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TROY AIKMAN
THURSDAY AT 7:55 AM

Credit Card Debt?

Solutions that can help you get out of debt.

Tom Hill
CGA STAFF WRITER

Every three minutes another person falls behind on credit card debt. It's no wonder, since every major credit card company has nearly doubled the minimum monthly payment on consumers' bills. Federal Regulators forced the change because of their concern about the growing mountain of consumer debt, which stands at \$2.17 trillion. Many consumers can only pay the minimum payment, which can take up to 30 years to pay off. Now, relief is in sight for millions of Americans.

U.S. CREDIT CARD DEBT PER HOUSEHOLD (\$)

(Data Source: U.S. Federal Reserve)

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VS.



OKLAHOMA (6-6)

NAVY (8-3)



12.27.24 | BOWL FOR THE BRAVE | **ESPN**

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AROUND THE AREA

LOCAL NEWS OF INTEREST

Charles Schwab Challenge update



Choctaw Casinos & Resorts Partners with Charles Schwab Challenge For Major Presence at Colonial

Choctaw Casinos & Resorts is now the official casino & resort of the Charles Schwab Challenge as well as the presenting sponsor of the new Choctaw Club Village, an on-site hospitality experience, tournament officials announced this week.

In a new multi-year sponsorship, Choctaw Casinos & Resorts will be introducing its iconic entertainment at the PGA TOUR event during the 79th Charles Schwab Challenge at historic Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Tx. Dates for the 2025 tournament are May 19-25.

“We are excited to partner with the Charles Schwab Challenge at the Colonial and deepen our engagement in the Fort Worth community,” said Heidi Grant, senior executive officer for the Choctaw Nation. “We look forward to having Village ticket holders experience the up-close views and the fun, high-energy atmosphere of the Choctaw Club.”

New Choctaw Club Village - Fun and Excitement

Village ticket holders will be treated to a brand new and dynamic experience at the

Choctaw Club. Located in a new triple decker venue overlooking No. 10 fairway and No. 18 green, the multi-story Choctaw Club will offer an air conditioned first level and an expansive entertainment deck on the third level overlooking Colonial and downtown Fort Worth. The entertainment deck will also feature free to play casino table games (blackjack and craps) where guests can play for prizes. Adding to the elevated experience will be photo-ops, signature drinks and lounge-style seating areas.

In addition to the Choctaw Club, Choctaw Casinos & Resorts will bring a new level of excitement to the Pro-Am draw parties through free to play casino games.

Villages Tickets Now On Sale

The Villages ticket which is all-inclusive of upscale food, beer, wine, craft cocktails and soft drinks along with prime viewing, is wildly popular at the tournament. The Choctaw Club is one of three on-course Villages. Villages are also located on two of Colonial’s marquee par three holes; the ULTRA Club at the Gil Hanse re-created No. 8 and the Village at No. 16. The Villages ticket also includes admission to the all-inclusive Poolside Plaza by Bank of Texas with VIP entrance to the course.

For the 2025 tournament, all three of the Villages have been reimaged and improved to offer Villages ticket holders a completely new, high-quality experience.

All-inclusive Villages tickets start at \$350 per day, Thursday-Sunday, and they are available now at charlesschwabchallenge.com /tickets.

Rangers Awards Dinner, Fan Fest, and First Baseball Card/Memorabilia Show

Tickets are available for the Texas Rangers Fan Fest scheduled for 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 18 at Globe Life Field.

The 37th annual Rangers Fan Fest presented by Comerica Bank includes for the first time a baseball cards and memorabilia show this year.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children ages 3-13. Tickets are available at rangers.com/fanfest and can be accessed through the MLB Ballpark mobile app.

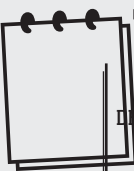
Tickets are also available for the Texas Rangers Awards Dinner presented by Coca-Cola at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 17. Tickets can be purchased at rangers.com/awards-dinner. Tables for 10 in preferred seating areas are available for \$1,500 and individual ticket are available for \$150.

Highlights of the 2025 Fan Fest include:






- Autograph sessions with current Rangers players and alumni.
- Question and answer sessions with Rangers VIPs.
- On-field activities include running the bases, wiffle ball home run derby, inflatables, and more
- Photo opportunities with Texas Rangers Six Shooters and mascot Rangers Captain.
- Rangers Baseball Foundation sale.
- Food and beverages on sale at ballpark concession stands on the main and lower concourse.
- Team merchandise on sale at the Grand Slam Team Store in the center field.

More Fan Fest details, including player availability, will be announced closer to the event date.

NCAA Basketball Poll		
Coaches Poll	Week 7	AP Poll
1. Tennessee	1. Tennessee	
2. Auburn	2. Auburn	
3. Iowa State	3. Iowa State	
4. Kentucky	4. Kentucky	
5. Duke	5. Duke	
6. Florida	6. Alabama	
7. Alabama	7. Florida	
8. Kansas	8. Kansas	
9. Marquette	9. Marquette	
10. Oregon	10. Oregon	
11. Texas A&M	11. UConn	
12. Houston	12. Texas A&M	
13. UConn	13. Gonzaga	
14. Gonzaga	14. Oklahoma	
15. Oklahoma	15. Houston	
16. Ole Miss	16. Purdue	
17. Purdue	17. Ole Miss	
18. UCLA	18. UCLA	
19. Michigan State	19. Cincinnati	
20. Cincinnati	20. Michigan State	
21. Michigan	21. Memphis	
22. Memphis	22. Dayton	
23. San Diego State	23. San Diego State	
24. Dayton	24. Michigan	
25. Mississippi State	25. Clemson	



WEEKLY CALENDAR

	DECEMBER 20 FRIDAY	DECEMBER 21 SATURDAY	DECEMBER 22 SUNDAY	DECEMBER 23 MONDAY	DECEMBER 24 TUESDAY	DECEMBER 25 WEDNESDAY	DECEMBER 26 THURSDAY
			Dallas vs Tampa Bay 7:20 / NBC				
		Mavs vs L.A. Clippers 7:30 / 97.1		Mavs vs Portland 7:30 / 97.1		Mavs vs Timberwolves 1:30 / ABC	
	Stars vs N.Y. Islanders 7:00 / ESPN+			Stars at Utah 8:00 / ESPN+			
	Allen vs Wichita 7:10	Allen at Wichita 6:05	Allen at Tulsa 3:05				
		SMU at Penn State 11:00 / TNT					

Penn State vs SMU CFP First Round



The weather will play a factor with game time temperatures in the 20's with wind chills in the mid teens

Penn State (11-2) vs SMU (11-2)
Saturday, 11:00 a.m / TNT/Max
Beaver Stadium, State College, PA
Line: Penn State -8.5, o/u: 54.5

By Jon Thomas

FINALLY, Penn State is in the College Football Playoff.

Over the last ten years it's been among the top Power conference teams to not make the CFP, and now it gets its chance after a strong 11-2 season with the only losses coming to Ohio State and in the Big Ten Championship against Oregon.

The team is coming off a good offensive day in the loss to the Ducks, QB Drew Allar announced he's returning for next year, and not to be presumptive, but the bracket is relatively favorable with the winner of this getting Boise State next.

SMU has been a blast. It basically paid to get into the Power Four world of programs, and it was all a wild success with a wonderful season complete with a thriller of a loss to Clemson in the ACC Championship.

It's not like the program is playing with house money at this point, but ... it sort of is. The payoff for the investment in profile improvement totally worked.

Penn State and SMU Bowl History

- This is Penn State's first time in the College Football Playoff. It's 31-20-2 all-time in bowl games, but it's just 3-5 in its last eight games. Head coach James Franklin is 6-6 in bowl games, and 4-5 at

Penn State.

- SMU hasn't won a bowl game since the 2012 over Fresno State in the Hawaii, going 0-4 since then. Overall, the program is 7-11-1 in bowls, and current head man Rhett Lashlee lost in each of his first two bowl attempts.

Penn State vs SMU Weather Forecast

It's going to be snowy. The temperature is expected to be in the mid-20s, with Northwest winds from 10-15 mph with gusts up to 25. Wind chills in the middle to upper teens. There is a slight chance of flurries but probably won't be all that bad. There should be enough precipitation to be a factor in the game.

Penn State vs SMU All-Time Record

Penn State is 1-0-1 vs SMU, winning 26-21 in 1978. The two teams tied 13-13 in the 1948 Cotton Bowl - both teams finished undefeated.

Why SMU Will Win

Tempo, tempo, tempo. The Mustangs can't line up and blast away on the Nittany Lion fronts, and there won't be any power against this bunch on either side, but when everything clicks with this offense the production is frighteningly efficient.

Clemson had SMU all but dead and buried in the ACC Championship, the Mustangs and QB Kevin Jennings settled in, and the comeback was breathtaking. SMU has to take the fight to the Nittany Lion secondary right away and make Allar and the offense press.

On the other side, here comes the pres-

sure. SMU brings it from all sides, the tackles for loss will be there, and the run defense should hold up. The Mustangs allowed fewer than 100 yards eight times, but ...

Why Penn State Will Win

SMU has yet to face power. There wasn't anyone on the the schedule who could line up and bash away at a high level, and that included Clemson.

Penn State can't be slow and steady - it has to be aggressive - but that might just work if the weather conditions aren't perfect. The offensive line should generate a huge push for a ground game that averages

over five yards per carry.

That line is good in pass protection, it should give Allar enough time to get the midrange passing game going, and the defense should do the rest.

Oregon might have gone off for 466 yards, and USC went for 409 - both with the good-tempo passing attack SMU will bring - but both of those games were anomalies. The Nittany Lion D is sixth in the nation, allowed 16.4 points per game.

Penn State vs SMU: Who Will Win?

Takeaways. Penn State doesn't force a ton of them, but when it forces mistakes, forget it.

SMU's turnover number is skewed with six coming against Duke, but three came in the loss to BYU and two more against Clemson. There will be two turnovers along with way too many penalties against a Penn State team that doesn't make a slew of mistakes.

Just how jacked up will these two be right out of the gate? It's the first game of Smörgåsbord Saturday, it'll be early, and the crowd might need a little bit to get going in the cold and possible snow.

Penn State will blast its way to a score on the first drive, the defense will bend without breaking on SMU's first few drives, and then the home side will own the time of possession battle. SMU doesn't care about that. It scores fast, moves fast, flies fast, and ... it gets off the field fast when this doesn't work.

The Mustangs will come up with a few good scoring drives, but Penn State will be able to do what Clemson couldn't - take the air out of the ball in the fourth quarter.

Pick: Penn State 34, SMU 20

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My lesson on taking a lesson



TOM WARD
TOMPWARD@SBCGLOBAL.NET

Back in the mid 1970's, after having quick success at the game of golf, my father thought it would be a good idea to get some professional help. Up to that point I had never taken a lesson except from my mother who was a low-handicap golfer. It was because of her that I took up the game in the first place. Sadly, she developed lung cancer and passed away.

Incredibly, I made the high school golf team which surprised everyone. I had gone from never playing to becoming the 6th man on the team. The coach only kept me on the team because he was a friend of my father.

High school matches back in those days were only 9 holes. My first match was a dismal 55. I quickly started to pick things up as my scores started going down into the low-mid 40's in the subsequent weeks. Then, after only 4 months playing, I broke par for the first time shooting a 35 (-1 under) and was medalist for the match.

My father intervened and arraigned a visit with a well-known pro named Jack Grout. I remembered reading about him as he was Jack Nicklaus' coach.

We drove over to Dublin, Ohio where I met Mr. Grout for the first time. After we visited for a bit, he asked me to hit some golf balls. He was patient and related things to me with good mental images. He was big on having sound fundamentals which I lacked at the time. Mr. Grout's valuable insights helped me a lot. I still use some of his teachings today.

One time after finishing my lesson with Mr. Grout, I saw Jack Nicklaus coming our way with his clubs. Mr. Grout introduced me to Nicklaus. They went over to another area to practice as I continued to hit balls. After Mr. Grout left, I decided to go over to Jack for a reason to this day I can't explain. Jack was very gracious. I asked him how he started his backswing? Nicklaus said that he takes the club back low and slow about 18 inches away. I thanked him and high-tailed it out of there

because I thought maybe I broke some kind of club protocol talking to him.

I went home and cut a piece of plywood 18 inches long. I placed it down as I hit balls to make sure it was exactly the distance Nicklaus told me. I figured if this is what the greatest player in golf does then I should practice like this too. I did this daily until my next lesson with Mr. Grout the following week. He watched in horror as my shots were spraying all over place. I was frustrated and disgusted when I finally fessed up to him that I spoke to Nicklaus after our last lesson. I told him about the 18 inches advice. Grout started laughing and then said,

"Jack is a great golfer, but what works for him, doesn't always mean it will work for someone else."

Translation: Different words mean different things to different people. I should of just listened to what this great teacher was telling me instead of soliciting advice from another golfer no matter how great he was.

I learned my lesson that day and as painful as it was those many decades ago it showed me the importance of trusting and listening to only one person at a time.

