by normal standards, averaging 433 yards and 38 points per game, the passing attack is adequate, and the team has done something right to get to 5-0, but outside of a scrimmage against Western Carolina, the pop just isn’t there.

Texas is the one coming into this with the hot offense the kids are all slamming to. No. 1 in the Big 12 in scoring, yards, ruining, and passing efficiency, everything that was supposed to happen with Steve Sarkisian taking over is actually kicking in.

The Longhorns figured out that Casey Thompson was the right quarterback fit for now, Bijan Robinson is close to becoming the best running back in college football, and it’s all leading to lots of big plays, lots of third down conversions, and the ability to come through in tight games like the 32-27 win over TCU.

Oklahoma’s problem is the inability to run with any consistency. Without a Jalen Hurts or Kyler Murray under center, and Rhamondre Stevenson off being a New England Patriot, the ground game is okay. It’s not good enough, though, for Oklahoma to be Oklahoma. If Texas gets out to a quick lead, then OU will have to press for the first time all year, but ...the team has figured something out.

So Oklahoma isn’t ripping through teams with frightening precision. So it’s having way too hard a time putting games away. So all four games against FBS teams were decided by a touchdown or less.

There’s a little too much playing with fire, but the Sooners have been able to pull off several solid wins with defense, not screwing up, and enough offense to get the job done without taking any unnecessary

chances.

The running game isn’t that bad. Kennedy Brooks and Eric Gray are combining for over five yards per carry. Spencer Rattler doesn’t rip off big runs, but that’s not his job. He’s not making the big plays through the air he did last year, but he’s more accurate – hitting 76% of his passes – and he’s not making the killer mistakes. The D is getting the job done, too, when it absolutely has to.

The Sooners aren’t allowing much of anything on the ground – Bijan Robinson isn’t going to find a whole lot of room to move – and the pass rush is good enough to be a bother. And then there’s the other key to the new and not-really-improved-but-different Sooners ...Turnovers. There really aren’t any. Last year at this point there were nine. This year after five games there are four, and two of them were in the opener against Tulane.

Is this still going to be as much fun when the two are in the SEC and not playing for Big 12 world domination? That’s for another day. The real question is this. Is Oklahoma really playing so many tight games because it’s being relatively conservative – and sputtering in a play-not-to-lose sort of way – or is it because it can’t do what it’s supposed to. We’re about to find out.

This probably goes one of two ways. Either the Oklahoma defense rises up and rocks – and that becomes the storyline – or the Texas offense gets hot and the OU O really doesn’t have the extra gear. Or it might be a little of both. The Texas offense plays better, the Oklahoma defense keeps this in range, and in the end, Rattler and the attack doesn’t quite come through with the one clutch scoring drive it needs to pull this out.

Pick: Texas 31, Oklahoma 27

Red River Showdown Fast Facts

The Red River Showdown, more commonly called the Red River Shootout, or alternatively the Red River Classic, the Red River Rivalry, or the Oklahoma–Texas football rivalry, is a football rivalry game played annually at the Cotton Bowl inside Fair Park in Dallas, during the State Fair of Texas in October (in 1903 and 2018, the rivalry met twice). The participants are the Sooners of the University of Oklahoma in Norman and the Longhorns of the University of Texas at Austin.

The game is played the week following the State Fair Classic (featuring Prairie View A&M and Grambling State), and the series is one of the major rivalries in NCAA football and in all of American sports. The name is derived from the Red River that forms part of the boundary between Texas and Oklahoma that has in the past caused conflict between the two states, most notably the Red River Bridge War in 1931.

There are three Red River Showdown trophies exchanged based on the outcome of the game. The best known of these is the Golden Hat, which is a gold ten-gallon hat, formerly of bronze. The trophy is kept by the winning school's athletic department until the next year. A newer trophy, the Red River Rivalry trophy, has been exchanged between the two student governments since 2003. The governor of Texas and governor of Oklahoma also exchange the Governors' trophy and frequently place a bet on the game such as the losing governor having to present a side of beef to the winning governor, often donated to charity.

For both teams, the rivalry is bitterly emotional and territorial in nature relating to the two states' proximity, past border disputes and economic and cultural differences.

Series history

The first game in the series was played in 1900, when Oklahoma was still a territory. The game was formerly called the Red River Shootout. For the 100th game in 2005, sponsored by SBC Communications, the game was officially renamed the SBC Red River Rivalry, with the word “Rivalry” replacing “Shootout” out of a desire not to convey an attitude of condoning gun violence. The following year, with SBC's merger with AT&T Corporation, the game was renamed the AT&T Red River Rivalry. In 2014, it became the AT&T Red River Showdown. The term Red River Shootout or Red River Showdown is also applied to meetings between the two schools in sports other than football. During a Q&A session with DeLoss Dodds (the Athletic Director of UT) during the Big 12 restructuring and chaos that ensued thereafter, Dodds stated in an interview, "That game – the rivalry game for us has always been Oklahoma. The A&M game's been a great game and all of that. And we may play 'em. But it's not something that we have to do. I think the Oklahoma game is something we have to do."

Since 1936, the first year of the AP Poll, at least one of the teams has come into the game ranked 70 times, including every one of the last 19 meetings. Texas leads the overall series 62–49–5 (.556), but since the end of World War II (1945), the series is narrowly in favor of Oklahoma at 38–36–3 (.513), and they lead over the last 21 meetings with a record of 14?7. In 2005, The Dallas Morning News asked the 119 Division 1A football coaches to identify the top rivalry game in college football. The Red River Rivalry ranked third, behind only Michigan–Ohio State and Army–Navy.

Big 12 STANDINGS		
Team	Conf.	Overall
Oklahoma	2-0	5-0
Oklahoma St	2-0	5-0
Texas	2-0	4-1
Baylor	2-1	4-1
Texas Tech	1-1	4-1
Iowa State	1-1	3-2
TCU	0-1	2-2
Kansas State	0-2	3-2
West Virginia	0-2	2-3
Kansas	0-2	1-4

First meeting	October 10, 1900 Texas 28, Oklahoma 2
Latest meeting	October 10, 2020 OU 53, Texas 45 4OT
Next meeting	October 9, 2021
Stadiums	Cotton Bowl (Dallas)
Trophy	Golden Hat
Statistics	
Meetings total	116
All-time series	Texas leads, 62–49–5
Largest victory	OU 65–13 (2003)
Longest win strk	Texas, 8 (1940–1947, 1958–1965)
Current win strk	Oklahoma, 3



TCU hopes to end its two game losing streak this weekend in Lubbock

By Jeff Bartl

TCU (2-2) ay Texas Tech (4-1)
Time / TV: 6:00 / ESPN
Line: TCU -1.5 / 61

It's a stunningly flawed TCU team – more on that in a moment – but the parts that work are really, really strong. The offense is amazing on third downs – it's No. 2 in the nation converting 50% or more of its chances in every game. The punting game is amazing, QB Max Duggan is a veteran who's great in the red zone, and the offensive line is giving everyone time to work.

Texas Tech's secondary is getting bombed on and the offense never has the ball. It's about pacing, but TCU might be able to control the game and the clock a bit. In a strange way, the inability of the Horned Frog D to rush the passer doesn't hurt – Texas Tech gets rid of the ball fast. Howeverit would be nice if TCU could generate some pressure on the QB, but it just doesn't.

Former Utah State starting quarterback Henry Colombi followed head coach Matt Wells to Texas Tech, and he's coming through large after Tyler Shough went down. The veteran threw for close to 300 yards with three touchdowns over the last two weeks, and he was steady enough in the win over West Virginia. Again, TCU doesn't get to the quarterback, and that's partly why it's so awful at coming up with third down stops. Texas Tech can run a little bit, and TCU is bad at stopping that, too.

Is this that strange week when TCU all of a sudden flips a switch and is good at defense again?

The Horned Frogs couldn't stop Texas from running, couldn't stop Cal from passing well, and it couldn't seem to stop anything against SMU.

It's not like Texas Tech is playing any defense, either, but at home, the offense will be just a little bit sharper with the ground game cranking up to control the clock a bit more.

Pick: Texas Tech 34, TCU 30

West Virginia (2-3) at Baylor (4-1)
Time / TV: 11:00am / FS1
Line: Baylor -3 / 44.5

If the object of the game was to come as close to winning without actually doing it, West Virginia would be 5-0 and ranked third in the nation.

The Mountaineers have come really, really close to being amazing. It couldn't stop turning the ball over against Maryland, it couldn't come up with that one big drive needed against Oklahoma, and last week's nice comeback attempt against Texas Tech was whacked by a last second field goal.

Closing is obviously part of the deal – the Mountaineers were able to do that against Virginia Tech – but the best pass rush in the Big 12 is a constant issue for opposing backfields and the offense has some explosive parts. But ...there's absolutely nothing consistent about this West Virginia team offensively. It struggles too much to run the ball, the passing attack has a bizarre mix of things happening, and in an are-what-your-record-is way, the O really doesn't know how to get the job done in the clutch.

Baylor is hardly perfect, but it's not turning the ball over, it's forcing a ton of mistakes, and it's been great at being consistent against inconsistent teams.

Considering how weird the West Virginia passing game has been, this isn't the secondary to go against when you want to work out the kinks.

You figuring out the Mountaineers. Baylor warmed up with three layups and it all worked in the win over Iowa State. The O fell flat, though, in the 24-14 loss to Oklahoma State and the run defense got shoved around. The Cowboys also spent a whole lot of time in the Baylor backfield ten tackles for loss and constant pressure. That's where West Virginia comes in.

