

College Football Bowl Roundup

Ohio State rolls over USC in Cotton Bowl

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Playoff-snubbed Ohio State got a bit defensive even without one of its best defenders in the Cotton Bowl.

Damon Webb returned an interception for a touchdown after recovering a fumble to set up an early score and the No. 5 Buckeyes beat No. 8 Southern California 24-7 on Friday night in a matchup that traditionally has been in the Rose Bowl instead of deep in the heart of Texas.

The Big Ten and Pac-12 champions would usually play New Year's Day in Pasadena, but the Rose Bowl is a College Football Playoff semifinal game this season.

Ohio State (12-2) instead quickly settled in at the NFL stadium where three years ago it won the first national championship in the four-team CFP format. The Buckeyes — with that bad loss at Iowa after an early setback to playoff team Oklahoma — were the first team left out this season.

USC (11-3), the Rose Bowl champion last season, lost for only the third time in its last 23 games. The Trojans had four turnovers that led to 21 Ohio State points in what could have been third-year sophomore quarterback Sam Darnold's final game.

Buckeyes All-America junior cornerback Denzel Ward has already decided to go into the NFL draft and didn't play after practicing with the team this week.

With Ward on the sideline in his No. 12 jersey over street clothes, fellow defensive back Webb had a fumble recovery on the third play of the game. That led to J.T. Barrett's 1-yard keeper for a score that put the Buckeyes ahead to stay.

Webb's 23-yard interception return for a TD put Ohio State up 17-0 less than a minute into the second quarter. It was the first pick-six this season for the Buckeyes, and the team-leading fifth interception for Webb.

Ohio State was up 24-0



Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett (16) rushes for a first down against Southern California safety Marvell Tell III (7) and cornerback Isaiah Langley (24) during the first half of the Cotton Bowl game in Arlington, Texas, Friday.

when Barrett ran 28 yards for another touchdown after the first of Darnold's two fumbles when stripped while being sacked. Darnold was sacked eight times overall.

TAKEAWAY
Ohio State: Barrett, playing his final college game only about a two-hour drive from his hometown of Wichita Falls, Texas, broke Drew Brees' Big Ten career record for total offense with 12,697 yards. He played 50 games, and was 38-6 as a starter. His 147 touchdowns (104 passing, 43 rushing) are also a Big Ten record, 41 more than Brees at Purdue.

USC: Darnold, who became the first Trojans quarterback ever with more than 4,000 yards passing in a season, has until Jan. 15 to decide if he will head to the NFL or return to USC for another season. While he threw for 356 yards on 26-of-45 passing in the Cotton Bowl, his turnovers were costly.

NOT FOR THE ROSES
This was the eighth time Ohio State and USC met in a bowl game. The first seven were in the Rose Bowl. The Trojans had won seven straight in the matchup of powerhouse programs, including four regular-season matchups since their last meeting in Pasadena 33 years

ago.

MUSIC CITY BOWL
NORTHWESTERN 24, KENTUCKY 23 — At Nashville, Tennessee, Justin Jackson ran for 157 yards and two touchdowns, and No. 20 Northwestern held off Kentucky 24-23 on Friday in a Music City Bowl that might be remembered more for injuries, ejections and a wild finish.

Both starting quarterbacks left in the first half with injuries, though Kentucky's Stephen Johnson returned early in the third quarter. Kentucky lost running back Benny Snell Jr. to an ejection for contact with an official early in the second quarter, and Northwestern lost leading tackler and linebacker Paddy Fisher before halftime when he was ejected for targeting.

Northwestern (10-4) still finished off back-to-back bowl wins in consecutive years for the first time in program history, and the Wildcats notched their second 10-win season in three years under coach Pat Fitzgerald. The senior class also won its 27th game for the best stretch in more than a decade.