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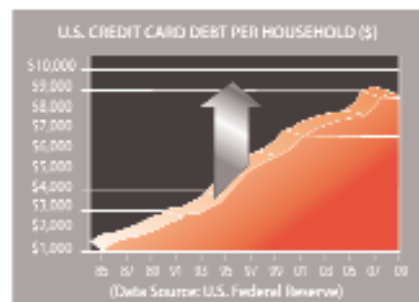


Credit Card Debt?

Solutions that can help you get out of debt.

Tom Hill
CGA STAFF WRITER

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This week: PNC Championship



Bernard Langer and son Jason will look to successfully defend their title from a year ago

PNC Championship
December 19 - 22, 2024
Ritz Carlton Golf Course
Orlando, Florida
Purse - \$1,000,000
Champs - Bernard and Jason Langer

By Adam Stanley

Tiger Woods is back. Tiger, along with son Charlie, are set to tee it up at the PNC Championship alongside 19 other impressive family duos as they look to break through for their first win as father-and-son at this event. The start in Orlando comes after Tiger underwent his sixth back surgery in September, aimed to help alleviate back spasms and pain he experienced throughout the 2024 season. "Playing together is something we look forward to and it's always more special when you're surrounded by friends and family," Tiger said. The duo finished tied for fifth last year. Tiger did not tee it up at the Hero World Challenge as he admitted he "wasn't tournament sharp," but that's not as much of a concern at the two-day PNC Championship, which allows competitors to use golf carts. "Hopefully next year will be better, I'll be physically stronger and better," Tiger said. "I know the procedure helped and hopefully that I can then build upon that." He's certainly hoping he can build upon some success alongside his son this week.

Here's everything else you need to know as plenty of the game's iconic names head to Orlando. **FIELD NOTES AND STORYLINES:** Tiger Woods and son Charlie are teeing it up for the fifth time as a pair. Their best finish is a solo second in 2021 ... Bernard Langer and son Jason will look to successfully defend their title from a year ago. It was an incredible 2024 for Langer, the elder, as he won the season-ending Charles Schwab Championship in dramatic fashion for his 47th career win on PGA TOUR Champions – coming after he ruptured his Achilles in February and missed seven events ... Fred Couples and Trevor Immelman are set to make their PNC Championship debuts. Couples will pair with his 16-year-old stepson Hunter Hannemann while Immelman will pair with his 18-year-old son Jacob Immelman, who plays on the Clemson golf team ... LPGA superstar Nelly Korda will once again be in the field along with her father, Petr. Korda had an all-time campaign on the LPGA Tour in 2024, winning seven times (including five in a row) and claiming Rolex Player of the Year honors ... Annika Sorenstam is also set to return to the PNC Championship field with her now 13-year-old son Will. This is her fifth appearance in the event for the 10-time major winner ... Lee Trevino, now 85, will continue his streak as the only golfer to play every iteration of the PNC Championship. He's back in action along-

side his son Daniel ... Steve Stricker will once again tee it up alongside daughter Izzi, with the pair having made their debut in 2023. Izzi is a freshman on the golf team at the University of Wisconsin while Stricker recorded an impressive 10 top-10s in just 12 events on PGA TOUR Champions this season, including a win at the Sanford International ... Padraig Harrington will have a familiar face alongside him in 2024, as his son Paddy Harrington is back (for the sixth time) after sitting on the bench last year with younger brother Ciaran making his tournament debut. Harrington won three times on PGA TOUR Champions this season ... Other past-champion pairings in the field include 2022 winner Vijay Singh with son Qass and 2021 winner John Daly alongside son John Daly II ... The rest of the field is made up of major champions and icons of the game including David Duval (with son Brady), Nick Faldo (with son Matthew), Stewart Cink (with son Connor), Matt Kuchar (with son Carson), Tom Lehman (with son Sean), Justin Leonard (with son Luke), 89-year-old Gary Player (with grandson Alexander), Nick Price (with son Greg) and Mark O'Meara (with son Shaun), who announced in September he would be retiring after a combined 958 starts on the PGA TOUR and PGA TOUR Champions and an induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame. **COURSE:** Ritz-Carlton Golf Club, par 72, 7,106 yards (yardage subject to change). The club in Orlando, Florida, has hosted the PNC Championship every year since 2002. Players will navigate a Floridian layout with generous landing areas and wide fairways but subtly contoured greens and strategically placed hazards. **36-HOLE RECORD:** 117, John Daly/John Daly II (2021) **18-HOLE RECORD:** 56, Davis Love III/Dru Love (Round 2, 2018) **LAST TIME:** Langer and his son, Jason (who works for an investment bank in New York) made 10 birdies in 11 holes in the final round to make up a three-shot deficit. This marked Langer's fifth PNC Championship victory, tying the all-time record. He's won three times with Jason and twice with his older son, Stefan. The Langer's 13-under 59 was the round of the day by two shots. Duval and his son, Brady, finished runner up at 23 under, two shots back of the Langer duo's winning total. Tiger Woods and his son Charlie fired an 11-under 61 in the second round to finish at 19 under and tied for fifth.

How to follow (all times ET)

Television

- Saturday: 1-2:30 p.m. (Golf Channel digital), 2:30-4:00 (Peacock), 4:00-6:00 p.m. (NBC)
- Sunday: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (Golf Channel digital), 1:30-4:30 p.m. (Peacock), 1:30-4:30 p.m (NBC)



Six players who earned their TOUR cards



Meet the six players who earned their TOUR cards at 2025 PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry
Lanto Griffin punches out of rough setting up birdie at PGA TOUR Q-School

By Staff

It's a week that defines dozens of careers, the Final Stage of PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry. A finish inside the top five and ties guaranteed a PGA TOUR card, four rounds for a golfer to change their lives.

For some, Sunday's result meant a return to the big stage after failing to keep their card. For others, it's their first touch-point to the TOUR and a lifelong goal realized. For all five, it means a full year on the PGA TOUR.

Lanto Griffin earned medalist honors, shooting a final-round 63 at TPC Sawgrass' Dye's Valley Course to win by three strokes. Griffin spent much of Sunday on cruise control after opening in 6-under 29, but that was a distinction he held alone. There was plenty of drama unfolding under him on the leaderboard, a tight finish that produced dramatic results.

Meet the six golfers who earned full status on TOUR for 2025.

Lanto Griffin

- Age: 36
- Career PGA TOUR starts: 148
- New PGA TOUR member: No

Griffin's not done yet. The one-time PGA TOUR winner was on the precipice of losing his card for the first time since 2019, but a revelatory week in northeast Florida will keep him on TOUR for another year. Griffin shot the round of Sunday, opening in 6-under 29 and adding another birdie on the back to shoot 63 and earn medalist honors. While he entered the day on the bubble, the drama was all but over by the time he made the turn, comfortably keep-

ing his card for 2025.

It was a needed week for the veteran, who missed just four cuts during the TOUR season, a career low. The winner of the 2019 Houston Open, Griffin has battled injuries in recent seasons. He injured his back in May 2020, rupturing his L5-S1 disc and then re-rupturing it in January 2022. He underwent a microdiscectomy surgery later that summer and battled other rib and back injuries into 2023 before finally returning during the FedExCup Fall healthy. He's struggled since, particularly with his putter which had been the best part of his game for much of his career. Griffin ranked 123rd in SG: Putting in 2024. It was no issue Sunday, pouring in five birdies, an eagle and no bogeys.

Hayden Buckley

- Age: 28
- Career PGA TOUR starts: 90
- New PGA TOUR member: No

Another 2024 TOUR member who saved his card this week, Buckley notched back-to-back rounds in the 60s over the weekend at Final Stage for the first time since the Barracuda Championship this summer.

A turn in form came just in time. Buckley showed his experience (90 TOUR career starts) when it mattered most, making birdie at the 10th and 16th holes and pouring in a testy mid-range par putt on the 17th hole to make the 18th hole all but a formality. For good measure, he poured in a birdie to finish solo second at 6-under.

Buckley comfortably kept his card in his first two seasons on TOUR (2021-22, 2023), but a loss of form over the second half of 2024 put his future at risk. The Tennessean had made just one cut since July to fall outside the top 150 of the FedExCup, leaving himself with no TOUR status entering this week.

Takumi Kanaya

- Age: 26

- Career PGA TOUR starts: 25
- New PGA TOUR member: Yes

It's a TOUR card long in the making for Kanaya, a seven-time Japan Tour winner and former top-ranked amateur in the world.

He's no stranger to high-level golf. Kanaya, 26, has already appeared in 11 major championships despite never holding a PGA TOUR card and ranked as high as 49th in the Official World Golf Ranking. Most recently, he ranked No. 1 on the Japan Tour's 2024 money list.

He advanced through Second Stage in California, then registered four rock-solid rounds at Final Stage to earn his card. He was the only golfer with four rounds of even-par or better.

Kanaya joins a wave of Japanese players headed to the PGA TOUR. Along with Hideki Matsuyama and Ryo Hisatsune, who retained their cards, Kaito Onishi earned his card through the Korn Ferry Tour and Rikuya Hoshino earned his through the DP World Tour.

Alejandro Tosti

- Age: 28
- Career PGA TOUR starts: 32
- New PGA TOUR member: No

A PGA TOUR rookie in 2024, Tosti wasn't ready to go back to the Korn Ferry Tour. The Argentine was 5-over through two rounds at Final Stage but shot 65-69 on the weekend to finish 4-under and sneak into the top five to retain his card.

It was anything but simple for Tosti, who found himself on either side of the bubble depending on when you refreshed your leaderboard. With his TOUR card at stake, Tosti carded seven birdies and three bogeys. He found the water at both the 11th and 13th holes, leading to two bogeys. In between he sandwiched a needed birdie at the 12th. By the end of the round, he was comfortably inside. He tapped in for par on the 18th to clinch.

His season followed a similar cadence, a year of incredible highs and lows. He very nearly won the Texas Children's Houston Open in March, losing to Stephan Jaeger by a shot. But he managed just one top-10 the rest of the season and missed five of seven cuts in the fall to finish No. 137 in the FedExCup. Known to run hot and cold, Tosti caught fire at the right time and earned himself another year on TOUR.

Will Chandler

- Age: 27
- Career PGA TOUR starts: 0
- New PGA TOUR member: Yes

It's a nine-hole stretch he won't soon forget. Chandler fired a back-nine 30 at Dye's Valley to rocket up the leaderboard

and improbably snag a TOUR card. Chandler birdied the 10th, 13th and 15th holes before pouring in an eagle putt from outside 50 feet at the 16th to move to 4-under. The University of Georgia alum narrowly missed another birdie at 17, then clinched it with another par on 18 to solidify the career breakthrough.

Chandler has only 19 TOUR-sanctioned starts to his name – 10 on the Korn Ferry Tour and nine on PGA TOUR Canada, all within the last two years. He hasn't had reliable status on either tour, though an out-of-nowhere runner-up at the 2024 Magnit Championship on the Korn Ferry Tour nearly secured his status on that tour for 2025 and beyond. He didn't do enough the rest of the season, though, finishing 85th on the Points List.

That left him with more than just TOUR status to chase. A finish inside the top 45 would have earned him Korn Ferry Tour status. But that's no matter now. The life on the mini-tours and Korn Ferry Tour Monday qualifiers is over. The 27-year-old is headed straight to the PGA TOUR.

Matthew Riedel

- Age: 24
- Career PGA TOUR starts: 0
- New PGA TOUR member: Yes

From college to the PGA TOUR in a matter of months.

Riedel finished T2 at the SEC Championship in April, turned professional in June and earned his PGA TOUR card by December.

It was anything but a guarantee on Sunday. While the Vanderbilt alum began the day tied for the lead, he quickly dropped out of the top five after going 3-over through 10 holes. The starting cushion proved pivotal as Riedel needed only to play the final eight holes in 1-under. He got that crucial birdie on the par-5 16th. He laid up off the tee with iron, gave himself a full wedge in and stuck the approach to within 3 feet for the birdie. Riedel scrambled well on the 17th, recovering from a wayward drive to save par. He sunk a mid-range par putt on the 18th to secure his card.

Riedel played five seasons at Vanderbilt (2019-24), where he was a two-time All-Southeastern Conference First Team selection (2023, 2024) and won his lone collegiate event at the 2022 SEC Match Play presented by Jerry Pate. He finished No. 77 on the 2024 Korn Ferry Tour Points List in just 13 starts after he joined the Tour via PGA TOUR University performance benefits in June.

He will aim to make it the only 13 starts he makes on the Korn Ferry Tour.