The Mountaineers will overcome yet another spotty day from the offense side with four sacks and enough pressure to keep stalling Baylor's attack just enough to matter.

It'll be close, and it'll be entertaining.

Pick: West Virginia 26, Baylor 20

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FOOTBALL

SEC GAME DAY REPORT

SEC football weekend picks - Week 6



Texas A&M is riding a two game losing streak after climbing to a #5 AP ranking. The Aggies host #1 Alabama this week



ROBERT CORTINEZ
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SEC teams Georgia and Alabama put their big boy pants on and put a backyard whuppin on West Division wanna-be's, Arkansas and Ole Miss. The Dawg's and Tide's respective defenses were titanium and steel and their starting offenses could have named the scores if their coaches hadn't reined in their thoroughbreds.

Besides Alabama and Georgia, the rest of the SEC is a mystery with a capital question mark. Mississippi State squashed A&M's glimmering hope of a New Year's bowl and brought the boo birds back to College Station. The newly AP ranked #16 Kentucky Wildcats beat #10 ranked Florida to stake its surprising claim to the #2 spot in the SEC East. LSU lost a heartbreaker at home to Auburn and Tennessee set a first quarter scoring record, 35 points, on the road against Missouri. Topsy turvy times in the SEC, but this week will sift out the contenders from the pretenders. Mississippi State is idle this week.

Last Week Results: Straight 5-3; ATL 3-5
Season Results: Straight 43-12; ATL 23-24

#13 Arkansas (4-1) @ #17 Ole Miss (3-1)
Time / TV: 11:00 a.m. / ESPN
Line: Ole Miss -6.5 / O/U 66

Last Week: Arkansas lost to Georgia, 37-0;
Ole Miss lost to Alabama 42-21

Which beat-up SEC West pretender bounces back and climbs the road back to

respectability? Georgia head coach Kirby Smart could have hung 60 on his old O-line coach, Hog head coach Sam Pittman but showed mercy, only putting up 37. Ole Miss scored 21 on 'Bama in their 20 point loss, but the Rebels scores were after-the-fact TD's, against Saban's third team defense. Arkansas's offense was stagnant, predictable and scoreless last week. Ole Miss's offense is creative, ingenious, and unpredictable under head coach Lane Kiffin and his star QB, Matt Corral. Going with home field advantage in Oxford.

Pick: Ole Miss 31 Arkansas 27

Vanderbilt (2-3) @ #20 Florida (3-2)
11:00 a.m. / SEC Network
Line: Florida -38 / O/U 59.5

Last week: Vanderbilt beat UConn, 30-28;
Florida lost to Kentucky, 20-13.

Vandy QB, K Seals, has thrown for 894 yards, 5 TD's and 5 interceptions. Florida QB, Emory Jones has thrown for 871 yds, 5 TD's and 6 interceptions. Sounds pretty even on paper, right? And if pigs could fly. Florida head coach Dan Mullen has to regroup and play for an upset of Georgia in three weeks for Gator Nation redemption. Vandy may catch Florida in a little let-down mode, but Commodores still go down hard.

Pick: Florida 44 Vanderbilt 7

South Carolina (3-2) @ Tennessee (3-2)
Time / TV: 11:00 a.m. / ESPN2
Line: Tennessee -10.5; O/U 56

Last week: South Carolina beat Troy, 23-14
and Tennessee beat Missouri, 62-24

Tennessee may have gained a Rocky Top foothold in head coach Coach Josh Huelgel's first season. The Vols absolutely gut punched Missouri in Columbia in a game that was over in the first quarter. Vols QB Hendon Hooker, threw for 3 TD's and ran for another and Tennessee's offense

scored at will. The Gamecocks were just good enough to cover the line against Troy last week but had some scary moments barely holding on at the end. Feels like Tennessee turned a corner last week, going with Big Orange.

Pick: Tennessee 37 South Carolina 22

#2 Georgia (5-0) @ #18 Auburn (4-1)
Time / TV: 2:30 p.m. / CBS
Line: Georgia -14.5 / O/U 46.5

Last week: #2 Georgia beat #8 Arkansas, 37-0 and #22 Auburn beat LSU, 24-19.

Against LSU, Auburn head coach Bryan Harsin came out of halftime down three points and went for the jugular with an unsuccessful onside kick. The fact that Auburn's new head man had the audacity (balls) to call that in Death Valley was refreshing. Tigers QB Bo Nix was Houdini all night, converting several fourth down conversions that led to 13 of Auburn's 24 points. The win was Auburn's first road victory in Baton Rouge in 20 years. Georgia was absolutely dominant in its shut-out of the Razorbacks. Head coach Kirby Smart had his crew, and the Dawg's fan base, in top form and his team could have pinned 60+ on the Hogs. Auburn has a better offense and will put up a fight on the Plains, but Georgia will win and cover.

Pick: Georgia 34 Auburn 13

North Texas (1-3) @ Missouri (2-3)
3:00 p.m. / SEC Network
Line: Missouri -19 / O/U 68

Last week: Missouri lost to Tennessee, 62-24; Troy was idle

Missouri HC, Eli Drinkwitz is too good of a coach to allow last week's home meltdown to start a losing "streak" with lightly regarded North Texas coming to town. Two weeks ago, Missouri was 2-1, and almost beat Kentucky in Lexington before getting blown by Tennessee. The Tigers still have Georgia, Florida, A&M and Arkansas on the schedule, so this game is a must win for Missouri. North Texas showed up in road losses to #23 SMU and Louisiana Tech, but Missouri flexes its SEC muscle in this contest.

Pick: Missouri 40 North Texas 17

LSU (3-2) @ #16 Kentucky (5-0)
6:30 p.m. / SEC Network
Line: Kentucky -3 / O/U 50.5

Last week: LSU lost to #22 Auburn 24-19;
Kentucky beat #10 Florida

LSU's Big Ed Ogeron is allegedly on the hot seat just two years after completing an undefeated, 15-0, National Championship season. Put away your cry-baby towels LSU fans, Coach Ed is a good coach, will still go to a decent bowl game this year and if you fire him, he laughs all

the way to the bank with his \$21 million dollar buy-out. Kentucky head coach Mark Stoops is in the exact opposite position. Coach Stoops has his Wildcats at #16 and has already beaten hated rival Florida. Based on nine years of achievements at Kentucky, his tenure is secure until he retires, no matter how bad a season the Wildcats have this year, next year or years in the future.

Coach "O" has to beat this East Division foe, with the Gators, the Rebels, the Hogs and Bama looming. Picking LSU in a mild upset.

Pick: LSU 27 Kentucky 26

#1 Alabama (5-0) @ Texas A&M (3-2)
7:00 p.m. / CBS
Line: Alabama -17.5 / O/U 51.5

Last week: Alabama beat Ole Miss, 42-21
and A&M lost to Mississippi State, 26-22.

The Crimson Tide and Georgia are on a collision course for the SEC Championship Game in December. Alabama starts its quest with this road 'test' against the Aggies. Only thing about it, it's not of much a test with A&M riding a two game losing streak after climbing to a #5 AP ranking. The Aggie's loss to Mississippi State last week was perplexing, with A&M's defense, which returned 10 starters, giving up 408 yards and three TD's to Bulldog QB, Will Rogers while A&M's QB, Zach Calzada has been anemic and only managed 135 passing yards. Aggie's offense also gifted the Bulldogs 2 points with a safety at two minutes left in the game meaning they now needed a TD to win. Didn't happen, interception on 4th down, game over. A&M's offense has one bright spot RB Isaiah Spiller (445 yds. 6.5 avg) on a team that is desperate for production. Jimbo's goose is cooked and the Tide Rolls in College Station.

Pick: Alabama 34 Texas A&M 18

SEC Standings		
Team	Conf.	Overall
WEST		
Alabama	2-0	5-0
Auburn	1-0	4-1
LSU	1-1	3-2
Arkansas	1-1	4-1
Miss State	1-1	3-2
Ole Miss	0-1	3-1
Texas A&M	0-2	3-2
EAST		
Georgia	3-0	5-0
Kentucky	3-0	5-0
Tennessee	1-1	3-2
Florida	1-2	3-2
Vanderbilt	0-1	2-3
S. Carolina	0-2	3-2
Missouri	0-2	2-3

AAC Game Day Picks and Predictions



SMU aims to stay undefeated this week at Navy

#24 SMU (5-0) at Navy (1-3)
Time / TV: 2:30 / CBSSN
Line: SMU -13.5 / 56

The SMU Mustangs will face the Navy Midshipmen on the road with the hope of continuing their strong season. The Mustangs are 5-0 and looking to win the American Athletic Conference this season while the Navy is 1-3 and unfortunately, having a season to forget. SMU might be looking ahead on their schedule but they have to beat the Midshipmen on the road who looks eager to turn their season around.

SMU have been led by potent offense The Mustangs look poised to win the AAC this season led by an offense that is scoring 42.6 points per game. Transfer quarterback Tanner Mordechai has been incredible under center, completing 70.2 percent of his passes for 1569 yards and 24 touchdowns while Danny Gray and Rashee Rice have emerged as the top pass catchers with 730 combined receiving yards and 13 touchdowns. In addition, the rushing attack is averaging 220.6 rushing yards per game and is led by a two-headed monster in Ulysses Bentley IV and Tre Siggers who have combined for 747 yards on the ground and three touchdowns.