Kentucky (7-6) had a chance to win after Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald

tried to convert his fifth fourth down of the game only to turn it over for the fourth time on downs — this time at his own 39 with 2:31 left. Johnson ran for his second touchdown of the second half with 37 seconds left. Kentucky coach Mark Stoops went for the 2-point conversion rather than play for overtime, but Johnson couldn't connect with Tavin Richardson on the pass.

With quarterback Clayton Thorson knocked out early in the second with a right knee injury, Northwestern outran Kentucky 333-65. Safety Kyle Quiero provided the winning margin taking Northwestern's second interception 26 yards for a TD with 7:49 left.

SUN BOWL
NC STATE 52, ARIZONA STATE 31 — At El Paso, Texas, Nyheim Hines had three 5-yard touchdown runs to help North Carolina State beat Arizona State in the Sun Bowl.

Hines finished with 72 yards on 16 carries for North Carolina State (9-4). The Wolfpack played in their fourth consecutive bowl game and sixth in seven years under coach David Doeren.

Reggie Gallaspy added 79 yards and two touchdowns on

12 carries for the Wolfpack, Ryan Finley completed 24 of 29 passes for 318 yards and a score, and Stephen Louis had three catches for 115 yards.

Arizona State (7-6) played its final game under fired coach Todd Graham, with former NFL coach Herm Edwards taking over the program.

Manny Wilkins was 25 of 40 for 352 yards and three touchdowns for the Sun Devils. He also threw three interceptions. Arizona State won its previous three Sun Bowl appearances — in 1997, 2004 and 2014.

North Carolina State played without standout defensive end Bradley Chubb. Chubb, a projected top-10 pick in the NFL draft. The school announced a few hours before the game that he wouldn't play.

BELK BOWL
WAKE FOREST 55, TEXAS A&M 52 — At Charlotte, North Carolina, John Wolford threw for 400 yards and four touchdowns, and Matt Colburn ran for 150 yards and the go-ahead score in Wake Forest's victory over Texas A&M in the Belk Bowl.

The teams combined for 1,260 yards in one of the highest-scoring games in bowl history.

Wolford, a four-year starter and the game's Most Valuable Player, threw all four TD passes in the first half for Wake Forest (8-5). Colburn had a 1-yard touchdown with 2:18 left in the game to give the Demon Deacons the lead for good.

Scotty Washington had nine catches for 138 yards and a touchdown for the Demon Deacons, and tight end Cam Serigne had nine catches for 112 yards and a score.

Wake Forest stopped the Aggies on downs on their final drive to seal the win.

Nick Starkel threw for a Belk Bowl-record 499 yards and also had four touchdown passes for Texas A&M (7-6). Christian Kirk caught 13 passes for 189 yards and three touchdowns.

Women's College Basketball

Gulich leads No. 17 Beavers past Huskies

Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Marie Gulich scored 18 of her 24 points in the second half, including eight in the pivotal third quarter and No. 17 Oregon State opened Pac-12 play on Friday with a 75-63 win over Washington.



Kat Tudor added 17 points and Mikayla Pivec scored 11 for the Beavers (9-2), who have won seven straight.

Amber Melgoza had 15 of her 19 points in the first half for the Huskies (6-6), who went up by 11 after a 10-point run in the second quarter. Oregon State scored the last five to close within 36-30 at the break.

The Beavers opened the third quarter with four straight points and after a Washington basket went on a 16-2 run to lead 50-40. Aleah Goodman hit two 3-pointers and Gulich scored six points while the Huskies were shooting 1 of 12.

The lead reached 20 midway through the fourth quarter as Gulich had six points and Pivec a 3-point play in a 9-0 run.

Gulich had 12 rebound as the Beavers had a 43-32 advantage on the boards. They also shot 60 percent in the second half, while the Huskies shot 30 percent.

College Football Playoff

Alabama, Clemson to complete their trilogy

By PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — When you're in the midst of a historic trilogy, it's hard to appreciate what it will mean to the ages.

Alabama is focused on beating Clemson.

Clemson is focused on beating Alabama.