BOWL SEASON™

2024 -25 SCHEDULE

DEC 14		CRICKET CELEBRATION BOWL ATLANTA, GA 12:00 PM ABC	
DEC 14		CAMELLIA BOWL MONTGOMERY, AL 9:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 17		BOCA RATON BOWL BOCA RATON, FL 5:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 17		SCOOTER'S COFFEE FRISCO BOWL FRISCO, TX 9:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 18		LA BOWL HOSTED BY GRONK INGLEWOOD, CA 9:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 19		R+L CARRIERS NEW ORLEANS BOWL NEW ORLEANS, LA 7:00 PM ESPN2	
DEC 20		STAFFDNA CURE BOWL ORLANDO, FL 12:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 20		UNION HOME MORTGAGE GASPARILLA BOWL TAMPA, FL 3:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 23		MYRTLE BEACH BOWL CONWAY, SC 11:00 AM ESPN	
DEC 23		FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO BOWL BOISE, ID 2:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 24		HAWAI'I BOWL HONOLULU, HI 8:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 26		DETROIT BOWL DETROIT, MI 2:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 26		GUARANTEED RATE BOWL PHOENIX, AZ 5:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 26		68 VENTURES BOWL MOBILE, AL 9:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 27		LOCKHEED MARTIN ARMED FORCES BOWL FORT WORTH, TX 12:00 or 3:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 27		BIRMINGHAM BOWL BIRMINGHAM, AL 12:00 or 3:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 27		AUTOZONE LIBERTY BOWL MEMPHIS, TN 7:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 27		SRS DISTRIBUTION LAS VEGAS BOWL LAS VEGAS, NV 10:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 28		WASABI FENWAY BOWL BOSTON, MA 11:00 AM ESPN	
DEC 28		BAD BOY MOWERS PINSTRIPE BOWL BRONX, NY 12:00 PM ABC	
DEC 28		ISLETA NEW MEXICO BOWL ALBUQUERQUE, NM 2:15 PM ESPN	
DEC 28		POP-TARTS BOWL ORLANDO, FL 3:30 PM ABC	
DEC 28		SNOOP DOGG ARIZONA BOWL PRESENTED BY GIN & JUICE BY DRE AND SNOOP TUCSON, AZ 4:30 PM CW NETWORK	
DEC 28		GO BOWLING MILITARY BOWL ANNAPOLIS, MD 5:45 PM ESPN	
DEC 28		VALERO ALAMO BOWL SAN ANTONIO, TX 7:30 PM ABC	
DEC 28		RADIANCE TECHNOLOGIES INDEPENDENCE BOWL SHREVEPORT, LA 9:15 PM ESPN	
DEC 30		TRANSPERFECT MUSIC CITY BOWL NASHVILLE, TN 2:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 31		RELIAQUEST BOWL TAMPA, FL 12:00 PM ESPN	
DEC 31		TONY THE TIGER SUN BOWL EL PASO, TX 2:00 PM CBS	
DEC 31		CHEEZ-IT CITRUS BOWL ORLANDO, FL 3:00 PM ABC	
DEC 31		TEXAS BOWL HOUSTON, TX 3:30 PM ESPN	
DEC 31		VRBO FIESTA BOWL GLENDALE, AZ 7:30 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 1		CHICK-FIL-A PEACH BOWL ATLANTA, GA 1:00 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 1		ROSE BOWL GAME PRESENTED BY PRUDENTIAL PASADENA, CA 5:00 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 1		ALLSTATE SUGAR BOWL NEW ORLEANS, LA 8:45 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 2		TAXSLAYER GATOR BOWL JACKSONVILLE, FL 7:30 PM ESPN	
JAN 3		SERVPRO FIRST RESPONDER BOWL DALLAS, TX 4:00 PM ESPN	
JAN 3		DUKE'S MAYO BOWL CHARLOTTE, NC 7:30 PM ESPN	
JAN 4		BAHAMAS BOWL NASSAU, BAHAMAS 11:00 AM ESPN2	
TBD		DIRECTV HOLIDAY BOWL SAN DIEGO, CA TBD TBD	
JAN 9		CAPITAL ONE ORANGE BOWL MIAMI, FL 7:30 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 10		GOODYEAR COTTON BOWL CLASSIC ARLINGTON, TX 7:30 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 20		COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ATLANTA, GA 7:30 PM ESPN	⋮
JAN 30		EAST-WEST SHRINE BOWL TBD 8:00 PM NFL NETWORK	

College football bowl storylines



College football bowl preview: Storylines to know and players to watch

By Jon Thomas

The 2024-25 bowl season is in full swing, kicking off with the Cricket Celebration Bowl (Jackson State vs. South Carolina State) on Dec. 14.

In a span of 19 days, 36 bowl games will be played -- on top of the College Football Playoff.

We will provide our thoughts on all 36 bowl matchups, including key storylines to follow and a player to keep an eye on in every game.

StaffDNA Cure Bowl Orlando, Florida

Ohio (10-3) vs Jacksonville State (9-4)
Dec. 20, 11 a.m. / (ESPN)
Line: Ohio -5 / 56.5

Ohio

Season storyline: Ohio University won its first MAC championship since 1968 with a blowout 38-3 victory over rival Miami (Ohio) in the conference championship game last week, making it three straight seasons the Bobcats have won 10 games. But there will be a new look to the team in the bowl game after head coach Tim Albin left to take the Charlotte head-coaching job. Brian Smith, Ohio's associate head coach and offensive coordinator, will serve as interim head coach. Despite losing six all-conference players from year's team, including quarterback Kurtis Rourke to Indiana, Ohio (10-3) played its best football the second half of the season and won six straight, which included avenging an earlier loss to Miami in the conference title game.

Player to watch: The Bobcats replaced

Rourke at quarterback with a talented transfer of their own in Parker Navarro, who started his career at UCF. Navarro, a senior, played one of his best games of the season in the conference title game. He passed for two touchdowns and ran for two touchdowns. Both of the quarterbacks in this game are dual threats. Navarro has 2,169 passing yards and 12 touchdowns and 943 rushing yards and 15 more touchdowns on the ground. He has also thrown 10 interceptions. Injuries have slowed Navarro at times, where he was replaced at quarterback by Nick Poulos in the first Miami game after throwing two interceptions, but has accounted for 15 touchdowns in his past four games.

Jacksonville State

Season storyline: After starting the season 0-3, Jacksonville State won nine of its past 10 games and the Conference USA championship with a dominant 52-12 win over Western Kentucky in the title game. That win came a week after losing 19-17 to Western Kentucky, which snapped the Gamecocks' eight-game winning streak. Jacksonville State is ranked 12th nationally in scoring offense (36.7 points per game) and rolled up 562 yards of total offense and 26 first downs in the blowout win over Western Kentucky. It's Rich Rodriguez's third season at Jacksonville State, and he has won nine games all three seasons. But he has also been mentioned prominently in the West Virginia head-coaching search.

Player to watch: Senior running back Tre Stewart and Boise State's Ashton Jeanty are the only two players in the country to rush for more than 1,600 yards and average more than 6 yards per carry this season. Stewart is a great story. He played at

Division II Limestone University in Gaffney, South Carolina and rushed for more than 1,000 yards in each of his past two seasons there before transferring to Jacksonville State this year. He has 24 total touchdowns (23 rushing and one receiving) and teams with quarterback Tyler Huff to give the Gamecocks a potent one-two punch in the running game. Huff has rushed for 1,343 yards and 14 touchdowns.
Pick: Ohio 31 JSU 24

Union Home Mortgage Gasparilla Bowl
Tampa, Florida
Tulane (9-4) vs Florida (7-5)
Dec. 20, 2:30 p.m. / (ESPN)
Line: Florida -12 / 49.5

Tulane

Season storyline: Jon Sumrall picked up where Willie Fritz left off in his first year as Tulane head coach, guiding the Green Wave to their third straight AAC championship game appearance and third straight season with at least nine wins. Though it lost in the conference title game to Army, Tulane is making its third straight bowl appearance. Quarterback Darian Mensah (2,723 yards, 22 TDs, 6 INTs) and running back Makhi Hughes (1,372 yards rushing) led them offensively though Mensah entered the transfer portal Monday with three years of eligibility remaining.

Player to watch: RB Makhi Hughes. The sophomore running back has put together outstanding back-to-back seasons, rushing for more than 1,000 yards in each of his first two years and earning first-team All-AAC honors those two seasons as well. Hughes ranked second in the AAC in the regular season in rushing and third in rushing touchdowns (15). He ran for 100 or more yards on the ground in five of the team's eight regular-season conference games.

Florida

Season storyline: For most of the season, there was widespread speculation that coach Billy Napier might be done with the Gators, particularly after a 4-5 start. But following a dispiriting 49-17 loss at No. 3 Texas, athletic director Scott Stricklin announced Napier would return for 2025. Florida closed the season on a three-game winning streak, including big home wins against LSU and No. 14 Ole Miss, not only rewarding the patience that has been shown Napier but providing a measure of hope for the future -- considering the roster is filled with young players set to return. Add to that a top-tier recruiting class that Napier finished off with a bang, and there is finally optimism around the Florida program.
Player to watch: DJ Lagway. Florida

turned to Lagway permanently after Graham Mertz went out for the season in early October. Lagway came into Florida as the No. 12-rated player in the ESPN 300 in the Class of 2024 and quickly showed why so many had such high expectations for him -- showing off his exceptional arm talent and his ability to run. Florida was beating Georgia until Lagway hurt his hamstring and missed the rest of the game. This season, Lagway threw for 1,610 yards, 11 touchdowns and seven interceptions and added 97 yards rushing on the ground as a true freshman.
Pick: Tulane 30 Florida 27

Myrtle Beach Bowl
Conway, South Carolina
Coastal Carolina (6-6) vs UTSA (6-6)
Dec. 23, 10 a.m. / (ESPN)
Line: UTSA -10 / 55.5

Coastal Carolina

Season storyline: It was an all-or-nothing season for Coastal -- the Chants scored 40 or more points five times and fewer than 20 three times, but November wins over App State and Georgia State secured bowl eligibility (and a bowl home game) in Tim Beck's second season. We'll see who suits up at QB, however: Their top two, including starter Ethan Vasko, have entered the transfer portal.

Player to watch: RB Braydon Bennett. The senior is one of the most explosive running backs in the Sun Belt; he averages 6.5 yards per carry, and among his 112 rushes are gains of 67, 49, 37 and 25 yards (plus receptions of 37 and 25 yards). He was responsible for a lot of the "alls" in the all-or-nothing year.

UTSA

Season storyline: A disappointing 2-4 start turned into a happier 4-2 finish as UTSA found its offense midseason and scored at least 38 points in five of its past six games. After going 32-9 from 2021-23, it's obviously a step backward to have to scrape out six wins, but Jeff Traylor's Roadrunners head toward the offseason with momentum, at least. That's doubly true if they can finish the season with a second straight bowl victory.

Player to watch: QB Owen McCown. Last year's bowl hero began the season in patchy form but caught fire late. Over his past six games, he averaged 310 passing yards per game -- five guys caught between 13-24 passes -- with a 2-to-1 TD-INT ratio. Not including sacks, he threw in over 50 rushing yards per game in that stretch as well. When he ignited, so did UTSA. --
Pick: UTSA 37 CCU 30

EVERYDAY HEROES



01.03.25 | 3PM CT | **ESPN**

TICKETS ON SALE!

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Boise, Idaho
Northern Illinois (7-5) vs Fresno St (6-6)
Dec. 23, 1:30 p.m. / (ESPN)
Line: NIU -3 / 40

Northern Illinois

Season storyline: Thomas Hammock's sixth NIU team began the season with maybe the most momentous win in program history, a 16-14 shocker against a Notre Dame team that could make serious noise in the College Football Playoff. The season got bumpier from there as injuries took their toll on the Huskies' offense. But the defense remained sturdy, and NIU won three of its final four games to secure a third bowl bid in four seasons.

Player to watch: Safety Nate Valcarcel. NIU ranks third nationally in completion rate allowed and fifth in yards allowed per dropback, and while pass rushers like Devonte O'Malley played a role and corner Jacob Finley is an absolute star, Valcarcel runs the show. He's stellar in coverage but also a heck of a playmaker, picking off two passes, breaking up eight more and even tossing in a pair of sacks via the good-old safety blitz.

Fresno State

Season storyline: Following Jeff Tedford's awkwardly timed July resignation, Fresno State stumbled through an up-and-down season under interim coach Tim Skipper. The Bulldogs started the season 3-1 and reached 5-3 after a pummeling of rival San José State, but they lost three of four in a home stretch littered by tight games. The defense played its part, but with no semblance of a run game, the offense got bogged down quite a bit and went from averaging 35.5 points over the first four games to just 22.1 over the past eight. And since the season ended, seven starters, including quarterback Mikey Keene and star corner Al'zillion Hamilton, have entered the transfer portal.

Player to watch: CB Julian Neal. Fresno State was blessed with three excellent corners in 2024, and while Hamilton is in the portal and senior Cam Lockridge's status is uncertain, the Bulldogs still have Neal, a junior who had more interceptions (two) than TDs allowed (one) and allowed a team-low 15.4 QBR as its primary coverage guy. It will be a surprise if either NIU or Fresno State passes particularly well in Boise.