The offense has led the way for the Mustangs but the defense has played great

as well, allowing only 21.8 points per game. Defensive linemen Gary Wiley and Turner Coxe have been disrupting plays in the backfield with 20 combined tackles and five sacks while linebackers Delano Robinson, Shaine Hailey, and Jimmy Phillips Jr. have been controlling the middle of the field with a combined 75 tackles between the trio. Additionally, the secondary has stepped up with cornerback Bryan Massey defending three passes and an interception while safety Isaiah Nwokobia has two interceptions.

Navy has played poorly on both sides of the ball. The Midshipmen won their most recent game with a surprise 34-30 win over UCF but have struggled across the board this season otherwise. The offense is scoring 16 points per game with a passing attack that is only averaging 62.3 yards per game. The Midshipmen rarely throw the ball, attempting only 38 passes all season and as a result, the primary production comes from the run game with running backs Isaac Ruoss and James Harris II combining for 407 rushing yards and two touchdowns while quarterback Xavier Arline has 171 yards on the ground and two touchdowns.

In addition to the offense struggling, the defense is allowing 32.5 points per game. Linebacker Diego Fagot and cornerback Jamal Glenn and Michael McMorris have

been the leaders of the defense, combining for 80 tackles and two sacks while line-backer Johnny Hodges has two passes defended but the rest of the unit has struggled. The secondary in particular has failed to limit opposing passing attacks with only one interception on the season while allowing 211 passing yards per game.

Pick: SMU 35 Navy 20

Cincinnati (4-0) at Temple (3-2)
Time / TV: 6:00 / ESPN
Line: Cincinnati -29 / 54

That's more like the Temple we were waiting for. The Owls were supposed to be solid coming into the season, but they couldn't stop screwing up against Rutgers and couldn't get past Rutgers. They beat Akron and Wagner, and then last week they passed the real test with a 34-31 win over Memphis. Now they get a shot at a potentially unfocused Cincinnati team coming off the massive win over Notre Dame and with the showdown against UCF coming up next. Here's the problem for a team being all but put in the College Football Playoff by some ...D'Wan Mathis is playing well.

The one-time star quarterback recruit for Georgia has thrown for over 600 yards and five touchdowns with no picks in the last two games. Temple is 3-0 when coming up with 400 yards or more, and 0-2 when it doesn't, but ...Cincinnati has yet to allow more than 400 yards. Now, Temple is 0-2 when it doesn't hit 300 yards, and UC has allowed that in each of the last two games, but Mathis will be under pressure all game long and it'll take something special to crank up the production the O generated against a bad Memphis D.

The Bearcat pass defense is among the nation's most efficient – coming up with eight picks and just three touchdown passes – allowing quarterbacks to hit just 46% of their passes. Temple doesn't have the ground game to bust through if Mathis isn't great.

Be a wee bit careful here. Temple gets to play loose and free in this, and it has the veterans to pull off a good game now that all the pressure in the college football world is on the other side. Give it a quarter, and then the Bearcats will settle down and start to produce. Temple will go on a few early scoring drives, but it won't be nearly enough – it won't be able to keep up the pace in the second half.

Pick: Cincinnati 41, Temple 16

Houston (4-1) at Tulane (1-4)
Time / TV: 6:30 / ESPN
Line: Houston -6 / 59.5

The Tulane defense is having a few issues. To be very, very fair, having Ole

Miss, Oklahoma, East Carolina, UAB on the slate doesn't help, but this is a veteran group that's supposed to be better than allowing 482 yards and 40 points per game.

Houston has hardly been perfect, but the defense has been stunningly solid overall after the season-opening loss to Texas Tech. The Cougars are great at getting off the field on third downs, the run D held up just fine against Navy and Tulsa, and there's a whole lot pressure in the back-field.

Tulane's offensive line hasn't been bad. It's been good in pass protection and the running game hasn't been bad when the team actually uses it. At home, this is one of those best-someone-your-own-size moments. The Green Wave need to cut down on the turnovers, but there's a passing game to push the Cougar secondary that hasn't been tested all that much.

With a good punting game – field position should matter – and with the defense getting a wee bit of a break compared to most of the season so far, this is where the season momentum might turn if the Green Wave D can just come up with a few positive stops early.

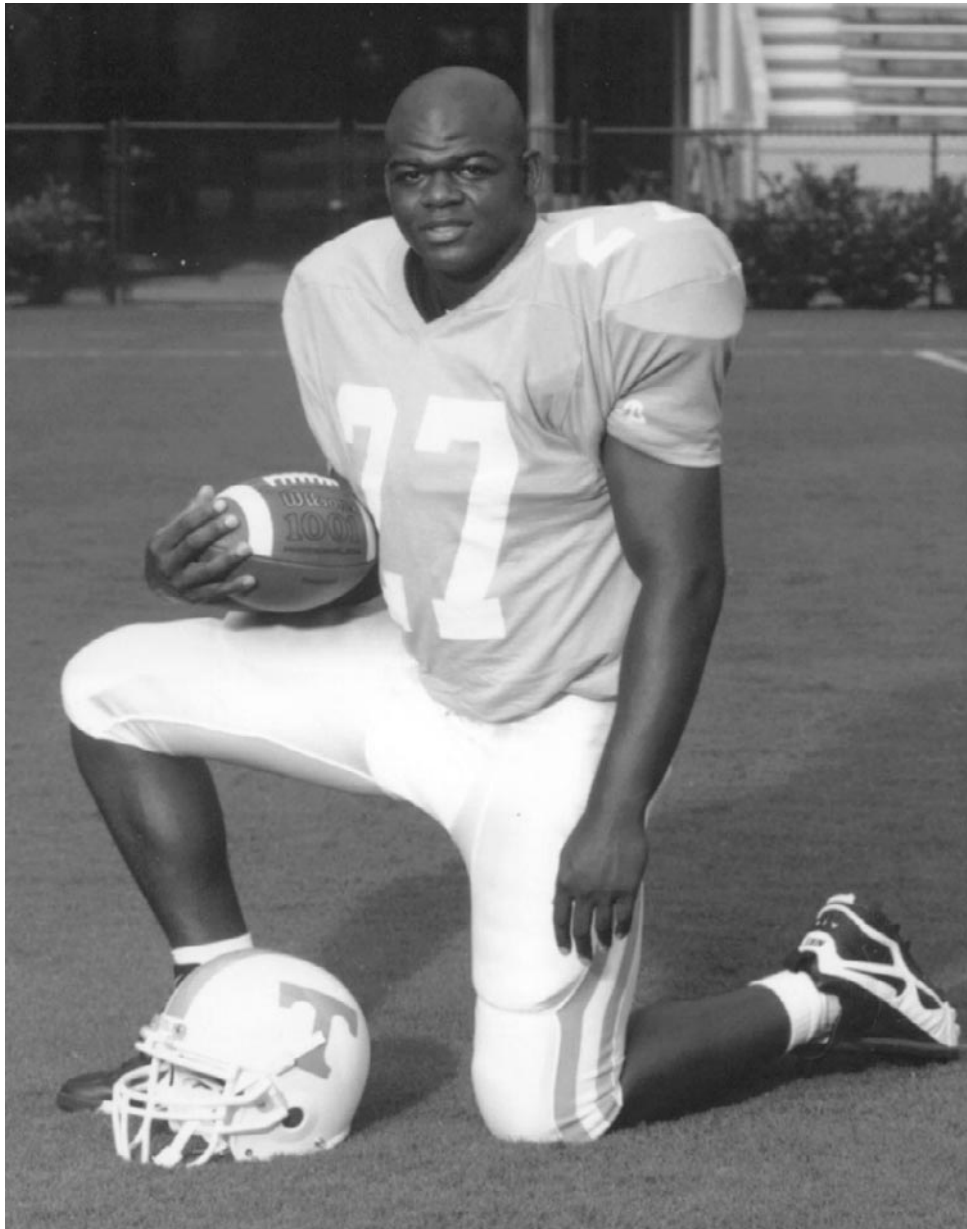
The fantastic 2019 Tulane win broke the Cougars. It was head coach Dana Holgorsen's first year at Houston and there wasn't a whole lot of luck happening early with two losses in the first three games. A crazy finish led to the build-for-2020-plan which for a whole slew of reasons didn't work. This isn't exactly a full circle moment – the Cougars won the 2020 season opener over Tulane 49-31 – but it sort of is. This is when the program is supposed to be kicking it in under Holgorsen, but it's about to get Tulane's best shot.

The Green Wave will be creative as the offense gets going early, but it won't be enough. Houston is playing too well defensively and QB Clayton Tune has been too accurate to lose this.

Pick: Houston 30, Tulane 23

AAC Standings		
Team	Conf.	Overall
SMU	1-0	5-0
Houston	2-0	4-1
East Carolina	1-0	3-2
Temple	1-0	3-2
Navy	1-1	1-3
Cincinnati	0-0	4-0
Memphis	0-1	3-2
UCF	0-1	2-2
South Florida	0-1	1-4
Tulane	0-1	1-4
Tulsa	0-1	0-4

National Football Foundation Spotlight



AL WILSON
University of Tennessee
Linebacker, 1995-98

By Matt Fortuna

Al Wilson couldn't help but add a little bit of drama to his recruitment. A highly ranked recruit from Jackson, Tennessee, Wilson was heavily sought after by most colleges in the country, ultimately narrowing his options down to Notre Dame and Tennessee. He loved Lou Holtz, who sold him on everything the Irish had to offer, but his heart rested with his home state.