Taking time to savor the first two chapters between these college football juggernauts — and, ohhh, are they worth savoring — will only get in the way of preparing for the rubber match.

"I just try to take it day by day," Alabama center Bradley Bozeman said. "I'll look back on it when I'm 40 or 50 years old."

No matter what happens Monday night when the top-ranked Tigers take on the fourth-ranked Crimson Tide in the Sugar Bowl semifinal game, this remarkable three-year run seems assured of joining all those great sporting rivalries that were doled out thrice.

Ali-Frazier.
Affirmed-Alydar.
Nadal-Federer.
Warriors-Cavaliers.

"We're in a good place if we're seeing them," Alabama safety Minkah Fitzpatrick said of the Tigers. "So, no, I'm not tired of them."

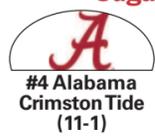
For whatever reason, the trilogy holds a special place in the sports lexicon.

They come in all shapes and sizes, from one side pulling off a sweep (Affirmed edged Alydar three straight times to claim the 1978 Triple Crown) to those who saved the best for last (Ali beating Frazier in the "Thrilla in Manila" after they split their first two heavyweight bouts) to matchups that signaled a changing of the guard (Nadal's epic victory over Federer in the 2008 Wimbledon final after losing to his Swiss rival the two previous years).

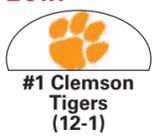
Which brings us to Alabama-Clemson III.

Already, they've produced a matching set of classics that rank among the greatest national championship games in college football history. Two years ago, Alabama won 45-40 in a breakneck affair that featured 40 points, a successful

Sugar Bowl



#4 Alabama Crimson Tide (11-1)



#1 Clemson Tigers (12-1)

• Monday, 5:45 p.m.
• TV: ESPN

onside kick and a kickoff return for a touchdown in the final 10 1-2 minutes. Last season, Clemson rallied from a two-touchdown deficit and the Tide's go-ahead TD with just over 2 minutes remaining to win 35-31 on Deshaun Watson's 2-yard scoring pass to Hunter Renfrow with a single second hanging on the clock.

The stakes are a bit different this time. Instead of meeting in the title game, Round 3 falls a week earlier in the College Football Playoff semifinals. Clemson claimed the top seed despite a loss to lowly Syracuse back in mid-October, while Alabama stirred up the biggest debate when it landed the fourth seed after a setback to Auburn in its final regular-season game and failing to even qualify for the Southeastern Conference championship.

In the end, it's hard to fault the selection committee for bending to the will of history.

A deciding game only seems right.

"Oh, it's a lot of fun," Tigers defensive lineman Christian Wilkins said. "The reason why I came to Clemson was to compete at the highest level, play against the best teams and win championships. You know if you're Clemson and you're playing Alabama, then you've had a good season. They're always going to be at the top. That's just the kind of program they are."

While many of the faces have changed — most notably, Watson moved on to the NFL after two brilliant performances against the Crimson Tide — there's a familiarity between the programs that only adds to the buildup.

They know each other's tendencies, the plays they like to run and the ones they shy away from, their many strengths and those handful of weaknesses that might be exploited at a crucial time.

Adding to the storyline: Clemson is coached by Alabama alum Dabo Swinney, whose goal all along was to turn the Tigers into a Atlantic Coast Conference version of the Tide.

"It's been great to compete against Alabama," Swinney said. "One of the things that was a goal of mine nine years ago was build a program that can be consistent and to build a program that can beat the best, and Alabama has been the best."

Indeed, there's still a sense that Alabama is college football's top dog, even though Clemson is the reigning champion. Nick Saban has carried on the houndstooth legacy by guiding the Tide to four national titles in the last eight seasons. His program is the only one to make the playoffs in all four years of its existence.

The greatest testament to Bama's decade-long dominance? Going back to the start of the 2008 season, Saban's teams have played only three regular-season games — all at the end of the 2010 campaign — that didn't have an impact on the national championship race.