Pick: Fresno State 30 NIU 28

Hawai'i Bowl
Honolulu, Hawaii
South Florida (6-6) vs San Jose St. (7-5)
Dec. 24, 7 p.m. / (ESPN)
Line: SJSU -3.5 / 60.5

South Florida

Season storyline: After a surprising seven-win campaign in 2023, USF entered 2024 as a sleeper pick for the AAC title but faceplanted out of the gates, starting 2-4. Alex Golesh's Bulls rallied, however, winning four of their last six to clinch bowl eligibility. After averaging just 23.5 points per

game in the first half of the season, they improved to 39.3 per game over the back half. They can still match last year's seven-win tally, which, for a program that won just eight total games from 2019 to '22, is still a pretty big deal.

Player to watch: RB Kelley Joiner. When he thrives, USF wins. Joiner averaged 9.4 yards per carry with 11 touchdowns in the Bulls' six wins and 2.9 yards per carry with no scores in their losses. Quarterback Bryce Archie found a solid rhythm down the stretch, too, but Joiner is the team's X-factor.

San José State

Season storyline: Seven is becoming an awfully common number in San José. SJSU won seven games in three of Brent Brennan's past four years in charge and finished 7-5 in Ken Niumatalolo's first regular season succeeding Brennan. With a bowl victory, however, it would reach eight wins for the first time since 2012. That would be a deserved plaudit for a team that came achingly close to big things: The Spartans lost by nine combined points at Washington State and Colorado State and gave Boise State and UNLV fits at home before fading late. A 34-31 win over Stanford did salvage some late-season joy, and a bowl win would add to that.

Player to watch: LB Jordan Pollard. The junior from Los Angeles leads the team in tackles, tackles for loss and run stops. With tackles Soane Toia and Gafa Faga eating up blockers up front and Pollard roaming from sideline to sideline, the Spartans have put together one of the better run defenses in the Group of 5, allowing just 4.1 yards per carry (not including sacks), which ranks 18th nationally.

Pick: SJSU 32 USF 21

GameAbove Sports Bowl
Detroit, Michigan
Pittsburgh (7-5) vs Toledo (7-5)
Dec. 26, 1 p.m. (ESPN)
Line: Pittsburgh -7 / 51

Pittsburgh

Season storyline: The Panthers had a season of two halves. Behind quarterback Eli Holstein, Pitt won its first seven games, culminating with a 41-13 rout of Syracuse, to jump to 18th in the polls. But then Holstein suffered an ankle injury, and the Panthers remarkably didn't win again, dropping their final five games of the season in a late collapse. Overall, 7-5 was a solid year for Pitt, given the preseason expectations. But the way the season swooned down the stretch felt disappointing.

Player to watch: Senior Gavin Bartholomew is set to play his 50th career game, the most for a tight end in Pitt history. Bartholomew has 37 receptions for 303 yards and four touchdowns, all coming in Pitt's final four games. He's one touchdown away from tying Dorin Dickerson (2006-09) for the third-most touchdowns by a tight end in Pitt history.

Toledo

Season storyline: The Rockets started the year hot, rolling past Mississippi State 41-17 in Starkville to start 3-0. But Toledo couldn't keep the momentum going. The Rockets, who at one point looked like the obvious MAC favorites, lost their final two conference games to fall out of contention for the MAC championship game, including an overtime defeat to rival Akron, which hadn't defeated Toledo since 2013.

Player to watch: Both Jerjuan Newton and Junior Vandeross III earned All-MAC honors at wide receiver after combining for 137 catches and 1,712 yards. Newton, however, led the MAC with 11 touchdowns. The senior from Florida enters bowl season with 32 career touchdown catches, a Toledo record.

Pick: Pitt 36 Toledo 24

Rate Bowl
Phoenix, Arizona
Rutgers (7-5) vs Kansas State (8-4)
Dec. 26, 4:30 p.m. / (ESPN)
Line: K-State -7.5 / 52

Rutgers

Season storyline: The Scarlet Knights got off to a promising start, which included back-to-back, three-point victories over Virginia Tech (26-23) and Washington (21-18) in late September. But Rutgers couldn't sustain that momentum. The Scarlet Knights went three quarters without scoring in a 14-7 loss to Nebraska, which sparked a four-game losing streak. Rutgers bounced back, though, with consecutive wins over Minnesota (26-19) and Maryland (31-17) to reach bowl eligibility. The Scarlet Knights routed Michigan State (41-14) in the regular-season finale to win seven games for the first time in a decade. Capital One Bowl Mania

Player to watch: Kyle Monangai earned first-team All-Big Ten honors, becoming the fourth player in school history to rush for more than 1,000 yards in two straight seasons. Monangai finished his senior year with 1,279 yards and 14 touchdowns while averaging 5.0 yards per carry. Monangai could opt out of the bowl game to prepare for the NFL draft. That would create an opportunity for freshman Antwan Raymond, who rushed for 344 yards and five touchdowns while backing up Monangai.

Kansas State

Season storyline: The Wildcats opened the year as one of the co-favorites alongside Utah to make the Big 12 championship game, and potentially, advance to the play-off. But K-State dropped three of its final four games, including one to Arizona State (24-14) and another to Iowa State (29-21), both of which advanced to the Big 12 title game instead. The Wildcats tied West Virginia for eighth in the Big 12 standings.

Player to watch: Defensive end Brendan Mott finished the regular season with a Big 12-high 8.5 sacks. He also had a fumble recovery and an interception on the way to earning Big 12 Defensive Lineman of the Year honors. Mott was a former walk-on

from Iowa City, Iowa. Mott's father, Joe, was an All-Big Ten defensive end at Iowa and a third-round pick of the New York Jets in 1989.

Pick: Kansas State 38 Rutgers 27

68 Ventures Bowl
Mobile, Alabama
Arkansas St. (7-5) vs. Bowling Green (7-5)
Dec. 26, 8 p.m. / (ESPN)
Line: BGU -7 / 50.5

Arkansas State

Season storyline: Arkansas State extended coach Butch Jones' contract through 2029 after he became the third FBS coach to lead at least four programs to bowl appearances (Jones previously coached at Tennessee, Cincinnati and Central Michigan). The Red Wolves won four of five games, beginning on Oct. 19 with a 44-28 victory over Southern Miss.

Player to watch: Trevian Thomas was Arkansas State's lone first-team All-Sun Belt selection. The senior safety finished the regular season with 73 tackles and five interceptions, which tied for most in the league. He ensured Arkansas State's first winning season since 2019 with an acrobatic interception to seal a 28-21 victory over Louisiana-Monroe on Nov. 24.

Bowling Green

Season storyline: The Falcons emerged out of a rugged nonconference slate, which included narrow losses at Penn State (34-27) and Texas A&M (26-20), as a legitimate MAC title contender. But Bowling Green couldn't get going offensively in a loss to Miami (Ohio) in the regular-season finale, which sent the RedHawks to the MAC title game, and the Falcons home.

Player to watch: Harold Fannin Jr. has emerged as one of the top playmakers in college football. He leads all FBS tight ends with 100 receptions for 1,342 yards to go along with nine touchdowns. Fannin topped 100 yards receiving in seven games this season. He also had a game-winning, 31-yard touchdown run late in the fourth quarter against Akron on Oct. 5. Fannin became just the second tight end to be named any league's Offensive Player of the Year. He is rising up draft boards, but if he plays in the bowl game, he'll be the best player on the field.

Pick: BGU 33 ASU 20

Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl
Fort Worth, Texas
Oklahoma (6-6) vs Navy (9-3)
Dec. 27, 11 a.m. / (ESPN)
Line: Oklahoma -5 / 43.5

Oklahoma

Season storyline: Not a lot went right for the Sooners this season. They were beset with injuries, especially at receiver, and went back and forth at quarterback between Jackson Arnold and true freshman Michael Hawkins Jr. Arnold, a former five-star prospect, finished the season as the starter but has since entered the transfer portal. Oklahoma struggled on offense most of the season, and Brent Venables

fired Seth Littrell as his offensive coordinator. Co-offensive coordinator Joe Jon Finley is expected to call plays in the bowl game. The Sooners (6-6) were held to 17 or fewer points in five of their eight SEC games.

Player to watch: With Arnold in the portal, Hawkins is in line to get another shot at quarterback. He started three games after replacing Arnold in the first half of the Tennessee game and led Oklahoma to a 27-21 win over Auburn on the road in his first career start. But a few weeks later, in a blowout 35-9 home loss to South Carolina, Hawkins turned the ball over on the Sooners' first three possessions and was benched in favor of Arnold for the rest of the season. Hawkins has passed for 536 yards and a touchdown and thrown two interceptions.

Navy

Season storyline: Navy (9-3) comes in on a high after beating 11-win Army, snapping a two-game losing streak in the storied rivalry. Navy reeled off six straight wins to open the season and moved into the AP poll. The Midshipmen won all six of those games by double digits, but then lost their next two games to Notre Dame and Rice. Navy scored 14 or fewer points in all three of its losses. Navy finished third in the AAC after being picked 11th in the preseason. **Player to watch:** One of the best comeback stories of the season, Navy quarterback Blake Horvath bounced back with a vengeance in 2024 after missing the final seven games of the 2023 season with an injured thumb. Horvath, a junior, became the first Navy quarterback to pass for more than 1,000 yards in a season since 2019. In Navy's biggest game of the season, Horvath outplayed Army QB Bryson Daily, who finished sixth in the Heisman voting, with 107 yards passing, 204 yards passing and four touchdowns. For the season, he has 1,261 passing yards and 13 touchdowns and has rushed for 1,099 yards and 15 more TDs.

Pick: Navy 30 OU 20

Birmingham Bowl

Birmingham, Alabama

Georgia Tech (7-5) vs Vanderbilt (6-6)

Dec. 27, 2:30 p.m. / (ESPN)

Line: Georgia Tech -2.5 / 41.5

Georgia Tech

Season storyline: Georgia Tech (7-5) faced a difficult schedule with three of its final five games coming against top-12 teams, and the Yellow Jackets came painfully close to pulling off one of the upsets of the year in college football. After upsetting No. 4 Miami and then beating NC State the next week, both at home, Georgia Tech lost 44-42 in eight overtimes at No. 7 Georgia in the regular-season finale. The Yellow Jackets had a chance to win it in regulation but fumbled on third down with a minute to play, leaving Georgia enough time to drive for a touchdown and force overtime.

Player to watch: Quarterback Haynes

King's toughness was on full display all season, but never more than in the eight-overtime loss to Georgia. He became the first FBS player in history to pass for 300 yards, rush for 100 yards and have three rushing touchdowns against an AP top-10 opponent. His fumble late in regulation was a killer, but the Yellow Jackets would have never been in the game without him. King, a transfer from Texas A&M, will be without his top receiver Eric Singleton Jr., who recently entered the transfer portal

Vanderbilt

Season storyline: Clark Lea engineered an incredible turnaround this season at Vanderbilt, which has a chance to have its first winning season since 2013 if it can take down Georgia Tech in the bowl game. The Commodores lost 10 straight games to close the 2023 season, and Clark completely overhauled the program in the offseason. The results were immediate, as Vanderbilt started out 5-2 and made an appearance in the top 25 rankings. Along the way, Vanderbilt upset then-No. 1 Alabama 40-35 on Oct. 5, which was Vandy's first win in the series in 40 years. The Commodores (6-6) seemed to run out of gas to end the season and lost their past three games.

Player to watch: Few players were more entertaining this season than quarterback Diego Pavia, whose ability to scramble and make big plays added a new dynamic to Vanderbilt's offense. Pavia started his career in junior college at New Mexico Military Institute, then went to New Mexico State and transferred to Vanderbilt, where he led the Commodores in passing and rushing. He accounted for 23 touchdowns (17 passing and six rushing).

Pick: Vanderbilt 28 Georgia Tech 27

AutoZone Liberty Bowl

Memphis, Tennessee

Texas Tech (8-4) vs Arkansas (6-6)

Dec. 27, 6 p.m. / (ESPN)

Line: Arkansas -2 / 55

Texas Tech

Season storyline: Texas Tech entered the month of November still holding onto hopes of playing in the Big 12 championship game, but those hopes were dashed by a 41-27 home loss to Colorado on Nov. 9. The Red Raiders (8-4) had several big moments and wound up beating both of the teams that did play for the Big 12 title -- Arizona State and Iowa State. But in losing three of four games from Oct. 19 through Nov. 9, Texas Tech gave up a total of 135 points. Coach Joey McGuire grew up in Texarkana on the Texas-Arkansas border and was a big Arkansas fan as a kid.

Player to watch: Redshirt senior Tahj Brooks broke the school's career rushing record this season previously held by Byron Hanspard. After rushing 1,538 yards a year ago, the bruising 5-foot-10, 230-pound Brooks has 1,505 yards in 11 games this season. He has rushed for 17 touchdowns and is ranked third nationally with 286 rushing attempts. He has been the centerpiece of the Texas Tech offense, and the

Red Raiders are hopeful he will opt to play in the bowl game.