Still, when lead Volunteers recruiter John Chavis came to visit him one last time, Wilson decided to drag things out once more for his future defensive coordinator.

"When it was all said and done, Tennessee was the place for me. It just felt like home," Wilson said. "And just to put a little cherry on top, I gave Coach Chavis a little scare. When he came to Tennessee to see me and I had made a decision on where

I was going to go, I knew I was going to Tennessee, but I wanted to spice it up. So, I told him I had actually chosen Notre Dame, just to see what kind of reaction I would get out of him. And everything just kind of got quiet, and then right after that I told him I was just playing a quick joke on him and I am coming to the University of Tennessee. So, it was one of those moments that obviously I'll never forget."

The rest is literal history on Rocky Top. Wilson became one of the best defensive players to ever walk through Neyland Stadium, ultimately leading the Vols to the first ever BCS national championship at the conclusion of the 1998 season. He now can call himself the 21st player in program history to make the College Football Hall of Fame — a number that leads the SEC.

The 6-foot, 240-pound linebacker made an impact from Day 1 in Knoxville, and he went on to start in each of his final three years in the orange and white. The Vols finished in the top 10 in all four years Wilson played for them. They won the Citrus Bowl

in 1996 and '97, and they won the SEC in '97 and '98.

Wilson became a team captain and a First Team All-American in 1998, posting 77 tackles despite missing three games. Tennessee went 13-0 and topped Florida State, 23-16, at the Fiesta Bowl to win the national title. Wilson finished his college career with 272 total tackles before being drafted 31st overall by the Denver Broncos in 1999.

"Obviously winning a national championship is at the top of that list, but honestly the relationships that I created over the years with my teammates, they still go on to this day," Wilson said. "So that to me is the most lasting memory of being at U-T for those four years, and just making lifetime friendships that for me are priceless."

Wilson became a five-time Pro Bowler in Denver, finishing with 21.5 career sacks. Wilson now lives in Atlanta, where he invests in a number of start-up companies and restaurants. One of his biggest passion projects is Project FANchise, which helps run fan-controlled football teams. He is

most proud of his son, Carrington, who was diagnosed with brain cancer as a teenager but still managed to have a successful baseball career at Division II Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville. Carrington is now pursuing a career in the medical field.

"The biggest thing that I loved about (Tennessee) when I got out of college was the time management; the ability to manage time between football and school is something that's not very easy to do," Wilson said. "And as a student-athlete, along the way you truly have to learn how to put yourself in the best possible situation, and for me that was how my skills honed in at the University of Tennessee. I've taken those approaches into life. And sometimes you learn a few things here and there that don't always work out, but you figure out what works for you and what direction you need to go.

"So just those life lessons of hard work, dedication and focusing on something and putting your mind to going ahead and complete is what I got out of being at U-T."



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College Football News and Notes



Mississippi State head coach Mike Leach is now 8-3 against Texas A&M as head coach at Texas Tech and MSU



BO CARTER

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The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame announced the 176 semifinalists for the prestigious 2021 William V. Campbell Trophy®, college football's premier scholar-athlete award. The impressive list of candidates boasts a solid, cumulative 3.66 average grade point average (4.0 scale), with more than two-thirds of the semifinalists having already earned their bachelor's degrees.

Celebrating its 32nd year, the Campbell Trophy® recognizes an individual as the absolute best football scholar-athlete in the nation for his combined academic success, football performance and exemplary leadership. The winner will be denoted at the 63rd NFF Awards Dinner presented by Fidelity Investments and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Bureau Dec. 7 in Las Vegas, Nev. For the complete listing and biographical information on the Campbell Trophy semifinalists, please access footballfoundation.com.

Among the 176 semifinalists, there are 105 nominees who have already earned

their bachelor's degrees, 12 nominees who have earned a master's degree, five nominees with a perfect 4.0 GPA for their careers, 52 nominees with a 3.8 GPA or better, 65 nominees with a 3.7 GPA or better, 34 CoSIDA Academic All-America® selections, 107 team captains, 97 all-conference selections from the 2020 season, and 22 All-America choices.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority will serve as the presenting sponsor of the 63rd 2021 National Football Foundation Awards Dinner Dec. 7 in Las Vegas' ARIA Resort and Casino. 2021 Hall of Fame class member Kenneth Sims of Texas received a special salute by the NFF last week.

Scheduled NFF Hall of Fame On-Campus Salutes, presented by Fidelity Investments since 2010 are:

Date – Honoree (Hall of Fame Class) – School (Opponent)

Oct. 9 – Eric Crouch (2020) – Nebraska (vs. Michigan)

Oct. 9 – Carson Palmer (2021) – Southern California (vs. Utah)

Oct. 9 – Al Wilson (2021) – Tennessee (vs. South Carolina)

Oct. 16 – Harris Barton (2021) – North Carolina (vs. Miami [Fla.])

Oct. 16 – Jason Hanson (2020) – Washington State (vs. Stanford)

Oct. 16 – Coach Dick Sheridan (2020) – Furman (vs. The Citadel)

Oct. 23 – E.J. Junior (2020) – Alabama (vs. Tennessee)

Oct. 23 – Cade McNown (2020) – UCLA (vs. Oregon)

Oct. 30 – E.J. Henderson (2020) – Maryland (vs. Indiana)

Oct. 30 – Coach Dick Sheridan (2020) – NC State (vs. Louisville)

Fans can enjoy a visit to the Chick-fil-A NFF College Football Hall of Fame if they are in the Atlanta area this fall. They have GameDay Tailgate every Saturday where fans can watch the top games of the week-end. Also, the 2020-2021 College Football Hall of Fame Class specialty exhibit is open to honor honoring the legendary players and coaches of both classes and featuring personalized lockers for each member with memorabilia highlighting their stellar collegiate careers.

NFF College Hall of Fame Facts

Some notable birthdates in NFF College Hall of Fame annals in the Oct. 5-11 time period are Oct. 5 (1911) Bill Corbus, San Francisco, Calif.; (1921) Bill Willis, Columbus, Ohio; (1937) Barry Switzer, Crossett, Ark.; (1958) Ken Margerum, Fountain Valley, Calif.; (1966) Dennis Byrd, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Oct. 6 (1902) George Pfann, Marion, Ohio; (1925) Bob Fenimore, Woodward, Okla.; (1930) Les Richter, Fresno, Calif.; (1963) Napoleon McCallum, Milford, Ohio; Oct. 7 (1878) Andy Kerr, Cheyenne, Wyo.; (1921) Vaughn Mancha, Sugar Valley, Ga.; (1939) Bill Snyder, St. Joseph, Mo.; (1950) Dick Jauron, Peoria, Ill.; (1976) Charles Woodson, Fremont, Ohio; Oct. 8 (1895) Lawrence "Biff" Jones, Washington, D.C.; (1911) Cotton Warburton, San Diego, Calif.; (1956) Johnnie Johnson, LaGrange, Texas; (1891) D.X. Bible, Jefferson City, Tenn.; Oct. 9 (1886) Walter Steffen, Chicago, Ill.; (1930) Hank Lauricella, Harahan, La.; (1958) Mike Singletary, Houston, Texas; Oct. 10 (1894) Walter Gordon, Atlanta, Ga.; (1920) Frank Sinkwich, McKees Rocks, Pa.; (1922) Merv Pregulman, Lansing, Mich.; (1946) Dwayne Nix, Kingsville, Texas; Oct. 11 (1905) Joel Hunt, Texico, N.M.; (1906) Dutch Clark, Fowler, Colo.; (1930) LaVell Edwards, Orem, Utah; (1947) Bobby Anderson, Midland, Mich.; (1961) Steve Young, Salt Lake City, Utah; (1965) Chris Spielman, Massillon, Ohio.

Notable anniversary death dates for Hall of Famers are Oct. 5 (1979) Ken Strong, New York, N.Y.; Oct. 7 (1986) Wallace Wade, Durham, N.C.; (2018) John Gagliardi, Collegeville, Minn.; Oct. 8 (2018) George Taliaferro, Bloomington, Ind.; Oct. 10 (1966) Slip Madigan, Oakland, Calif.; (2012) Alex Karras, Los Angeles, Calif.; Oct. 11 (1980) James Moscrip, Atherton, California.

Happy birthdays to NFF College Hall of Fame members Oct. 5 Barry Switzer (a spry 84), Ken Margerum, Oct. 6 Napoleon McCallum, Oct. 7 Bill Snyder (a spry 82), Dick Jauron, Charles Woodson, Oct. 8

Johnnie Johnson, Oct. 9 Mike Singletary, Oct. 10 Dwayne Nix, Oct. 11 LaVell Edwards, Orem, Utah; (1947) Bobby Anderson, Midland, Mich.; (1961) Steve Young, Salt Lake City, Utah; (1965) Chris Spielman, Massillon, Ohio.

