

SPORTS

PSU Sports
@
Glance

McComas picks the best: week 5

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With college football games on hiatus until the bowl season begins, all eyes are on the NFL. This week features a rundown of each NFL game. With Playoffs around the corner, every game is important.

Dismal. Think of Penn State losing to Michigan State and a whole lot of negative adjectives will spring to mind. One very important one might be bleak. Is Penn State's football future really going anywhere? Or is this just another game in a once proud program gone mediocre? I suppose that it is possible that this is just a bad game from a season weary team.

I guess I could forgive them this time, well except for the fact that I used my one free forgive on the road loss to Illinois.

This was a team that very publicly spoke of having high hopes towards a national title. Instead, they lose four conference games and finish the season well out of the Top 25.

Don't worry I'm not going to get on Joe Pa's back. I'm just tired of doing it, I mean he probably could use a good verbal bashing. Anyways, Anthony Morelli was only 16-35 passing for 188 yards, with one touchdown. I guess that's senior leadership, but when freshman all around the NCAA are putting up better numbers against much stiffer competition one has to wonder if this is the kind of senior we need.

Losing to Michigan State is bad, but blowing a seventeen point second half lead in a game that means the difference between 9-3 and a New Years day bowl and 8-4 and who knows where, is pathetic.

As it stands now the Nittany Lions finished fifth in the Big Ten and are likely headed to either the Alamo Bowl or the Champs Sports Bowl. Neither of these bowl games holds any great prestige and both take place in the latter days of December. The official bowl announcement will likely come in the first week or so of December.

In a somewhat interesting, somewhat sports related side note; the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has ruled against the State Employees' Retirement System. What does this have to do with PSU you ask? This case was stemming from a lawsuit from the Patriot News, requesting that Joe Pa's salary be made public.

Now after years of legal scrapping the public will know just how much money is paid to the man who roams our sideline. While this doesn't seem like very big news, it could mean that a lot more people might resume chanting JOE MUST GO, when they compare his annual compensation with his teams annual results.

But then again, everyone might be completely shocked at how little he gets paid, but I doubt it. After all he did have all that money sitting around to donate when the University wanted a new library.

I have been informed that the PSU Sports At A Glance column has been rather remiss in its coverage of PSU sports feats.

In particular we have failed recognize our tennis team. Freshman Tennis player Ashleigh Roach is the first PSU student athlete to win a NEAC conference championship. Ashleigh won her title after a grueling 3-hour and 15 minute championship match rallying to win a 7-6 (8) tiebreaker. Congratulations Ashleigh from everyone here at PSU.

In other sports news the Lady Lions Volleyball team has won its fifth straight outright Big Ten Conference Title. Coach Russ Rose was name Big Ten Coach of the Year; this is his ninth time earning that distinction. The men's basketball team is off to a 2-3 starts, losing all three games in the Old Spice Classic. While the men's team attempts to get the wheels turning in the right direction; the Lady Lions are off to a 5-1 start with their only loss being to Xavier.



CHICAGO BEARS @ WASHINGTON REDSKINS: A big game in D.C. The Skins have a better offense and defense, but the Bears own the special teams. Devin Hester is a game breaker and could very well determine the outcome of this contest. The key to the game however will be the play of the quarterbacks. Rex Grossman and Jason Campbell should have identical game plans. No interceptions or fumbles. Turnovers will decide the winner, as it tends to do. I'm picking the Redskins as long as they don't kick the ball to Devin Hester.



MIAMI DOLPHINS @ BUFFALO BILLS: What a year for Miami. They are not only on the bottom of the AFC East, but the entire NFL. On the bright side, they should gain the first overall pick in next year's draft. Hopefully they don't use it for special teams. The Bills have had a surprisingly, decent season so far. Lingered hopes of a playoff birth are fading away, but are nonetheless still present. With Trent Edwards at the helm, I think Buffalo's offense is more potent. The Dolphins have nothing to play for, which could make them dangerous, but I pick the Bills at Orchard Park, providing Marshawn Lynch is healthy.



SAINT LOUIS RAMS @ CINCINNATI BENGALS: The Bengals have to be one of the more disappointing teams this year. High expectations have resulted in a subpar season. Both Carson Palmer and Rudi Johnson have made little noise all year. The Rams, like Cincinnati, have not lived up to big expectations. Both teams are at the bottom of the pack with little or no chance at making the playoffs. The game could be fun to watch however, since both squads have high-powered offenses and struggling defenses. Cincinnati gets the win in "The Jungle."



DALLAS COWBOYS @ DETROIT LIONS: Behind Jon Kitna's guarantee of 10 wins, the Lions are over halfway there. However, with recent losses, Detroit seems to be fading. The Cowboys are one of the best teams in the NFL. Tony Romo and Terrell Owens are a lethal combination. Despite the game being contested under the roof of Ford Field, Dallas will win the game in dominating fashion.