Arkansas

Season storyline: The Hogs (6-6) need a win in the bowl game to avoid their second straight losing season. The high point was upsetting playoff-bound Tennessee 19-14 at home on Oct. 5, but the Hogs could never find any rhythm as the season progressed. They won just two more games the rest of the way against Mississippi State and Louisiana Tech. Three of their six losses were by a touchdown or less, and with some questions swirling about coach Sam Pittman's future, he's set to be back in '25. **Player to watch:** Quarterback Taylen Green's best football is ahead of him as he tutors under offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Bobby Petrino, but Green showed flashes this season after transferring to Arkansas from Boise State. Green passed for 2,813 yards and 13 touchdowns, but also threw nine interceptions. He is great at keeping the play alive and tough to tackle. He rushed for 521 yards and seven touchdowns.

Pick: Texas Tech 44 Arkansas 42

DirecTV Holiday Bowl

San Diego, California

Syracuse (9-3) vs Washington State (8-4)

Dec. 27, 7 p.m. / (Fox)

Line: Syracuse -14 / 54.5

Syracuse

Season storyline: Coach Fran Brown's first regular season at Syracuse was an overwhelming success, leading the program to its first nine-win season since 2018 and just second since 2001 (both of those were 10-win seasons). Had it not been for a puzzling home loss to Stanford early in the season, Syracuse would have had a chance to tie the single-season school wins record in this game. It was ranked No. 21 in the final College Football Playoff rankings and had two wins against top 25 teams: No. 13 Miami and No. 24 UNLV.

Player to watch: After transferring from Ohio State, quarterback Kyle McCord led the nation in passing yards (4,326) and threw 29 touchdown passes to 12 interceptions. He was held to less than 300 yards in only one game all season -- an overtime win against Virginia Tech -- and was particularly good down the stretch, throwing for 850 yards over the final two games of the season -- wins against UConn and Miami -- with five touchdowns and no picks. McCord was named second-team All-ACC.

Washington State

Season storyline: Wazzu's season almost needs to be evaluated in two parts: The first nine games and the past three games. Because after starting 8-1, the Cougars rose to No. 18 in the playoff rankings -- with New Mexico, Oregon State and Wyoming left on their schedule -- and were chasing the school's first 12-win season. Then disaster struck. WSU was upset in all three games to limp to the finish line, eroding much of the positive momentum it had

built along the way. Coach Jake Dickert fired defensive coordinator Jeff Schmedding and offensive coordinator Ben Arbuckle was hired away by Oklahoma at season's end.

Player to watch: QB John Mateer was one of the most entertaining quarterbacks in college football, throwing for 3,139 yards with 29 touchdown passes and rushing for 826 yards with 15 touchdowns in the regular season. But with that success -- in this new era of college football -- comes questions about his future at Washington State. As former WSU starter Cam Ward was last offseason, Mateer would surely be a sought-after player in the transfer portal and if he chooses that route, it would likely mean he would not play in San Diego.

Pick: Syracuse 32 Washington State 28

SRS Distribution Las Vegas Bowl

Las Vegas, Nevada

Texas A&M (8-4) vs USC (6-6)

Dec. 27, 9:30 p.m. / (ESPN)

Line: A&M -3.5 / 52

Texas A&M

Season storyline: After a 7-1 start, Texas A&M looked as if it had a chance to do something special -- and even after losing two of its next three games -- against South Carolina and Auburn -- still could have played its way into the College Football Playoff. But a 17-7 loss to Texas in the regular-season finale ended that dream, relegating the Aggies to Las Vegas. Still, Mike Elko's first season in College Station represented a step forward following Jimbo Fisher's ouster.

Player to watch: DE Nic Scourton.

Assuming he plays, Scourton will be one of the best pass rushers USC has seen all year. He finished the regular season with 14 tackles for loss and five sacks, leading the team in both categories. In ESPN NFL draft analyst Matt Miller's November mock draft, Scourton was projected as the No. 20 pick.

USC

Season storyline: USC's third season under Lincoln Riley was such a disaster that he was forced to address reports that he was a candidate for the vacancy at UCF. Riley quickly dismissed them, but the possibility that that was even slightly plausible speaks volumes. The Trojans went from 11-3 in Riley's first season to 8-5 last year to 6-6 in 2024 and finished with a losing record (4-5) in the Big Ten. If not for a buyout reportedly in the neighborhood of \$90 million, it's fair to question whether Riley would still be the coach.

Player to watch: RB Woody Marks. A transfer from Mississippi State, Marks was a seamless addition for USC, rushing for 1,133 yards and nine touchdowns -- by far the most productive season of his college career. He was one of two USC offensive or defensive players named second-team All-Big Ten, alongside offensive guard Emmanuel Pregnon.

Pick: USC 32 Texas A&M 27

NFL picks, predictions for Week 16



Buffalo is averaging 41.7 points per game over its past three, and Josh Allen is making a run at the NFL MVP award

Eagles keep rolling vs. Commanders, Bucs knock out Cowboys on 'SNF'

By Bill Bender

The NFL front-loaded the Week 16 schedule with AFC showdowns, starting with a Thursday Night Football matchup between the Broncos and Chargers. Then, the league went directly against the College Football Playoff with a Saturday doubleheader featuring the Chiefs and Texans and the Steelers and Ravens.

What's left for Sunday?

Keep an eye on the three-way race for home-field advantage in the NFC. Detroit, Philadelphia, and Minnesota all have road games. The Lions travel to Chicago in a rematch of the 23-20 Thanksgiving nail-biter that led to the firing of Matt Eberflus. Philadelphia travels to Washington in a NFC East matchup, and Minnesota heads to Seattle. The NFC playoff picture is starting to solidify around those three teams and Green Bay — the other team with at least 10 wins with three weeks left to play. It's anybody's guess who gets No. 1. A loss here likely would knock a team out.

A look at our track record this season:

- Straight up: 164-60 (14-2 in Week 15)
- ATS: 125-92-7 (6-9-1 in Week 15)

Here are our picks for Week 16.

Denver (9-5) at L.A. Chargers (8-6)
Thursday, 7:15 p.m. / Prime Video
Line: Chargers -3 / 41.5

The Chargers are 1-3 S/U in their past four games, and the season-ending knee injury to JK Dobbins continues to loom large. Los Angeles has averaged just 66.2 rushing yards per game through this

stretch. Denver averages 86.5 rushing yards through a four-game win streak, but the defense is creating more turnovers. That could key an upset here.

Pick: Broncos 24, Chargers 21

Houston (9-5) at Kansas City (13-1)
Saturday, 12 p.m. / NBC
Line: Chiefs -3.5 / 41.5

Will Patrick Mahomes (ankle) play in this game? The Texans are favored, which means the oddsmakers believe Carson Wentz will get the start. Houston is 4-3 S/U on the road, and C.J. Stroud has an 83.8 passer rating on the road. We reserve the right to change this pick based on Mahomes' status, and right now, we assume he plays through the injury with Kansas City still looking for home-field advantage.

Pick: Chiefs 20, Texans 16

Pittsburgh (10-4) at Baltimore (9-5)
Saturday, 3:30 p.m. / Fox
Line: Ravens -6.5 / 45.5

When will the Ravens figure out the Steelers? Baltimore has lost to Pittsburgh in each of Lamar Jackson's past four starts, including an 18-16 loss in Week 11 where Jackson was limited to 253 total yards. The Steelers have a minus-9 turnover ratio in their past five games, and that includes road losses at Cleveland and Philadelphia. The Steelers will be the popular pick to cover, but the Ravens are due here.

Pick: Ravens 24, Steelers 17

N.Y. Giants (2-12) at Atlanta (7-7)
Sunday, 12 p.m. / Fox
Line: Falcons -8.5 / 42.5

The Giants' nine-game losing skid continues, and they failed to cover a 17-point spread against Baltimore last week. Atlanta is coming off a short week, and the Falcons are 1-3 S/U as a favorite. That translates into an ugly football game, but Atlanta still has something to play for in the NFC South. New York is 2-4 S/U on the road, and all four losses are by one score. A backdoor cover is possible, but who is the quarterback for the Giants?

Pick: Falcons 21, Giants 12

New England (3-11) at Buffalo (11-3)
Sunday, 3:25 p.m. / CBS
Line: Bills -14 / 46.5

This is a huge line, but the Bills' offense is clicking. Buffalo is averaging 41.7 points per game over its past three, and Josh Allen is making a run at the NFL MVP award. The Patriots have lost four games by 14 points or more this season, and the Pats have allowed 30-plus points in two of their past three games. Buffalo has won the past

two home meetings by an average of nine points.

Pick: Bills 31, Patriots 13

Detroit (12-2) at Chicago (4-10)
Sunday, 12 p.m. / Fox
Line: Lions -6.5 / 47.5

Injuries are piling up on the Lions' defense, but the offense remains in top form. Jared Goff averages 332.7 passing yards with 10 TDs and one interception in his past three starts. This might be an audition of sorts for Lions offensive coordinator Ben Johnson, too. Look for Detroit to re-assert its place atop the NFC standings after a tough loss with Buffalo. This won't be as close as the first meeting.

Pick: Lions 31, Bears 17

Cleveland (3-11) at Cincinnati (6-8)
Sunday, 12 p.m. / Fox
Line: Bengals 7.5 / 46.5

The Browns have averaged 10.5 points per game in losses to the Steelers and

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Chiefs, and Dorian Thompson-Robinson could get the start against Cincinnati. The Browns also are without Nick Chubb, who suffered a broken foot. The Bengals are looking to make a playoff push, and Joe Burrow has at least three TD passes in six straight games. Cincinnati has won the past two home meetings by an average of 15 points per game.

Pick: Bengals 30, Browns 20

Tennessee (3-11) at Indianapolis (6-8)

Sunday, 12 p.m. / CBS

Line: Colts -3.5 / 42.5

These teams combined for 11 turnovers last week. Will Levis committed four turnovers in Week 15, and Mason Rudolph was not much better. The Colts committed five turnovers in their loss to Denver. Anthony Richardson had two interceptions. This one literally comes down to who protects the football, and it feels like a one-score game either way.

Pick: Colts 21, Titans 18

L.A. Rams (8-6) at New York Jets (4-10)

Sunday, 12 p.m. / CBS

Line: Rams -3 / 46.5

The Rams lead the NFC West after a three-game winning streak. Los Angeles has not committed a turnover in that stretch, and Matthew Stafford has taken just two sacks. The Jets are 0-4 S/U and 1-3 ATS as an underdog this season. Aaron Rodgers is coming off his best game of the season, and the connection with Davante Adams finally resurfaced. That won't be enough against a better defense.

Pick: Rams 27, Jets 17

Philadelphia (12-2) at Washington (9-5)

Sunday, 12 p.m. / Fox

Line: Eagles -3.5 / 45.5

The Eagles still have a shot at the No. 1 seed, and the defense has quietly allowed less than 20 points in five of its past six games. Saquon Barkley had 146 yards and two TDs in the last meeting with the Commanders, but he's dealing with some soreness after the Week 15 matchup against Pittsburgh. Will Nick Sirianni lighten that workload ahead of the postseason? This is a possible first-round preview, albeit on the road for Philadelphia.

Pick: Eagles 28, Commanders 20

Arizona (7-7) at Carolina (3-11)

Sunday, 12 p.m. / Fox

Line: Cardinals -5 / 47.5

The Cardinals are still in the mix in the NFC West race, but they must avoid a hiccup against the Panthers. Carolina has given up 200-plus rushing yards in its past three losses. That means 20-plus carries for James Conner, who's averaged 89.3 yards per game over the past three weeks. Kyler Murray edges Bryce Young in a duel between Heisman Trophy winners and No. 1 picks, showing why patience is required.

Pick: Cardinals 32, Panthers 23

Minnesota (12-2) at Seattle (8-6)

Sunday, 3:05 p.m. / Fox

Line: Vikings -3 / 43.5

Geno Smith (knee) left the Week 15 loss to the Packers, and if he cannot go, then Sam Howell will face the Vikings, one of eight NFL teams with 40-plus sacks. Minnesota is 3-1 ATS when favored by four points or more, and Sam Darnold continues to be the hot hand.

Pick: Vikings 31, Seahawks 19

Jacksonville (3-11) at Las Vegas (2-12)

Sunday, 3:25 p.m. / CBS

Line: Raiders -1.5 / 47.5

This is a draft-positioning game. Mac Jones has thrown seven interceptions in his past five starts, and the Raiders continue to shuffle quarterbacks in and out each week. It's two bad teams, and Las Vegas is working on a short week. Jacksonville is 2-0 ATS as an underdog of three points or less. Why not?

Pick: Jaguars 18, Raiders 15

San Francisco (6-8) at Miami (6-8)

Sunday, 3:25 p.m. / CBS

Line: Dolphins -1 / 44.5

A pair of 6-8 teams fighting to keep their slim playoff hopes alive. The 49ers continue to battle injuries, and the lack of a running game showed in the Thursday Night Football loss to the Rams in Week 15. The Dolphins are 4-3 S/U at home, and they have just five turnovers in those games. That could be a difference in a toss-up game, but the 49ers show that last bit of fight as an underdog.