Arkansas and Texas Tech will play a two-game series during the 2030 and '31 seasons...Army West Point and Tennessee have cancelled their scheduled contest in 2022 with both schools now scrambling to obtain a 12th opponent. Several observers noted the great military traditions and histories of the academy and prospective SEC University...BYU and Notre Dame have signed their contract for an Oct. 8, 2022, Shamrock Series clash at Las Vegas' Allegiant Stadium...Coastal Carolina will host Charleston Southern in 2025. CCU and Virginia also have a three-game series scheduled to start in 2022, 2024 and '25...Nicholls will travel to ULM for a 2022 tilt...Old Dominion and Virginia Tech have a 10-game series slated from 2022-31...Arkansas' move from No. 16 to No. 8 in the Associated Press national survey was one of the largest of the season, and the Razorbacks continue to be in the Top 25 for the first time in 10 years...Baylor football was No. 21 in the AP poll for its first rating since the end of the 2019 campaign and for the second time in the last five years. The Bears also converted on six of their first seven fourth down conversions this season...North Texas held a Louisiana Tech team averaging 38.7 points over three games to 24 markers in a recent C-USA clash...Virginia kept its hopes alive in the ACC Coastal Division race with a 30-28 squeaker win at Miami (Fla.) last Thursday night...Kentucky ended a skein of 33 losses in 34 games and 16 in a row at Lexington to U. Florida with a 20-13 win over the then-No. 10 Gators...Five teams ranked in the Top 15 nationally fell last week with two matchups of Top 10 entries – Arkansas at Georgia and Cincinnati at Notre Dame. It was the first meeting of the Fighting Irish and Bearcats since 1900 and UC's first victory over an Associated Press Top 10 opponent at kickoff...Penn State shut out Indiana to end a school-record streak of 246 games with points by the Hoosiers since 2000...There are 16 undefeated teams in NCAA FBS through games of Oct. 2, and this includes surprising Wyoming (4-0), SMU (5-0), Kentucky (5-0), San Diego State (4-0), and UTSA (5-0), among others.

Special Olympics Florida attained Coke Florida as co-presenting sponsor for 2021 Sunshine Bowl last Saturday at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa...Children's Health Center in Dallas, which hosts hospi

(continued on page 16)

tal visits by visiting teams in the Goodyear Cotton Bowl annually since 1986, is hosting a special Halloween fundraiser with several area colleges and youth groups attending and volunteering...The 2021-22 Hebron (Texas) HS marching band has received an official invitation to perform for the first time in school history in the historic Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif., Jan. 1. Hebron is the sixth Dallas-Fort Worth region school invited to play in the Rose Parade since 1991 and interestingly is located 31 miles from AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, where the 2021 Rose Bowl presented by Capital One was played on neutral ground due to COVID-19 conditions in California...The Rice "R" Association held a special tailgate party prior to last week's Rice-Southern Miss encounter in Houston...Vanderbilt celebrated the 50-year anniversary of its largest group of Black football student-athletes in 1971 with the likes of stalwarts Taylor Stokes, Jim Hurley, Walter Overton, and Doug Nettles – among the first four student-athletes to play in the Southeastern Conference. Nettles told a group of VU Black and Gold members jokingly that he lived a boring existence as a defensive back from 1970-73 because so many SEC teams were running the Wishbone offense.

Head coach Brian Kelly of Notre Dame hope to add to his school record for coaching triumphs with the Fighting Irish at 106-40-0 over 12 years and 277-97-2 in 28 seasons as a head coach with a win over Wisconsin. He eclipsed the previous UND coaching standard by NFF College Hall of Fame mentor Knute Rockne at 105-12-5 over 13 seasons from 1918-30...NC State head coach Dave Doeren celebrated like numerous winning coaches and players in many of the Alabama-Tennessee series with a prime panetela cigar...Georgia defensive coordinator Dan Lanning received an ample compensation raise with his new pact with the Bulldogs through June 2024...Mississippi State head coach Mike Leach is now 8-3 against Texas A&M as head coach at Texas Tech and MSU...Kevin Whitley has taken over as interim head coach at Georgia Southern after the dismissal of former head coach Chad Lunsford...Texas State head coach Jake Spavital noted that a total of 43 players over two games against Incarnate Word and Eastern Michigan had symptoms or were quarantined by COVID-19 protocols...USA Today complimented Arkansas head coach Sam Pittman for his late start as a college head coach and the victorious and can-do attitudes he has brought back to the UA gridiron program. The publication also noted immediate improvements must continue to be made for performance turn-arounds and bowl invitations at such schools at North Carolina, Auburn, Texas Tech, North Texas, and others.

Hometowns of more 2021 college head coaches – Michigan Tech: Steve Olson, Ada, Minn.; Middle Tennessee: Rick Stockstill, Sidney, Ohio; Millsaps: Aaron

Pelch, Sandy, Utah; Minnesota: P.J. Fleck, Sugar Grove, Ill.; MSU Mankato: Todd Hoffner, Valley City, North Dakota.

Temple is expected to name Texas executive senior associate AD for facilities Arthur Johnson as director of athletics...Arkansas director of athletics Hunter Yurachek has received accolades for the timely hiring of possible 2021 SEC Coach of the Year Sam Pittman prior to the 2020 campaign...Northern Illinois AD Sean Frazier visited with media about his contract extension and happiness with his position with the Huskies and also had an extensive interview with D1Ticker.com content producers...VMI selected David Miller as its interim AD...Boston College AD Pat Kraft explained details about the selection of New Balance as the new apparel and marketing partner for the Eagles...Nebraska AD Trev Alberts recognized the need for the Huskers to limit mistakes for optimum play in several upcoming Big Ten Conference tussles, which should be evenly-matched...Michigan State AD Alan Haller had his compensation and bonus clause packages confirmed by the MSU Board of Trustees...UC San Diego AD Earl W. Edwards reflected on UCSD's first full year in NCAA Division and challenges caused by COVID-19 and financing...Alcorn State AD Derrick Horne is stepping down from his position...Interim Southern Illinois AD Matt Kupec is working to maintain stability within the department until the fulltime position is filled...Holy Cross has selected co-interim ADs in Rosemary Shea and Nick Smith...Arizona State senior associate AD Don Bocchi retired after 32 years with the Sun Devils...Notre Dame selected Garrett Chapman as senior associate AD for finance and strategy...San Diego State chose Matt Wittig as associate AD for philanthropy...Auburn athletics' new executive director of counseling and sport psychology is Dr. Doug Hankes...Miami (Fla.) president Julio Frenk spoke of the state of Hurricanes football and numerous factors, which may be distracting coaches and student-athletes such as NIL legislation, antitrust rulings, promotion of gambling, conference realignments, and some groups that portray college athletics as exploitative...Mario Rosales is the new associate AD for business and finance at Florida Atlantic...James Madison president Dr. Jonathan Alger is joining the Knight Commission...Stetson tabbed Danny Forshey as men's head golf coach...Georgia Southern AD Jared Benko related how the search for a new GSU football coach will be conducted...Wisconsin AD Chris McIntosh noted that he would not be filling the deputy AD's position held by him for several weeks or months...Georgetown has updated its staff with Sharon Brummell as executive senior associate AD for business and finance as well as senior woman administrator, Dan O'Neil as deputy AD for external affairs, Dan Trump as deputy AD for internal operations, Kelli Myers as chief of

staff and senior associate AD for sport administration...Northwestern selected Eileen O'Rourke as associate AD for academic services and student development...Former Clemson associate AD for creative services Jonathan Gantt has left the group to go into private business...Old Dominion restructured its staff recently with Ken Brown as chief of staff, deputy AD/COO Bruce Stewart as football sport administrator, Carolyn Crutchfield as executive senior associate AD for sport administration and external affairs and Dr. Ron Moses as executive senior associate AD for internal operations and student-athlete welfare...Tennessee Tech president Dr. Phil Oldham has been named to the NCAA Board of Governors...Montana State has made several internal changes in athletics with Thijs Goossens as deputy AD for internal operations and chief financial officer, Casey Fox as deputy AD for external operations and Jamie Rizzuto as senior associate AD for student services and senior women administrator...Wagner chose Seagren as associate AD for compliance, equity and inclusion and associate AD Wassel as senior women administrator...Princeton executive associate AD Anthony Archbald is a new member of the NCAA Division I-II men's volleyball committee...The Eastern Kentucky U. Board of Regents approved the naming of the ECU Olympic Sports Training Center after longtime Colonels 39-year track and field and cross-country head coach Rick Erdmann...Washington State men's basketball head coach Kyle Smith inked a contract extension through the 2026-27 outing...Former NASA deputy administrator Lesa Roe is completing her tenure as chancellor of the U. of North Texas system March 31, 2022, after total enrollment reached a record 49,000-plus for the fall semester...Arizona swimming and diving head coach Cliff Robbins had hos contracted extended through 2024...Manhattan added Eric Rasmussen Jr. as swimming and diving coach for the Jaspers...UC San Diego track and field head coaches Tony Salerno and Darcy Ahner will retire after the 2021-22 seasons...Minnesota men's hockey head coach Bob Motzko will receive a new compensation package along with his three-year contract extension...Kansas State economics professor Dr. Daniel Kuester discussed the impact on college athletics of conference membership changes and losses of traditional football rivalries...Several high-profile public college coaches and administrators in all sports in Mississippi are subject to a maximum, four-year contract limit. CoSIDA Hall of Fame member and Mississippi State legendary publicist Bob Hartley signed a one-year letter of intent for 39 years in MSU athletics from 1946 until he retired in 1985...Marshall has narrowed its search for a new AD to five finalists...D1Ticker.com has posted new positions in athletics at Utah State, Texas Tech, Dayton, Bucknell, Idaho, the Big 12 Conference, Temple, Arkansas

State, Abilene Christian, UNC Greensboro, Appalachian State, Kentucky, Longwood, UCLA, Oklahoma State, Tennessee, Kansas, Stanford, Wyoming, Syracuse, Florida, and Utah State.