"It's like anything in life," Saban said matter-of-factly. "You make up a goal, you understand there's a process of things that you have to do to accomplish the goal, and you have to have the discipline to execute it every day. That's not necessarily a feeling. It's a choice that you choose to be persistent at the things that are going to help you be successful and you resist the things that are not going to help you be successful."

For Saban and Swinney, that leaves little time to dawdle over how this trilogy will remembered in the big picture.

But Renfrow has some idea. Maybe one day, long after his career is over, he'll flip on the TV to watch a "30 for 30" documentary.

They'll call it "Tide vs. Tigers: The Trilogy."

"I guess the word is appreciation," Renfrow said. "I'm just very appreciative for the opportunity to go out there and make the most of it and exhausting the moment. That's something we talk about. Not wishing for tomorrow. Just living in the moment."

You see, this budding masterpiece is not yet complete.

There's still another act to go.

While Mayfield ails, Bulldogs scheme to stop QB

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — An illness has slowed down Baker Mayfield for the past few days, and Oklahoma's Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback has missed a handful of public events leading up to the Rose Bowl.

Georgia's defense is taking no comfort in Mayfield's condition.

"Oh, I'm sure he'll be in that game," said Roquan Smith, Georgia's star linebacker. "It's going to be big playing against him. I'm a big college football fan, and he's a winner. I've been hearing about him for a long time."

The Bulldogs realize their national title hopes depend on figuring out how to contain one of the most dynamic players in their sport's recent history. With weeks of disciplined study and some practice help from a scout-team quarterback dubbed Mayfield's Mini-Me by his teammates, Georgia thinks it has got a shot.

Georgia has heard and seen everything that the rest of the country knows about Mayfield, who won the Heisman in a landslide vote earlier this month to cap a phenomenal senior season.

And even if he's under the weather this week, the Bulldogs expect him to be on top of his game Monday.

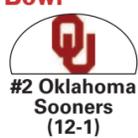
"I can remember when Michael Jordan had the flu once," Georgia defensive coordinator Mel Tucker said. "They were having to carry him off the floor during timeouts, and he had one of his best games. I expect Baker Mayfield to be at his best."

Big 12 champion Oklahoma (12-1) will bring a potent, versatile offense into Pasadena when the Sooners face SEC champion Georgia (12-1) in the College Football Playoff semifinal. But that offense is driven by Mayfield, the swashbuckling passer with running ability and a virtuosic knack for avoiding trouble — well, at least on the field and between the whistles.

Rose Bowl



#3 Georgia Bulldogs (12-1)



#2 Oklahoma Sooners (12-1)

• Monday, 2 p.m.
• TV: ESPN

"He can throw the ball in locations on the run that you don't see too many guys do," Smith said.

Mayfield's athleticism and football smarts are a formidable mix for any defense, but Georgia has an underlying confidence about its ability to slow down any offensive playmaker after plowing through the regular season by allowing more than 20 points just twice in 13 games.

The Bulldogs are still playing all proper respect to Mayfield during their week in Southern California.

"Their quarterback, he's just a special guy, and he makes a lot of things happen," Tucker said. "He reminds me of Brett Favre, because he makes all the throws, he's mobile and he can improvise on the run. He will run to run you over, and he will also slide, so you have to be ready for all of that."

Tucker doesn't claim to have a secret formula or a brilliant game plan for shutting down Mayfield, who passed for 4,340 yards and 41 touchdowns with just five interceptions. Instead, the Bulldogs have spent the past month drilling their basic defensive concepts tailored to a mobile quarterback with an impressively accurate arm.

"We always preach a coordinated pass rush," Tucker said. "You have to know when you can rush, and also where your teammates are. We also make sure our players downfield also know they have to cover for as long as it takes. You can't change too much of what you do in a situation like this. We've played other great quarterbacks this season, and we're going to have to be at our best against Oklahoma."