OAKLAND RAIDERS @ GREEN BAY PACKERS: Brett Favre is having a career year. Given his Hall of Fame status, that is saying something. The Raiders are in the midst of a down year, again. Surprisingly however, Oakland has remained competitive. Lambeau Field has seen legendary games. This won't be one of them. Green Bay wins behind solid defense and a strong air attack.



SAN DIEGO CHARGERS @ TENNESSEE TITANS: Sports reporters always said Vince Young wins. Well, lately that has not been the case. A poor statistical season by Young has led the once promising Titans on a downward spiral. The Chargers are the most inconsistent team in the NFL. No team has looked more dominant or pathetic than San Diego. Even with the game being played in Nashville, the Chargers will continue their quest in solidifying the AFC West title.



NEW YORK GIANTS @ PHILADELPHIA EAGLES: The New York "Football" Giants are trying to shake their annual second half collapse. Eli Manning is supposedly continuing his progression. Unfortunately, neither is going well for the "G Men." The Eagles blitz consistently and Manning will have trouble finding his receivers with that type of pressure. Whether it's McNabb or Feely, Philly will be victorious at Lincoln Financial and continue to pressure NY for a wild card spot.



CAROLINA PANTHERS @ JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS: Will Carolina ever live up to expectations since their Super bowl loss? Not this year at least. The Jags on the other hand are breathing down the necks of the Indianapolis Colts. Jacksonville is for real. David Garrard protects the football and Maurice Jones-Drew and Fred Taylor provide a powerful running game. With the Panthers struggling yet again, look for the Jaguars to win at home in easy fashion.



TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS @ HOUSTON TEXANS: In what could be a great back and forth game, Tampa needs the win more. Houston has an outside chance of landing a wild card birth, while the Buccaneers have their minds on a division championship. Jeff Garcia and Joey Galloway are ageless, while Matt Schaub and Andre Johnson have the fountain of youth on their side. If Ahman Green is unable to go once more, the lack of consistent running game will hurt the Texans. Tampa can squeak out a road victory if Ernest Graham gains 100 rushing yards or more. Buccaneers win a close game.



MINNESOTA VIKINGS @ SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS: At this point in the season, the Vikings and Niners are heading in opposite directions. At the beginning of the year, predictions showed San Fran up and Minnesota down. Now, the Niners are toward the bottom and the Vikings are looking just outside the playoffs. Adrian Peterson will win Rookie of the Year and will also help the Vikings beat the Niners on Bill Walsh Field. San Fran has a chance if a healthy Frank Gore can run extremely well against a defense that hasn't allowed teams to do so thus far. Minnesota will not only win, but will make the playoffs as long as Tavaris Jackson doesn't throw crucial interceptions.



ARIZONA CARDINALS @ SEATTLE SEAHAWKS: A huge divisional game in which the winner could end up in the driver's seat. Arizona does not play consistent enough for me to pick them over Seattle. The Seahawks pass the ball extremely well and the Cardinals turn the ball over too much. The "12th Man" will rally behind their team and celebrate a victory at game's end.



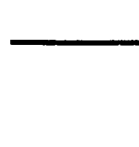
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS @ DENVER BRONCOS: Quite simply, Jay Cutler is a better quarterback than Brodie Croyle. With this certainty, Denver will defeat KC at Mile High. San Diego better keep watch. If they falter, the Broncos could sneak up behind them and take the division.



PITTSBURGH STEELERS @ NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS: The toughest challenge the Patriots will have the rest of the year will be the Steelers. Pittsburgh will need to blitz on defense and run the spread on offense to have a chance at winning this game. New England needs to continue with what they always do. Adjust and find a way to win, nobody does it better than New England. Foxboro will be smiling at the end of the game as Tom Brady will outplay Big Ben, leading to a Patriots' "W."



CLEVELAND BROWNS @ NEW YORK JETS: Is there a better story in the National Football League this year than the Browns? Romeo Crennel has finally mixed and molded a group of players to best fit his style of play. Cleveland has found a gem in Derek Anderson. The Jets are just not talented enough to win this game, even if it is at home. The Browns are victorious and continue their march to the playoffs.



INDIANAPOLIS COLTS @ BALTIMORE RAVENS: Baltimore's defense is not what it used to be and the Colts are getting healthier. That is a recipe for bad news if you're the Ravens. This game should be similar to the Steelers/Ravens night game a few weeks back. Indy steam rolls Baltimore at M&T Bank Stadium and gears up for a rematch with the New England Patriots in the playoffs.



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS @ ATLANTA FALCONS: Joey Harrington in the Georgia Dome gives the Falcons a chance at beating the streaky Saints, but I wouldn't bet on it. New Orleans is focused on winning their division and making some noise in the playoffs. Drew Brees will have to be error free and Reggie Bush will have to run the ball effectively to win. The Saints should be able to do so against an average Atlanta defense. The Saints win in Atlanta and this game could get out of control early.