Texas A&M-Commerce is leaving the Division II Lone Star Conference after 90 years to join the NCAA FCS Southland Conference...Lone Star Conference commissioner Jay Poerner wished TAMUC well and remarked that the other 17 members of the LSC were dedicated to pursuing excellence as the loop has begun its 10th decade of competition...American Athletic Conference commissioner Mike Aresco stressed the need for the loop to get back to 10-12 football-playing members and emphasized urgency in the invitation process...Five Big 12 teams entered last week's games among the Top 25 in rushing defense...Sports Illustrated researched the non-conference performances of all FBS prior to games of Oct. 1 and saluted the SEC with the top out-of-circuit winning percentage of .812, the Big 12 at .793, the Big Ten at .769, and the ACC with a .711 victory rate...Game times and matchups for the Big 12-Southeastern Conferences' Men's Basketball Challenge have been set for Saturday, Jan. 29...The American Athletic Conference assured members that they will receive at least \$7 million apiece annually from current television contracts despite the pending moves of UCF, Cincinnati and Houston to the Big 12 Conference...Former Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany was reported to be in meetings with Conference USA leadership to discuss future membership changes and opportunities...Conference USA has renewed its NIL advising agreements agreement with INFLCR...Air Force athletics is trying to keep student-athletes, coaches, alumni, and donors informed of any possible moves to another conference...The Big 12 Conference's Champions of Life has entered its seventh year and highlights student-athletes who are making a difference on their campuses with a 2021-22 theme of unity and social justice. Among the featured student-athletes are football standouts Byron Hanspard Jr. of Baylor, Greg Eisworth II of Iowa State, Patrick Fields of Oklahoma, Obinna Eze of TCU, Tony Bradford Jr. of Texas Tech, and Nicktroy Fortune of West Virginia...The Northeast Conference is adding men's volleyball as a championship sport starting with the 2022-23 competitive year. The Goodyear Cotton Bowl is set for Tuesday's induction into its Hall of Fame of NFF Board of Directors' member, former Arkansas star and NFL Dallas Cowboys owner/general manager Jerry Jones, NFF College Hall of Fame coach Bill Snyder of Kansas State, NFF College Hall of Famer Tom Gatewood of Notre Dame, Jonathan Beasley of Kansas State, Cory Redding of Texas, Dexter McClusker of Ole Miss, and Bill Romanowski of Boston College...College Football Playoff executive director Bill Hancock related that

time is on the side of a possible CFP field expansion in the future and that the complexity of contracts and other factors make it a time-necessity decision.

Alabama RB Brian Robinson Jr. rushed for 171 yards and four TDs in a Tide victory over Ole Miss...Stanford QB Tanner McKee threw the game-tying and game-winning touchdown passes while going 20-for-36 with 230 yards passing and three TDs...SMU quarterback Tanner Mordecai leads NCAA FBS with 24 touchdown passes in five tilts after tossing four more against USF last week...Texas RB Bijan Robinson rushed for a career-high 216 yards and four touchdowns in a Big 12 road win over TCU...Kentucky RB Chris Rodriguez Jr. spearheaded a 20-13 victory over then-No. 10 Florida with 99 rushing yards on 19 carries...Mississippi State QB Will Rogers was 46-of-59 passing for 408 yards and three touchdowns as the Bulldogs upended No. 15 Texas A&M on the road. Rogers now has completed 169-of-225 passes for 75.1 percent, 1,454 yards and 11 touchdowns in five contests...The 25 semifinalists for the 35th annual Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award presented by O.A. Smith are Brennan Armstrong, Virginia; Connor Bazelak, Missouri; Anthony Brown, Oregon; Sean Clifford, Penn State; Jack Coan, Notre Dame; Matt Corral, Ole Miss; Malik Cunningham, Louisville; Jayden Daniels, Arizona State; JT Daniels, Georgia; Dillon Gabriel, UCF; Sam Hartman, Wake Forest; Sam Howell, North Carolina; Emory Jones, Florida; D'Eriq King, Miami (Fla.); Devin Leary, NC State; Grayson McCall, Coastal Carolina; Kenny Pickett, Pittsburgh; Jack Plummer, Purdue; Brock Purdy, Iowa State; Spencer Rattler, Oklahoma; Chris Reynolds, Charlotte; Desmond Ridder, Cincinnati; Carson Strong, Nevada; Taulia Tagovailoa, Maryland; and Malik Willis, Liberty...UTSA kicker Hunter Duplessis connected on 10 of his first 12 field goals in '21 with a game-winning boot at Memphis ...Big 12 standouts from recent weeks have included Texas QB Casey Thompson (conference offensive player of the week) and Xavier Worthy (newcomer of the week, Oklahoma State's Malcolm Rodriguez (co-defensive) and Baylor's Garmon Randolph (co-defensive) and Trestan Ebner (special teams)...Conference USA stars QB Chris Reynolds (25-of-36 passes for 339 yards with five total touchdowns against Middle Tennessee), UTSA LB Clarence Hicks and WKU safety A.J. Brathwaite Jr. have achieved recent Surf & Turf Conference USA Players of the Week laurels...The Lou Groza Award Stars of the Week kickers were Oklahoma's Gabe Brkic, Auburn's Anders Carlson (led the nation in kick scoring with 45 points through Sept. 29) Indiana's Charles Campbell I...UTSA running back Sincere McCormick was the Earl Campbell Tyler Rose Award National Player of the Week for his 217 all-purpose yards in an upset victory at Memphis...Oklahoma State QB

Spencer Sanders began Big 12 activity by throwing for 344 yards against then-No. 23 Kansas State...Duke QB Gunnar Holmberg tied a school record with four rushing TDs against Kansas...North Texas RB DeAndre Torry rushed for 516 yards in his first four contests...Villanova QB Daniel Smith (transfer from Campbell) has the Wildcats in the thick of a possible NCAA FCS play-off berth...North Texas coaches have been impressed by the mentoring of sixth-year senior Jason Pirtle and Mean Green Eagles freshman tight end Jake Roberts..Louisiana Tech QB Austin Kendall has been out with an undisclosed ailment but hopes to return soon...Oregon QB Anthony Brown threw for three touchdowns in a Pac-12 triumph over Arizona...Baylor QB Jacob Zeno has entered the NCAA transfer portal...Iowa middle linebacker Jack Campbell provided key plays to help the Hawkeyes come from behind for a win over Colorado State to earned FWAA Bronko Nagurski Award National Defensive Player of the Week laurels...Wisconsin QB Graham Mertz has vowed to coaches and fellow players he will improve his passing consistency....Notre Dame QBs Jack Coan and freshman Drew Pyne each worked extensively with No. 1 units before the Fighting Irish's clash last weekend with Cincinnati...Clemson's star DT Bryan Bresee is out for the rest of the season with a torn ACL...Former Duke standout and Texas Tech grad transfer Marquis Waters has been sidelined for the rest of '21 with a pectoral injury...Kansas State QB Skylar Thompson is nursing a knee injury and seeking a faster return to full-speed activity. Wildcats third team QB Jaren Lewis has received extensive action the last two weeks...Texas OL Jake Majors was highlighted for his blocking work in helping the Longhorns average 267.8 yards rushing through four contests...Nick Smith Jr. has given an oral commitment to Arkansas in 2022...SMU erected a ceremonial billboard for Tarrant County residents and football student-athletes Alan Ali, Rashee and Mike Williams in the Fort Worth, Texas, area last week...ULM quarterback Rhett Rodriguez (son of longtime college head coach and current ULN offensive coordinator Rich Rodriguez) was originally on a ventilator and recovering from a severe chest injury encountered against Troy but has been released from the hospital and is much improved...UCLA's Johnny Juzang is under contract to the WME Group and Legends Apparel...Memphis' Emoni James-Wayne Bates has a new NIL agreement with Roc Nation Sports...Ohio State's K'Vaughan Pope is looking for a new transfer college after leaving the OSU program...Washington State WR Brandon Gray is recovering from a shooting episode on Sept. 24 in Pullman, Washington.

NFF College Hall of Fame coach Jimmy Johnson of Arkansas (as a student-athlete) joined Drew Pearson of Tulsa and Cliff Harris of Ouachita Baptist were hon-

ored at last Monday night's Dallas-Philly NFL Game of the Week for their admissions' into the Pro Football Hall of Fame...Ole Miss QB Eli Manning and Arkansas QB Matt Jones spoke Monday at the NFF Little Rock Quarterback Club about the famed, seven overtime contest won by Arkansas 58-56 in the longest NCAA FBS contest in history in 2001...Football historian, award-winning writer and pundit Mike Burrows offered one of the great quotes of the week about two former Nebraska NFF College Hall of Fame coaches via legend Dr. Tom Osborne: "I don't know much about fashion, but there is one person who knows less than me - Bob Devaney"...The Canadian Baseball Network College Player of the Year from Canada competing for a U.S. college on the diamond includes several past winners who also played high school or college football - David Mendham, Connors (Okla.) State, Edouard Julien, Auburn; Christopher Acosta-Tapia, Oklahoma Wesleyan; Guillaume Blanchette, Lubbock Christian; Connor Panas, Canisius; Phillippe Craig-St. Louis, Seminole (Okla.) College, Ryan Kellogg, Arizona State; Maxx Tissenbaum Stony Brook; Chase Larsson, Cameron; Marcus Knecht, Connors State, Jesse Sawyer, South Dakota State; Mike Gosse, Oklahoma, Kevin Atkinson, New Mexico Junior College; Jon Baksh, Florida Tech; Karl Amonite, Auburn; Charlie MacFarlane, Cumberland; Aaron McRae, LSU-Shreveport; Ryan Kenning, New Mexico State; Jesse Crain, Houston, Jeff Francis, UBC; and Ben Emond, Texas...Former Tennessee and NFL standout Jason Witten has become a spokesperson for Caliber Collision in the Southwest Region while competing in his first year as a head coach at Argyle (Texas) Liberty Christian HS...Longtime network college and pro football statistician and 43-year veteran in media relations and broadcasting Mike Swanson has retired as vice president of the MLB Kansas City Royals...Former Fresno State standout and current NFL Las Vegas Raiders QB Derek Carr and his FSU alumnus brother/student-athlete David have inaugurated CMP Enterprises Inc. to work as marketing consultants, media producers and advertising matchmakers for such projects as the Valley Children's Hospital naming rights for Fresno State's Bulldog Stadium..Former Stanford sailing head coach John Vandemoer published a new book *Rigged Justice - How the College Admissions Scandal Ruined an Innocent Man's Life* about the Varsity Blues' paid admissions' cases.