Pick: 49ers 27, Dolphins 22

Tampa Bay (8-6) at Dallas (6-8)

Sunday, 7:20 p.m. / NBC/Peacock

Line: Bucs -4 / 48.5

The Buccaneers can end the Cowboys' last-ditch playoff push here. Dallas running back Rico Dowdle has averaged 130.7 rushing yards per game over the past three weeks, and Cooper Rush has just one interception in his past four starts. Is there an upset in the works here? Dallas has one victory at home this season and is 4-7 ATS as an underdog. Baker Mayfield has led the Bucs to four straight victories. The playoff push continues.

Pick: Buccaneers 28, Cowboys 21

New Orleans (5-9) at Green Bay (10-4)

Monday, 7:30 p.m. / ESPN

Line: Packers -14.5 / 42.5

The Packers can clinch a playoff spot with a win, and Green Bay has covered in its past four games. New Orleans has allowed 135 rushing yards per game in its past three games, and that's not good news when facing Josh Jacobs, who has scored eight rushing TDs in his past four outings. There is potential for a blowout here if Jordan Love does not turn the ball over at home. Love has seven interceptions in six home games, but he has not thrown an interception in his past four starts.

Pick: Packers 27, Saints 16



College Football News and Notes



BO CARTER

bcarter@footballfoundation.com

The 66th NFF Awards Dinner is history and made history with several memorable moments in Las Vegas thanks to generous sponsorship by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Bureau and several other entities. With famed broadcaster and former Tennessee Volunteers standout Charles Davis serving as emcee of the dinner for the first time, the festive mood was highlighted at Bellagio Hotel and Casino by the induction of the 22 members of the NFF Class of 2024 Hall of Fame members as well as a partnership with the Pacific Club IMPACT® Foundation to reveal the 2024 Ronnie Lott IMPACT® Trophy presented by Allied Universal as Colorado's (later named Heisman Trophy recipient) Travis Hunter and the 35th annual NFF William V. Campbell Trophy® to Alabama All-America QB and noted scholar Jalen Milroe. Other Lott IMPACT finalists on hand were (presented by Allied Universal) Caleb Downs (Ohio State); Mikail Kamara (Indiana) and Nic Scourton (Texas A&M). Hunter later became the first player in history to win the Bednarik, Biletnikoff and Walter Camp Player of the Year Awards along with the Heisman. Historically as well, the winners of the Walter Camp Award have gone onto capture the Heisman

Trophy almost 65 percent of the time since the Camp Award was introduced in 1967. Michigan AD Warde Manuel also received the NFF John L. Toner Award for Excellence in Athletics Administration.

The 22 Hall of Fame inductees honored included Justin Blackmon – WR, Oklahoma State (2009-11); Paul Cameron (posthumously) – HB, UCLA (1951-53); Tim Couch – QB, Kentucky (1996-98); Warrick Dunn – RB, Florida State (1993-96); Armanti Edwards – QB, Appalachian State (2006-09); Deon Figures – CB, Colorado (1988,1990-92); Larry Fitzgerald – WR, Pittsburgh (2002-03); Toby Gerhart – RB, Stanford (2006-09); Dan Hampton – DT, Arkansas (1975-78); Steve Hutchinson – OG, Michigan (1997-2000); Antonio Langham – CB, Alabama (1990-93); Randy Moss – WR/KR, Marshall (1996-97); Julius Peppers – DE, North Carolina (1999-2001); Paul Posluszny – LB, Penn State (2003-06); Dewey Selmon – NG, Oklahoma (1972-75); Alex Smith – QB, Utah (2002-04); Kevin Smith – CB, Texas A&M (1988-91); Chris Ward – OT, Ohio State (1974-77); Danny Woodhead – RB, Chadron State (Neb.) (2004-07); coaches Mark Dantonio – 132-74-0 (64.1 percent winning rate); Cincinnati (2004-06), Michigan State (2007-19); Danny Hale – 213-69-1 (75.4 percent); West Chester (Pa.) (1984-88), Bloomsburg (Pa.) (1993-2012); and Frank Solich – 173-101-0: (63.1 percent) Nebraska (1998-2003), Ohio (2005-2020).

The nation's top 16 scholar-athletes and finalists for the William V. Campbell Trophy® also netted \$300,000 in postgraduate scholarships, 50-plus former NFF College Hall of Fame inductees attended to add to the festivities, 2024 NFF College Football Trailblazers were recognized, and NFF officials saluted official sponsors for

the always-entertaining and educational function's 66th dinner -Bruin Capital, CAA Executive Search, Catapult Sports, College Football Playoff, Delta Air Lines, Fidelity Investments, Hampshire Foundation, Jostens, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, LDWW, New York Athletic Club, "The Original" Bob's Steak & Chop House, the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, Riddell, Rose Bowl Legacy Foundation, SideQuests, Sports Business Journal, and the United States Naval Academy Department of Athletics.

Also on the NFF calendar:

Monday, Dec. 16 (today) - Presentation of the Asa S. Bushnell Cup to the Ivy League Offensive and Defensive Players of the Year at the historic Rainbow Room at the NBC Rockefeller Center in New York City; January 2025 date TBD – Denotation of the 2025 College Football Hall of Fame Class.

Major national position of player of the year award winners announced from Dec. 9-14 are Allstate Wuerffel Trophy: Nick Dawkins, Penn State; Rotary Lombardi Award: Kelvin Banks Jr., Texas; Bednarik Award: Travis Hunter, Colorado; Biletnikoff Award: Travis Hunter, Colorado; Tetairoa McMillan, Arizona; Nick Nash, San José State; Bronko Nagurski Award: OLB Kyle Kennard, South Carolina; Broyles Award: TBD Feb. 13, 2025; Burlsworth Trophy: Bryce Boettcher, Oregon; Butkus Award: Jalon Walker, Georgia; Davey O'Brien Award: Cam Ward, Miami (Fla.); Doak Walker Award: Ashton Jeanty, Boise State; George Munger Award: TBD January 2025; FWAA Eddie Robinson Award: TBD Jan. 19, 2025; John Mackey Award: Harold Fannin Jr., Bowling Green; Colston Loveland, Michigan; Tyler Warren, Penn State; Lou Groza Award: Kenneth Almdares, Louisiana (first national individual award recipient at ULL since joining FBS); Maxwell Award: Ashton Jeanty, Boise State; FWAA Outland Trophy: Kelvin Banks Jr., Texas; Paycom Jim Thorpe Award: Jahdae Barron, Texas; Paul Hornung Award: Isaac Brown, Louisville; Travis Hunter, Colorado; Tyler Warren, Penn State; Ray Guy Award: Eddie Czaplicki, USC; Rimington Trophy: Seth McLaughlin, Ohio State; Walter Camp Award: Travis Hunter, Colorado; NFF Campbell Trophy: Milroe; Home Depot National Coach of the Year: Curt Cignetti, Indiana; associated Press Player of the Year: Hunter, Colorado; Heisman Trophy (finalists): Dillon Garbiel, Oregon, Colorado; Travis Hunter, Colorado; Cam Ward, Miami, Fla.; Ashton Jeanty, Boise State. Winner: Hunter, Colorado.

The 2024 College Football Playoff starts Friday with the all-Hoosier State

Indiana at Notre Dame inaugural clash in the expanded, 12-team format. Three other Round of 12 tests follow Saturday (see schedule below) to move into the quarterfinals against by recipients No. 1 Oregon, Georgia, Boise State, and Arizona State as FBS conference title game winners on Dec. 31-Jan. 1, 2025, he semifinals follow on Jan. 10, and the championship skirmish is Monday, Jan. 20.

The current longest NCAA FBS member streaks without a shutout through Dec. 9 are Florida with a NCAA-record 461 since 1988, TCU with 406 since 1991, Georgia with 386 since 1995, Virginia Tech with 384 since 1995, Nebraska with 363 since 1996 (the only Big Ten Conference team that has scored in every game in the 21st Century), Boise State with 352 since 1997, Alabama with 302 since 2001, and Clemson with 294 since 2003.

The American Heart Association Paul "Bear" Bryant National Coach of the Year sponsored by Accenture public voting is now available online through Jan. 10, 2025, via the URL: <https://bryantawards.org/fan-vote/>. Some of the latter season leaders in the public balloting have been Curt Cignetti of Indiana, Spencer Danielson of Boise State, Dan Lanning of Oregon, Kirby Smart of Georgia, Rhett Lashlee of SMU, James Franklin of Penn State, and Steve Sarkisian of Texas, among others.

NFF College Hall of Fame Facts:

Some notable birthdates in NFF College Hall of Fame annals in the Dec. 17-23 time period are Dec. 18 (1956) Jerry Robinson, San Francisco, Calif.; (1957) Scott Woerner, Baytown, Texas; (1909) Frank Hoffman, Seattle, Wash.; Dec. 19 (1926) Bobby Layne, Santa Anna, Texas; (1961) Reggie White, Chattanooga, Tenn.; (1964) Randall McDaniel, Phoenix, Ariz.; (1974) Jake Plummer, Boise, Idaho; (1978) Dan Morgan, Clifton Heights, Pa.; Dec. 20 (1867) Pudge Heffelfinger, Minneapolis, Minn.; (1953) Chet Moeller, Fairmont, Ohio; (1965) Mike Utley, Seattle, Wash.; Dec. 21 (1916) Vic Bottari, Vallejo, Calif.; (1926) Joe Paterno, Brooklyn, N.Y.; (1935) Garney Henley, Elgin, N.D.; (1940) Tom Beck, Chicago, Ill.; (1941) Hal Bedsole, Chicago, Ill.; (1950) Mike Bellotti, Sacramento, Calif.; (1960) George Floyd, Tampa, Fla.; Dec. 22 (1949) Ray Guy, Thomson, Ga.; Dec. 23 (1871) Frank Hinkey, Tonawanda, N.Y.; (1892) Gus Welch, Spooner, Wis.; (1924) Dan Devine, Augusta, Wis.; (1935) Paul Hornung, Louisville, Ky.; (1948) Jack Ham, Johnstown, Pa.

Notable anniversaries of passings of NFF College Hall of Fame members are Dec. 17 (1954) Fred Miller, Milwaukee, Wis.; (1973) Wally Butts, Athens, Ga.;

(2003) Otto Graham, Sarasota, Fla.; (2008) Sam Baugh, Rotan, Texas; (2011) Harley Sewell, Arlington, Texas; Dec. 19 (2012) Larry Morris, Atlanta, Ga.; Dec. 21 (1918) Hobey Baker, Tours, France; (2017) Pervis Atkins, Los Angeles, Calif.; Dec. 22 (1957) Bob Zuppke, Champaign, Ill.; Dec. 23 (1931) Knowlton Ames, Chicago, Ill.; (1942) Chris Cagle, New York City; (1948) Gil Dobie, Boston, Mass.

Happy birthdays to NFF Hall of Fame members born Dec. 17 Jerry Robinson, Scott Woerner, Dec. 19 Randall McDaniel, Jake Plummer, Dan Morgan, Dec. 20 Chet Moeller, Mike Utley, Dec. 21 Garney Henley (a spry 89), Mike Bellotti, George Floyd, Dec. 23 Jack Ham...

Schedules:

One game fans and media have circled on their viewing calendar is coach Bill Belichick's North Carolina Tar Heels and UCF head coach Scott Frost's Knights in Orlando...2025 Vanderbilt will host Utah State in 2025 for its 12th game. Vandy's first three games of '25 are at home against Charleston and then road skirmishes at Virginia Tech and South Carolina...Colgate will meet Cal Poly, Central Michigan and Cornell as part of its 2026 non-conference slate...Connecticut will open its 2026 campaign against Lafayette, Maryland, at North Carolina, and Indiana...Ball State will start its 2027 season at Iowa...UNLV is at Minnesota for its '27 opener...Temple and Howard will meet in Philadelphia for the first time in 2025...Mississippi State will open its 2025 home schedule against CFP competitor Arizona State and then face Notre Dame upsetter Northern Illinois on Sept. 20 at Davis Wade Stadium...Texas A&M has replaced Tarleton State on its '25 slate with the Samford Bulldogs – a first-ever grid opponent for the Aggies.

Good Works:

The 31st annual Beat Bama Food Rally at Auburn U. helped raise 900,000-plus pounds of food for underserved families in Esat Alabama...Rice celebrated and lauded the generosity of 1958 alumnus Russ Pittman who has endowed 75 different programs since graduating from the Houston university...The Vanderbilt Alumni Association (in Birmingham, Ala.) and North Texas Alumni Association (near downtown Dallas locations) are offering several gatherings prior to their upcoming bowls to celebrate both schools' return to postseason play...Longtime college athletics sponsor Toyota North America celebrated the sale of its nine millionth certified used vehicle all-time in this division, which is headquartered in Plano, Texas.