Kansas State's new Shamrock Zone at Snyder Family Stadium has sold 180 of its 318 premium club seats and nine of the 19 of the 20 loge and suites' areas from the \$50 million renovation project...The Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency in Florida will allot \$20 million to help fund renovations at Florida State's Doak Campbell Stadium with the anticipated creation of 250 new jobs in the Florida

Panhandle and \$50 million-plus in direct spending in the area...Marieke and Jeff Rothschild have donated \$20 million to Vanderbilt for the Rothschild College for undergraduate residents, including student-athletes...Purdue athletics maxed its goal of \$18 million for the More Than A Game campaign initiative, and the John Purdue Club eclipsed \$9 million in donations in 2020-21 for a school record...Southern Indiana (NCAA Division II) is pondering a possible jump to Division I in coming months after a study commissioned by USI president Dr. Ronald S. Rochon...Jackson State is studying plans for a possible on-campus football stadium and remodeling of the T.B. Ellis volleyball Center, track, baseball, and soccer facilities...Arizona State finished the super structure construction of its new ASU Multi-Purpose Arena on campus last week with 1,100 tons of steel and 6,980 yards of concrete in place. The facility will open late in 2022...Higher prices for agricultural commodities have signaled possible higher donations to college athletics for agriculturally based institutions in 2021-22. Income in commodities such as soybeans, cotton, corn, and related plants may increase as much as \$113 billion from 2020 to '21...Boston College administrators detailed thoughts on the National Labor Relations Board's opinion that college student-athletes could be considered as employees of the universities and could be free to unionize and receive other employee benefits...The Endeavor Group has purchased content/tech provider OpenBet from Scientific Games for \$1.2 billion ...Vanderbilt's human-dressed mascot Mr. C. (for Commodore) has been named as one of the sexiest mascots in college football by a national sports and logistics group ...Texas A&M's defense yielded just one touchdown pass in its first four games...Historic Rickwood Field (built in 1910) in Birmingham, Alabama and Kuempel Stadium in Pflugerville, Texas, were featured in a Sports Illustrated remembrance of famed football and others sports' facilities. Rickwood not only has hosted hundreds of minor league and college baseball games as well as the Negro Leagues Throwback Games but also has been the site of some of the most memorable high school football contests in Alabama annals. Kuempel Stadium was the setting for NBC's popular Friday Night Lights television series over five years...The 100-game SMU-TCU series renews in September 2022 with the traditional Iron Skillet Trophy, won in the last two contests by SMU, on the line...CAA Design has purchased ICM Partners to help storytellers, student-athletes and administrators to inspire and move global audiences...The Missouri Board of Curators has approved the naming of the Stephens Center indoor football practice facility in honor of major contributors and MU alumni Brad Stephens and Rachel Cohen Stephens...TurnkeyZRG tabbed Nzinga Shaw as its

(continued on page 18)

first president...Duke athletics has a new vaccine mandate or proof of a negative COVID test within 72 hours for entry to games at Cameron Indoor in 2021-22... Appalachian State athletics is hoping to avoid taunting by student section fans against opponents at Kidd Brewer Stadium after some recent pregame episodes...The famed Nebraska football Saturdays' hang-out Barry's has reopened in downtown Lincoln after several weeks of closure due to COVID-19 protocols... Hawai'i athletics remains in spectator lockdown for its football and women's volleyball contests in Honolulu with an impact of \$570,000-plus in home football contests' revenue and an estimated loss of \$75,000-plus for each of its well-attended women's volleyball matches in Honolulu... Mazda Toyota Manufacturing in football and NASA-famous Huntsville, Ala., just started construction on the first Mazda Toyota Corolla Cross, which will gain expected usage by numerous college athletics departments as a staff courtesy vehicle... North Texas football is vending some of its premium HUB Club suites and seats... Texas Wesleyan invited youngsters of all ages to bike, skate or skateboard to the Wesleyan Fan and Play Zones at the Rams Sooner Athletic Conference standoff with Wayland Baptist last week at historic Farrington Field in Fort Worth, Texas... Texas Tech and Boise State student-athletes have been following instructions from their respective departments of athletics to keeping NIL accounts private and low-key to avoid possible social media challenges... Wisconsin athletics gained a \$20 million, six-year no-interest loan to help a budget shortfall caused by COVID-19 conditions in 2020-21... Traditional rivals Marshall and West Virginia met in fall exhibition baseball Friday. Virginia Tech football has started a unique, early campaign for 2022 season ticket purchases with solid incentives... Kansas State athletics will remain with Nike for apparel and marketing through 2024... Leona Marketing Group tabbed Michael Ross as vice president for acquisitions and partnerships... The Charlotte (N.C.) Football Club soccer program is launching a NIL program similar to the one offered to Florida area college student-athletes by the NHL Tampa Bay Lightning... SMU is 5-0 for the second time since 2019 when the Mustangs opened the year at 7-0 overall and is ranked No. 24 nationally this week for the first time since November 15, 2019... The North Carolina Senate has a bill in the hopper to tax proceeds of NIL compensation for student-athletes... New Mexico athletics has joined a large field of schools in attempting to locate enough employees for concession stands, security areas and ticket operations because of COVID-19 conditions... Marquette's athletics features a new NIL promotion - MARQ-U - with agreements with NIL providers Opendorse, BrandR and TEAM LEMMI... Brown and Niagara athletics introduced mobile appli-

cations in conjunction with ion with From Now On.

The Montana-Eastern Washington contest last week was the first time a Big Sky Conference encounter has been aired on ESPN2... ESPN reporter Holly Rowe will continue her extensive college football and basketball duties while returning to her native state as an analyst for the NBA Utah Jazz... Yahoo Sports had an extensive interview with Cincinnati AD John Cunningham about a new architectural design phase for Nippert Stadium and the Bearcats admission to the Big 12 Conference... YouTube TV and NBCUniversal have worked to continue their standing agreement for YouTube telecasts and are seeking to incorporate more Peacock Premium webstreaming into the contracts... Award-winning sports writer with the Denton (Texas) Record Chronicle and honors graduate from the North Texas Mayborn School of Journalism Reece Waddell is moving from the DRC sports staff to become director of communications for the Sanger (Texas) Independent School District... Heitner Legal updated information that Florida athletics' new Gator Collective Group has 700-plus 700 members... The Action Network spoke of "guaranteed" performance clauses in future collegiate NIL contracts as some high-profile football student-athletes got off to slow starts in 2021... ESPN president James Pitaro reported updated subscriptions for ESPN+ and ESPN Edge with just under 15 million daily subscribers in October for ESPN+... The Sports TV Group has been projecting possible television contests before the networks denote their slates six and 12 days in advance of the televised date... The Athletic had a reporter imbedded throughout the week with Villanova's football program as it prepared to face No. 5 nationally FBS power Penn State and the challenge of playing before 100,000-plus Nittany Lions enthusiasts... Former ESPN host and analyst Dan Dakich has initiated his new digital show Sack Up with Dan Dakich on Outkick.com... ESPN named Freddy Rolon senior vice president for programming and scheduling... ESPN's College Gameday presented by Home Depot was in Athens, Ga., last week for the nationally-ranked Arkansas-Georgia game. The previous week's College Gameday from Soldier Field in Chicago drew the nation's top Nielsen Rating at 3.5 million viewers... AthleticDirectorU.com did an extensive study on the NCAA transfer portal and men's basketball and how it might translate into additional victories by numbers of quality transfers... ESPN analyst Jesse Palmer of Southern California has a new contract extension and will replace former popular Lubbock, Texas, television sportscaster Chris Harrison as host of the ABC-TV The Bachelor. He was once a contestant during year five of The Bachelor... The Action Network portrayed the Twitterbate Group and some of its inner working of NIL agreements as well as how

they correlate with current NFL deals... The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel newspaper speculated that former UCF and current Tennessee AD Danny White might have remained with the Knights if he had known they eventually would join the Big 12 Conference... ExtraPoints.com indicated a possible move by several NCAA Division II schools to Division I from a group such as Grand Valley State, Lincoln Memorial, Lindenwood, Queens (N.C.), Central Oklahoma, West Florida, West Georgia, Valdosta State and several others. These possibilities also happen to occur with additions of members in the Mid-Eastern Athletic, Ohio Valley and Southland Conferences... Sports Business Journal profiled retiring Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference commissioner Dr. Dennis E. Thomas and his impact on NCAA and HBCU athletics... 75 million-plus (a conference record) have watched Big Ten Conference football outings through week four of '21 on all televised outlets, according to the latest Nielsen Ratings... ESPN has been cutting expenses by utilizing local technical crews and broadcasters from a home university along with other play-by-play commentators working from their homes on Thursday night college telecasts... AT&T SportsNet and Root Sports are no longer available on Dish Satellite TV... CBS Sports polled 100 Division I men's basketball coaches on their thoughts for the 2021-22 basketball season and possible continued impact of COVID-19... Sportico.com had a lengthy editorial on the NRLB's opinions about labor practices, NCAA reactions and college student-athletes... ESPN Game Day powered by Home Dept will visit historic Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas and the Texas State Fair Saturday for the annual Oklahoma-Texas contest. This is the 92nd consecutive season for the teams to play at Cotton Bowl Stadium... The Athletic observed that the Pac-12 might have been wise to offer membership to BYU before the Big 12 Conference welcomed the Cougars... The Coloradoan newspaper opined that Colorado State might remain with the Mountain West Conference and unless other teams begin leaving the MWC and that the American Athletic Conference might be a good alternative... CBS Sports reiterated that Boise State and San Diego State definitely are reinforced as members of the Mountain West, and Yahoo Sports confirmed the two university's promises that they will remain in the MWC... Knight Commission Executive Director Amy Perko told Sports Illustrated that more changes need to be made in college athletics after the ruling last week from the NLRB... The Salt Lake City Deseret News newspaper edited an in-depth story on the days prior to BYU athletics accepting itbid to join the Big 12.