Football Coaches:

Finalists for the FWAA Eddie Robinson FBS Coach of the Year are Shane Beamer of South Carolina, Curt Cignetti of Indiana, Spencer Danielson of Boise State, Kenny Dillingham of Arizona State, Marcus Freeman of Notre Dame, Jody Wright at Murray State, Dan Lanning of Oregon, Rhett Lashlee of SMU, Jeff Monken of Army, and Kirby Smart of Georgia.

Lashlee is a returning finalist for 2023 while Monken and Smart are previous finalists...Recent head coaching moves have been Barry Odom at Purdue, Willie Simmons at FIU, Dowell Loggains at Appalachian State, Zach Kittley at Florida Atlantic, Tre Lamb at Tulsa, Dan Mullen at UNLV, Tony Gibson at Marshall, Scott Frost (second tenure) at UCF, Shawn Gibbs at North Carolina A&T, Charles Huff at Southern Miss, and Tim Albin at Charlotte...Future Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Belichick is the new head coach at North Carolina. Belichick's father Steve was a longtime college assistant coach at North Carolina (1953-55), Vanderbilt and Navy. Bill Belichick has received guaranteed compensation for the first three years of a five-year pact with the Tar Heels...Veteran head coach Rick Rodriguez is returning to West Virginia where he guided the Mountaineers from 2001-07. He is coming off three highly-successful head seasons as chief mentor at Jacksonville State...Indiana head coach Curt Cignetti pointed out the Hoosiers outscored all FBS opponents 40-17 during the '24 campaign...Texas State and head coach GJ Kinne agreed to a contract upgrade through the 2031 campaign...Tennessee Tech head coach Bobby Wilder and Georgia Tech head coach HC Brent Key each signed contract extensions through 2029...BYU head coach Kalani Sitake has gained a new, long-term contract (no details made public currently) to extend his current agreement well past 2027...Arkansas State head coach Butch Jones inked an additional years' contract through December 2029...Texas A&M head coach Mike Elko termed early signing dates and thousands of transfer portal moves this month 'a circus' but thinks the Aggies are in position to make some noise again in the 2025 SEC football race...

...Arkansas head coach Sam Pittman praised his staff for some good incoming transfer portal movement as he continues to have therapy for a hip replacement.... Oklahoma State head coach Mike Gundy is now working with an amended contract after taking the Cowboys to a school-record, 18 consecutive bowl berths from 2006-23 with a current all-time high of 169 coaching wins at OSU...Houston added offensive coordinator Slade Nagle and finalized his original compensation... Colorado State tabbed Alex Collins as its football general manager...Sacramento State head coach Andy Johnson is leaving to move to Stanford as assistant head coach and co-defensive coordinator...North Dakota head coach Bubba Schweigert will receive bonus and contracted compensation for the next four years after finishing his 11-year tenure at UND.

Hometowns of more 2024 college head coaches – Sewanee (U. of the South): Andy McCollum, Marietta, Ga.; Simpson (Iowa): Reed Hoskins, Waverly, Iowa; Simpson (Calif.): Shawn Daniel, Ellendale, N.D.; SMU: Rhett Lashlee, Springdale, Ark.; South Alabama: Major Applewhite, Baton

Rouge, La.

Directors of Athletics:

Eastern Michigan director of athletics Scott Wetherbee received a contract extension through December 2027...Colorado AD Rick George is pursuing the possibility of retirement when his current contract ends June 30, 2026. George also feels that NFF College Hall of Fame member and Buffaloes head coach Deion Sanders will extend his stay in Boulder for several seasons...Arizona State AD Graham Rossini has noticed a 45 percent increase in basic costs for football the travel, food and technology with the Sun Devils move to the Big 12 Conference. CFP revenue and donor upticks will assist in making up the difference...Virginia Tech AD Whit Babcock provides has plans for the House v. NCAA settlement with annual sharing of approximately \$20.5 million in revenue-sharing with student-athletes and an additional \$2.5 million prepared if the NCAA increases scholarship limits...Illinois AD Josh Whitman opines sees some levelling of differences between certain schools if revenue-sharing ends up in the \$20-20.5 million area when the House settlement goes into effect...Alabama AD Greg Byrne reflected that Alabama's 2024 strength of schedule among Southeastern Conference and other opponents matters in CFP selection. he expressed group disappointment for the Bama program student-athletes and coaches for the omission of an at-large berth...New Mexico AD Fernando Lovo is complying with university policies and procedures in dealing with an alleged altercation among Lobos men's basketball members on a trip to a tournament in California in November...Georgia Tech named Simit Shah executive associate AD for administration; Lance Markos senior associate AD for compliance and Bret Cowley associate AD for compliance...Former Memphis athletics senior staffer Brendan Dwyer accepted a post at Vanderbilt as senior associate AD for capital projects, facilities and events...Gonzaga women's volleyball head coach Katie Wilson is leaving GU after three years...Michigan president Dr. Santa Ono had his contract extended through 2032 with added compensation...The latest position openings in athletics on D1Ticker.com are at Akron, Cleveland State, East Tennessee State, Illinois State, Jacksonville State, Lehigh, Marquette, Mississippi State, Mississippi Valley State, New Orleans, Rutgers, Hawai'i, TCU, and The Citadel.

The Conferences:

Multiple media reports have the Mountain West Conference adding UC Davis to membership in July 1, 2026...Grand Canyon is joining the Western Athletic Conference for men's soccer as an affiliate member...American Athletic Conference commissioner Tim Perneti asked about how the hierarchy of college football may not have placed all nine FBS conferences within the same parameters in the CFP selection process and that a then-11-1 Army West Point squad should have been

considered...Vanderbilt head coach Clark Lea was named coaches poll SEC Coach of the Year after helping the Commodores rebound from a 2-10 mark to 6-6 and bowl eligibility this season while South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer was tabbed as Associated Press SEC Coach of the Year after guiding the Gamecocks to a school-record four wins over Top 25 opponents...Some suspenseful games and dates denoted for the 2025 Big Ten Conference campaign are with defending champ Oregon opening loop play at Northwestern on Sept. 13 going to Penn State on Sept. 27 and no games for the Ducks against powers Michigan or Ohio State prior to the Big Ten title test. Michigan will take on USC in Los Angeles on Oct. 11 with the traditional finale at home against Ohio State on Nov. 29. UM also will travel to Nebraska, Michigan State, Northwestern, and Maryland next autumn...SEC commissioner Greg Sankey used the argument about national branding, strength of schedule and tradition in the final days before selection of teams for the College Football Playoff...The Big West Conference had multiple studies after its winter term Board of Directors meeting, and these included a research project by the Pictor Group, positioning within NCAA Division I for positions in NCAA championships and the approval of Hawai'i as an affiliate member of the Big West in men's volleyball, women's water polo, beach volleyball, and men's swimming and diving starting July 1, 2026...The West Conference has jurisprudence ongoing against Grand Canyon for breach of contract for joining the Mountain West Conference in 2026...MWC commissioner Gloria Nevarez congratulated Boise State for its College Football playoff placement, 11-game winning streak to close the outing and final CFP ranking...College Football Playoff future discussion included Big 12 Conference commissioner Brett Yormark: commenting on the merits in the overall picture of Power Four conferences and Group of Five circuits in the selection process...By conferences, the breakdown for the CFP is Big Ten with four, SEC with three, ACC with two, and Big 12 with one, Mountain West with one and independent Notre Dame...American Athletic Conference referee Kevin Randall of Starkville, Miss., was the honored referee in the Army West Point-Navy game last Saturday, and he is son of famed late Air Force, LSU and Mississippi State assistant coach and Colgate Glee Club singer Craig Randall...There are six Big 12 Conference women's gymnastics squads ranked in the 2025 Women's Collegiate Gymnastics Association Preseason Coaches' Poll.

The Bowls:

The FBS bowl season has begun with last Saturday's HBCU Cricket Celebration Bowl in Atlanta with Jackson State winning for the first time over South Carolina State 28-7 and the Salute to Veterans Bowl (formerly the Camellia Bowl) with South

Alabama edging Western Michigan 30-23 at the historic Cramton Bowl in Montgomery, Ala.,...Following these classics among the 40 additional bowls are Tuesday Dec. 17 – Scooter’s Coffee Frisco Bowl, Memphis vs. West Virginia, 9 p.m., Frisco, Texas.. ESPN; Wednesday, Dec. 18 – Boca Raton Bowl, James Madison vs. WKU, 5 p.m., Boca Raton, Fla., ESPN; AOS LA Bowl hosted by Gronk, California vs. UNLV, 9 p.m., Los Angeles, ESPN; Thursday, Dec. 19 - R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl, Georgia Southern vs. Sam Houston, 7 p.m., New Orleans, La., ESPN2; Friday, Dec. 20 - StaffDNA Cure Bowl Ohio vs. Jacksonville State, Noon, Orlando, ESPN; Union Home Mortgage Gasparilla Bowl, Florida vs. Tulane, 3:30 p.m., Tampa, Fla., ESPN; CFP first-round, Indiana at Notre Dame, 8 p.m., ABC; Saturday, Dec. 21 – CFP first-round game, SMU at Penn State, Noon, TNT; CFP first-round, Clemson at Texas, 4 p.m., TNT; CFP first-round, Tennessee at Ohio State, 8 p.m., ABC Monday, Dec. 23 - Myrtle Beach Bowl, Coastal Carolina vs. UTSA, 11 a.m., Myrtle Beach, S.C., ESPN; and Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, Fresno State vs. Northern Illinois, 2:30 p.m., Boise, Idaho, ESPN...Marshall has opted out of the Radiance Technologies Independence Bowl against Army West Point and has been replaced by Louisiana Tech of Conference USA...Reddit is serving as the official fan voice of the Union Home Mortgage Gasparilla Bowl through special features on the stadium videoboard via the Game Thread Group...The Navy-Oklahoma Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl in Fort Worth, Texas, is the second meeting of these schools after a 10-0 Navy win at Norman, Okla., in 1965...The Alabama-Michigan skirmish in the Reliaquest Bowl Dec. 31 in Tampa, Fla., is a rematch of the post-2023 CFP semifinal...Michigan AD and College Football Playoff committee chair Warde Manuel joined executive director Richard Clark about transparency throughout the six rankings of the CFP, how in-room discussions about teams weekly stayed in that room and how Manuel and Clark had major availability after each rankings’ denotation and the final selection of 12 to national news media and the public.

The Players:

Some key members of the prestigious American Football Coaches All-America team are DL Donovan Ezeiruaku, Boston College; DL Mason Graham, Michigan; DL Abdul Carter, Penn State; DL Kyle Kennard, South Carolina; LB Jay Higgins, Iowa; and LB Jalon Walker, Georgia; LB Danny Stutsman, Oklahoma...Among the All-America honorees for the Athletic’s 2024 dream team are QB Shedeur Sanders, Colorado; RB Ashton Jeanty, Boise State; WR Nick Nash, San Jose State; TE Harold Fannin Jr., Bowling Green; OT Lucas Scott, Army West Point; OL Jordan White, Liberty; and center Jacob Gideon, Western Michigan...Ole Miss QB Jaxson Dart has

pledged to compete for the Rebels in the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl against Duke....Mississippi State’s outgoing transfer list grew to 21 last midweek, but head coach Jeff Lebby has one of the school’s top recruiting classes in history and numerous other FBS transfers to bolster 2025 team fortunes. Among the portal entries is 2024 starting QB Michael Van Buren while standout Oklahoma WR Brenen Thompson will join the 2025 Bulldogs...NC State OLB Redd Hibbler is an early committed transfer to MSU...Florida LB Jack Pyburn is a sought-after transfer portal entry for ’25 ...Duke QB Malik Murphy has joined the portal for ’25...UNLV linebacker and Mountain West Conference Defensive Player of the Year Jackson Woodard leads the Rebels into the postseason at the Art of Sport LA Bowl hosted by Gronk...California QB Fernando Mendoza has overcome an illness that forced him to miss the SMU-Cal regular-season finale...Oklahoma QB Jackson Arnold is taking his talents to Auburn...Auburn TE Micah Riley has transferred to Texas A&M....Auburn walk on kicker Ian Vachon was saluted for his contributions to the 2024 Tigers late in the season after transferring from Birmingham-Southern, which closed its doors last May...Louisiana WR Dalen Cambre and OL AJ Gillie received All-America recognition from two different publications...All-SEC Freshmen Team members WR Ryan Williams and DB Zabien Brown are set to lead the 2025 Crimson Tide outfit...One of the nation’s top deep snappers, Tate Deitz, of the Houston suburbs has inked to play at Air Force in 2025...Over the first six days of actual NCAA transfer portal movement, several schools are working to replace mass exits in coming days. Those with the most outgoing transfers in this period are Arizona with 26, Arkansas with 24, Mississippi State with 24, and Kentucky with 21.