This week's NFF FWAA Super 16 (formerly the FWAA Grantland Rice Super 16 Poll) poll features among the Top Five Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Penn State, and

first-time member Cincinnati... NC State is the 20th annual Cheez-It Bowl FWAA National Team of the Week after upsetting multi-time CFP contender Clemson in ACC activity... Bryan Marshall of Millikin, Tom McDaniel of Memphis, Jordan Sarnoff of Fairleigh Dickinson, Cathy Luetje of the Goodyear Cotton Bowl, and Travis Chamblee of SMU were featured subjects and opinion makers in the CoSIDA Open Forum online newsletter and magazine... Arizona State, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Louisville, LSU, Mercer, Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State, St. John's (N.Y.), San Jose State, Southern California, Stony Brook, UC San Diego, Villanova, and Western Michigan are working with NCAA enforcement and compliance officials concerning possible issues and probes at their respective schools... Defending champ West Florida is No. 1 in the AFCA NCAA Division II Top 25 poll ahead of Northwest Missouri State, Ferris State, Valdosta State, and Colorado School of Mines. Nebraska-Kearney entered the DII survey for the first time in 10 years at No. 12... The AFCA has featured the same five teams in the NCAA FCS Top Five poll with defending titlist Sam Houston again leading the pack... Topping the AFCA NCAA Division III poll were Mary Hardin-Baylor (Texas), North Central (Ill.), Wisconsin-Whitewater, Mount Union (Ohio) and St. John's (Minn.)... The NAIA Top 25 poll has +++ as the teams in its Top Five... The NCAA will use March Madness for marketing and branding for the 2022 NCAA Women's Basketball Championship for the first time... NCAA president Dr. Mark Emmert is preparing to ask the U.S. Congress to pass NIL legislation that will specific that student-athletes are not employees of their colleges and universities... The NFL, NFL Players Association and Dapper Labs are finishing negotiations for NFL digital collectables... Fr. Raymond J. Finch is stepping down as head of the Maryknoll Society in Ossining, N.Y., and is being replaced by Fr. Lance Nadeau. Many of the Maryknoll missionaries serve on U.S. college campuses and in underserved areas throughout the U.S. and are football fans of such traditional powers as Notre Dame, Boston College, Fordham, Ave Maria (Fla.), and others... The NCAA Division I men's and women's basketball committees have tabled the possibility of a joint location for both championships to be played in the same city until 2027.

National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame Vitals:

Preserving the Past, Promoting the Present, Preparing the Future, and Protecting the Game Through Programs and Initiatives that Support 767 Colleges & Universities, 81,000-plus College Football Players, 15,810 High Schools, 1.04 Million-plus High School Football Players

The desirability of G-Class holds strong



There's an all-new Mercedes-Benz G-Class, available as a G550 and an AMG G63, the latter a substantially more powerful model that we cover elsewhere. While the rugged new 2019 G550 retains a boxy profile and looks much the same as before, Mercedes says only three parts are carry-over: the door handles, spare-tire cover and headlight washers. More significant, this go-anywhere Mercedes SUV, still built in Graz, Austria, has a stronger and all-new body-on-frame chassis with independent front suspension replacing the former G's live front axle. Three locking differentials (center, rear, front) ensure that the new G can still tackle legitimately tough terrain. Moreover, the new G550 has lost about 375 pounds, thanks to revised materials and a lighter body. Much of the new body is steel, but the fenders, hood and doors are aluminum. Varied competitors include the Land Rover Range Rover, the Jeep Wrangler, the Lexus LX 570 and the Toyota Land Cruiser.

The Mercedes-Benz G550 cruises comfortably down the highway, with plenty of power for easy passing. At light throttle, the 9-speed automatic shifts smoothly. With more throttle, the shifts get crisper. Electric-assist steering, light at parking-lot

speeds, firms up nicely on the highway, where there's none of the wander you might expect from such a large truck. Even though the Mercedes-Benz G-Class is a high-riding vehicle, body roll is kept in check by its well-damped suspension with anti-roll bars. The flat-plane glass windshield, so much a part of the G's character, makes it easy to see the road ahead, and the prominent fenders, topped by large directional signals, help the driver sense the front corners of the G550. One downside of driving such a blocky-shaped vehicle on the highway is a fair amount of wind noise. Off-road, the G550 unquestionably is one of the most capable SUVs. With three locking differentials, excellent power and stout suspension, it makes light work of tough trails and climbs that would be impossible in a crossover SUV.

Three locking differentials via three buttons on the dash, the G550's center, rear and front differentials can be locked, but only in that order. This gives the G550 an ability to climb hills like a mountain goat. The dynamic select drive system has five modes: Slippery, Individual, Comfort, Sport and Sport+. Basically, the response of the G550's engine, transmission, steering and stability control can be tailored to

meet driver preference.

The Mercedes-Benz G-Class Interior Luxury has been heightened considerably in the 2019 G550, thanks largely to the use of top-quality leather and attractive wood veneers. We're glad Mercedes retained the prominent grab bar for the front passenger, and we also like how the traditional instruments have been replaced by an attractive and easy-to-read digital screen. The dashboard, with four prominent circular air vents, also features a push-button starter and an integral analog clock, this last item adding a touch of traditional ambience. The new G550 is 2.8 inches longer and rides on a wheelbase also increased by 2.8 in. As a result, Mercedes has found nearly six inches more rear legroom than before, plus an extra 1.5 inches up front. There's also 4.8 inches more shoulder room inside the new G. All this extra space is much appreciated, as is a new rear bench seat that folds and splits 60/40.

The Mercedes-Benz G-Class exterior has succeeded with the look of the new G550. This new Mercedes SUV remains as boxy and upright as ever, still military in appearance and not mistaken for any other vehicle. Items such as the flat glass, exposed door hinges and external spare tire

add a back-to-basics feel, and even though the new G550 is a larger vehicle, it doesn't look that much bigger. A high-mounted tubular grille guard, unique to the G550, adds to the rugged look.

Mercedes-Benz G-Class standard twin-turbo V8, 9-speed automatic transmission and full-time 4-wheel-drive (4WD) system with three locking differentials aren't enough, consider that the Mercedes-Benz G550 is also equipped with LED headlights and taillights, Apple CarPlay/Android Auto, a sunroof and a handy 360-degree camera that helps a bunch when parking the G in tight lots. Also standard: Brake Assist, Lane Keep Assist and Dynamic Select with five driving modes (Slippery, Individual, Comfort, Sport and Sport+).

The G550 is available with a \$12,200 Exclusive Interior Package that includes diamond-stitched Nappa leather, a Designo headliner and front seats with active bolsters and built-in massagers. You can also get a \$3,470 AMG kit that includes AMG body styling, flared wheel arches, a sport exhaust and brake calipers emblazoned with the words "Mercedes-Benz." If you're looking for a blacked-out G550, the \$1,990 Night Package should satisfy with exterior mirrors, spare tire cover, grille, brush guard and wheels all done in black, plus black-tinted headlights and directional signals.

The Mercedes-Benz G550 is powered by a twin-turbo 4.0-liter V8 that produces 416 horsepower and 450 lb-ft of torque. That's good for a 0-60-mph sprint of 5.6 seconds. Of note, the powerplant is a bit unusual in that its turbochargers are atop the engine, in the vee of the aluminum block as opposed to outside of it. One transmission is available, a 9-speed automatic that occasionally skips ratios for added efficiency during acceleration.

4.0-liter twin-turbocharged V8
416 horsepower @ 5,250 rpm
450 lb-ft of torque @ 6,175 rpm
EPA city/highway fuel economy: 13/17 mpg

The Mercedes-Benz G550, which takes 100 hours to hand-assemble at the factory in Austria, has a Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) of \$124,500, plus a destination charge of \$995. Ordered with several options such as the Exclusive Interior Package, a G550 can touch \$150,000. Take note: That exceeds the base price of the almighty 577-horsepower Mercedes-AMG G63, which starts at \$147,500. Rest easy, though, because the desirability of a G-Class (and therefore its resale value) holds strong and steady over time. Before buying, check the KBB.com Fair Purchase Price to see what others in your area are paying for their new truck.



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