Around the Campus:

Amazing statistic of the week: Army West Point has 17 pass interceptions yet only two fumble recoveries in 13 games prior to its bowl visit in Shreveport, La., Dec. 31. The Black Knights also have a NCAA FBS-most 16 different rushers in ’24 ...Mississippi State picked up a key, anonymous \$1.75 million donation for the State Excellence Fund, which has taken in \$6 million-plus in gifts...The Connecticut Board of Trustees updated a budget proposal to upgrade Wi-Fi service at Gampel Pavilion and is allowing surveys for the possibility of premium seating in the arena ...Stephen F. Austin athletics now is working with the FanWord Group for the new video series A Cut Above through Fan Word Stories...The Nevada Board of Regents is allowing Nevada athletics to add a 3.50-per-credit student fee to for the funding of the \$25 million UN Indoor Fieldhouse...Regents for the Nevada System of Higher Education okayed the sale of historic Sam Boyd Stadium for \$5

million to the Clark County Board of Commissioners...The only remaining tickets for the Indiana-Notre Dame CFP Round of 12 tussle are available on second-hand vendor StubHub with pricing in the \$1,100-\$3,600 range...Hawai’i athletics is working to shore up a \$2.1 million budget deficit from fiscal year 2024 and is limited somewhat by the smaller size and fewer tickets available at the on-campus Ching Stadium Complex. The university, city and state officials continue to work on a replacement facility for historic Aloha Stadium with larger capacity and surrounding business opportunities...Under construction Bank Independent Stadium on the North Alabama campus will name the playing surface Bobby Wallace Field for the Lions retired NCAA Division II championships’ head coach...Iowa NIL Swarm Collective members will earn priority points through the will now earn priority points through the I-Club with one point per \$100 contribution made to the collective from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025 ...UCLA (men’s water polo) and North Carolina (women’s soccer) are celebrating 2024 NCAA team championships in December...The U. of New Orleans is restructuring finances for several areas to help offset a \$15 million university deficit. There was no word on the proposal in recent years to start varsity football at the university in coming years and how that might be funded...Jacksonville U. is working with donors and creditors to help reduce long-term, university-wide debt estimated at \$143 million for the famed private school. For several years late NFF supporter and award winner Bob Hope assisted with annual fundraising events...Army West Point’s offensive line was named the 2024 Joe Moore Line of the Year ...The Pepperdine campus, all classes, semester exams, and athletics events had to be suspended due to massive brushfires near the Malibu, Calif., area...Ohio State is having a rollback of \$2 million-plus in designated raises for many employees due to federal changes in overtime payments beginning Jan. 1, 2025...Athletes.org and Pittsburgh football student-athletes had a special bowling trek for its initial Players Only introductory meeting...Louisiana’s 19 freshmen and community college signees this month are rated as one of the top signing classes in school annals...Tennessee has sold out its allotment of 2025 softball season tickets...Pennsylvania athletics and Skinletics are in the process of assisting student-athletes with the group’s red-light therapy and additional products...The Taco Bell 2024 Student Section of the Year is at Ohio State...The Nations Group is expanding its stadium development services and has added several employers and contractors to accomplish new goals....Penn State football anticipated its CFP berth and allowed season ticket holders and Nittany Lion Club members to have priority for purchasing ducats for the opening round...Texas allowed 2024 season ticket

holders to maintain their regular season seat and parking locales for the CFP contest against Clemson by 4 p.m. (CST) last Monday...Ohio State started its prices for the CFP game against Tennessee Saturday at \$100 and had an allotment of 3,500 tickets for Tennessee purchasers...Nations Group selected Michael Godoy as vice president...Last week’s Army West Point-Navy standoff represented the first game when both academies already had qualified for bowls since the 2017 season...The Alabama Community College Bard of Regents has requested an \$18 million funding increase for 2025-26 athletics and operations’ needs.

Other Notables:

The NFF Good in the Game video segment last week highlighted the 22 inductees into the NFF College Hall of Fame class last week in Las Vegas...NFF College Hall of Fame coach Gene Stallings and his wife celebrated 58 years of marriage...NFF College and ro Football Halls of Fame member Randy Moss of Florida and Marshall is getting treatment for cancer ...Former Big 12 Conference commissioner Bob Bowlsby believes that College Football Playoff rankings should be determined later in the season and could possibly be limited to two announcements. He also opines that the 12-team selection process is decidedly more difficult on the committee and that the human element must be considered in every selection committee appointment...Caitlin Clark of Iowa and the WNBA has been named Time magazine 2024 Sports Person of the Year...Legendary Texas softball coach Connie Clark has been inducted into the National Faspitch Softball Hall of Fame....Former NBA Milwaukee Bucks co-owner and venture capitalist is seeking to acquire per se college football and basketball programs through active NIL investments and lucrative coaching contracts...Former Mississippi State All-SEC great 1B Bruce Castoria is being inducted into the Floral Park (N.Y.) Memorial HS Sports Hall of Fame...Eastern Kentucky is adding six standouts to its EKU Sports Hall of Fame - Ole Hesselbjerg, Danny Hope, Jacob Korir, Sofie Levin, Nick Mayo, and Corey Walden ...Four NFL teams sold anywhere from 8-20 percent of their ownership with NFL Office permission to private equity concerns last week.

Media Musings:

CBS Sports, Army West Point and Navy have extended their national broadcast agreement for 10 years...USA Today chronicled bonus compensation pacts for 2024 performances coming to LSU defensive coordinator Blake Baker, Michigan defensive coordinator Wink Martindale, Ohio State defensive coordinator defensive Jim Knowles, Ole Miss defensive coordinator Pete Golding, Utah offensive coordinator Andy Ludwig who now is looking at other opportunities, Florida State defensive coordinator Adam Fuller, Georgia defensive coordinator Glenn Schumann, Ohio

offensive coordinator and former head coach Chip Kelly, Utah defensive coordinator Morgan Scalley, and Oregon defensive coordinator DC Tosh Luposi and college football general managers, chiefs of staff or and recruiting coordinators Alabama's Courtney Morgan, Oregon's Marshall Malchow, LSU's Austin Thomas, Ole Miss' Billy Glasscock, Ohio State's Mark Pantoni, Michigan's Sean Magee, Texas' Brandon Harris, and Texas A&M's Derek Miller...Disney Co. president of global advertising Rita Ferro reports that advertising for the College Football Playoff has hit an all-time high with the 12-team format... Highly-decorated Associated Press college football editor Ralph Russo now is plying his writing talents for The Athletic... The San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News newspaper examined the rare matchup of same-conference squads in the Valero Alamo Bowl where BYU will face Colorado...Learfield Sports has reorganized financially over the last 12-13 months and revealed \$1.2 billion in gross revenue since January...Poneman and Naiditch Representation Group agent Daniel Poneman projects future buyouts by professional teams of NIL contracts from college student-athletes...Sportico's Jason Clinkscales glanced at the relationship of Everett Sports Marketing and in-house proposals at Clemson to negotiate NIL agreements for student-athletes...USA Today's Steve Berkowitz and Mark Giannotto glanced at the growing trend of college football programs utilizing general managers, recruiting managers and/or player personnel directors particularly in light of implementation of the House v. NCAA settlement. Texas A&M head coach Mike Elko intelligently observes: "It used to take a village. Now it takes an army."...

JohnCanzano.com noted how Pac-12 Conference survivors Oregon State and Washington State are proceeding with enhanced NIL bargaining...ESPN and On3.com detailed negotiations between Oklahoma State head coach Mike Gundy and the OSU administration...Yahoo Sports and a Washington, D.C., CPA firm estimated NIL collective distribution for Power Four conferences through December. The SEC leads with \$186 million-plus via NIL collectives while the ACC and Big Ten are in the \$150 million range for all sports. The Big 12 follows at just under \$115 million...The Sports Business Journal Intercollegiate Athletics Forum last week in Las Vegas had several key addresses from NCAA president Charlie Baker (emphasizing rewriting most of the current NCAA bylaws due to developments in college athletics since 2021 and the complicated national mix of politics and athletics), Weatherford Capital and Collegiate Athletic Solutions founding partner Drew Weatherford (concerning reports that venture capital groups and equity investors are not seeking to buy college athletics programs) and several key national leaders in college athletics specu-

lating on continuing challenges for football and other sports...ESPN indicated its decision on which two games in the CFP to sublet to TNT Sports/MAX during the opening round of the CFP encounters this week...Warner Brothers Discovery is starting a reorganization of its financial and broadcast policies for more streamlining of operations...Altius Sports Partners added Ron Raccuia as a senior adviser for the group...TurnkeyZRG chair and CEO Len Perna addressed the Sports Business Journal Forum on the topics of congressional action for NCAA reorganization and NIL measures as well as the necessity of university presidents, chancellors and ADs to work alongside a united group of facilitators to help maximize the impact of new-found college football rules and regulations off the playing field...Columnist Jon Solomon of the Aspan Group cautioned about recent football wagering movements in many of the 39 states with legal sports betting on contests from the Pee Wee football to high school levels in addition to the colleges and pros.

FWAA, CSC, NCAA, Etc.:

The 46th round of NCAA FCS playoffs completed Week 3 with these quarterfinal results: South Dakota State 55, Incarnate Word 14; Montana State 45, Idaho 19; North Dakota State 31, Mercer 7; South Dakota 31, UC Davis 21; semifinals are Saturday with FCS title contest Monday, Jan. 6, in Frisco, Texas...The 69th annual NAIA Football Championship is now in the semifinal rounds after these results last Saturday: Keiser (Fla.) 42, Benedictine (Kan.) 38; Grand View (Iowa) 36, Morningside (Iowa) 15; Keiser meets Grand View in the NAIA championship Saturday at Durham, N.C., with a noon (EST) kickoff...NCAA Division II semifinal results were Valdosta State 35, Minnesota State 21; Ferris State 48, Slippery Rock 38, championship is Saturday at 1 p.m. (CST) at McKinney (Texas) ISD Stadium...NCAA Division III semifinals are set for Saturday are Susquehanna at North Central (Ill.) and Johns Hopkins at Mt. Union; the championship will be played Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025...College Sports Communicators featured in major online or social media posts in recent days are Matt Ensor and David Waxman of the Big 12 Conference, Chuck Dunlap of the SEC, Bruce Ludlow and Thomas Samuel of the Southland Conference...Florida, Kentucky, Louisville, LSU, Michigan State, Oregon, and UCLA are conferring with NCAA enforcement and compliance officials concerning possible challenges and probes at their respective schools...The USBWA Oscar Robertson Player of the Week for Dec. 3-9 was Central Connecticut State's Charles Haid along with Women's Player of the Week Sonia Citron... Houston, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Nashville made future bids for the NCAA FCS Championship while Frisco, Texas, and Toyota Stadium (also home to the U.S. Soccer Hall of

Fame) are continuing bids after 14 years of FCS at that site. There also is ongoing construction at the stadium, but the city assured the NCAA that it has the means to provide adequate seating for the title game. In the interim, Nashville will host the January 2026 and 2027 contests at FirstBank Stadium/Dudley Foeld on the Vanderbilt campus...Sixteen states set legal all-events' wagering records for monetary statistics last October...U.S. Senators Marsha Blackburn (Rep-Tenn. – a loyal supporter of her alma mater Mississippi State) and Catherine Cortez Masto (Dem-Nev.) contacted the U.S. Department of Justice about more frequent allegations of possible "fixing" of various college contests in legal wagering states if over-under or point spread wagering can be manipulated...Former high school football student-athlete and incoming U.S. President Donald Trump is the Time magazine Person of the Year and rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange on Dec. 12...U.S. federal court judge Claudia Wilken of the Northern California District had her authority questioned by defense attorneys if she decides to try and have NCAA members create a union or a players' association as part of the continuing saga of the House v. NCAA settlement. Late national weather note: Northern California suffered a rare, EF1 level tornado and the first-ever U.S. Weather Service

tornado warning for the city of San Francisco. There is an average of 10 sighted tornadoes annually in California.

2024-25 College Football Playoff Bowl Schedule

(All Games Televised by ESPN, ABC or TNT Sports, EST Airtimes, Campus Sites For First Four Games)
Friday, Dec. 20 – First Round (5-12 Seeds competing Dec. 20-21)
Indiana at Notre Dame, 8 p.m., ABC/ESPN
Saturday, Dec. 21
SMU at Penn State, noon (TNT)
Clemson at Texas, 4 p.m., (TNT)
Tennessee at Ohio State, 8 p.m., ABC
Quarterfinal Games
Vrbo Fiesta Bowl (Tuesday, Dec. 31):
Boise State vs. Penn State-SMU winner, Glendale, Ariz., 7:30 p.m., ABC
Rose Bowl presented by Prudential (Wednesday, Jan. 1): Oregon vs. Ohio State-Tennessee winner, 5 p.m., Pasadena, Calif., ABC
Allstate Sugar Bowl (Wednesday, Jan. 1): Georgia vs. Notre Dame-Indiana winner, New Orleans, La., 8:45 p.m., ABC
Thursday-Friday, Jan. 9-10, 2025
Jan. 9 – Capital One Orange Bowl, Miami Lakes, Fla., winners of quarterfinals, 7:30 p.
Jan. 10 – Goodyear Cotton Bowl, Arlington, winners of quarterfinals, 7:30 p.
Monday, Jan. 20 – National Championship Game, Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Ga., semifinal winners, 7:30 p.m.



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