Phil Steele Plus
Inside the Pressbox

WEEK 15

Saturday, December 11th
Army
  3:00 p.m. ET
Navy

FCS GAMES

Friday, December 10th
Montana
  7:00 p.m. ET
James Madison

Saturday, December 11th
East Tennessee St
  12:00 p.m. ET
North Dakota St

South Dakota St
  2:00 p.m. ET
★ Villanova

Montana St
  8:30 p.m. ET
Sam Houston

College Bowl Issue Release Schedule

Part 1: Released Wed 12/16/21 by 5:00pm
Part 2: Released Mon 12/20/21 by 5:00pm
Part 3: Released Mon 12/27/21 by 5:00pm
Part 4: Released Fri 12/31/21 by 1:00pm

Army Black Knights

Black Knights Logs

TM REC	FOE REC	TM CONF	FOE CONF	TM +/-	FOE +/-	AP TM	AP FOE	DATE	FOE	SCORE	W/L	TEAM OFF	DEF	ST	FOE OFF	DEF	ST
0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	120	122			9/4	at Georgia St	43-10	W	109	82	55	59	101	114
1-0	1-0	0-0	0-0	125	116			9/11	WKU	38-35	W	104	79	14	103	68	32
2-0	0-3	0-0	0-0	124	91			9/18	Connecticut	52-21	W	100	79	22	129	129	125
3-0	1-2	1-0	0-0	123	116			9/25	Miami, OH	23-10	W	42	71	44	106	110	36
4-0	1-3	1-0	0-1	123	116			10/2	at Ball St	16-28	L	40	53	29	122	109	45
4-1		1-0		119				10/9	Bye			74	48	51			
4-1	2-3	1-0	1-2	119	135			10/16	at Wisconsin	14-20	L	73	40	57	65	5	95
4-2	6-0	1-0	4-0	121	134		16	10/23	Wake Forest	56-70	L	86	48	70	42	74	6
4-3		1-0		120				10/30	Bye			63	81	85			
4-3	6-2	1-0	3-2	120	126			11/6	† Air Force	21-14	W	62	82	91	94	69	122
5-3		1-0		124	#N/A			11/13	Bucknell	63-10	W	68	88	89			
6-3	1-9	1-0	1-1	121	86			11/20	UMass	33-17	W	57	88	81	125	130	110
7-3	7-4	2-0	1-0	117	125			11/27	at Liberty	31-16	W	60	88	87	85	48	94
8-3		3-0		122				12/4	Bye			59	75	94			
8-3	3-8	3-0	3-5	122	121			12/11	† Navy			59	75	94	127	104	91

	OVERALL: 8-3 vs. IND 3-0	OVERALL: 3-8 vs. AAC 3-5	

2021 TEAM RANKINGS / NCAA RANKINGS

Army		Navy
#2	Rush Off	#7
	Pass Off	#127
#69	Total Off	#125
#20	Score Off	#114
#1	Sks Allowed	#81
#11	Rush Def	#37
#14	Total Def	#44
#55	Pass Def	#64
#39	Score Def	#91
#70	Sks By	#116
#33	Ypg Diff	#105
+7	Total TO's	+6

Score / Offense / Defense (Army)

Score		Yds	Net FD	TO's	FD	RA-RY	YPC	Comp Att	Pass	Sks	FD	RA-RY	YPC	Comp Att	Pass	Sks
at Georgia St	43-10	179	6	2	20	67-258	3.9	3-4	98	0	14	28-48	1.7	12-20	129	3
WKU	38-35	-61	1	0	23	67-339	5.1	5-6	77	1	22	19-42	2.2	28-40	435	3
Connecticut	52-21	279	15	1	24	67-397	5.9	3-4	107	0	9	19-116	6.1	11-26	109	2
Miami, OH	23-10	152	3	1	16	63-384	6.1	0-5	0	0	13	20-28	1.4	12-27	204	2
at Ball St	16-28	10	6	-2	18	61-213	3.5	5-15	66	0	12	26-36	1.4	17-28	233	2
Bye																
at Wisconsin	14-20	-44	-5	0	13	50-179	3.6	5-6	87	1	18	43-198	4.6	8-15	112	1
Wake Forest	56-70	-43	9	-2	31	70-416	5.9	10-13	179	1	22	23-180	7.8	23-29	458	0
Bye																
† Air Force	21-14	-79	-9	1	13	43-108	2.5	8-13	214	1	22	50-175	3.5	13-23	226	1
Bucknell	63-10	311	19	1	30	61-428	7.0	3-4	58	0	11	20-39	2.0	16-32	136	2
UMass	33-17	142	8	3	20	59-377	6.4	2-12	42	1	12	39-199	5.1	7-13	78	4
at Liberty	31-16	-62	0	2	20	62-220	3.5	3-4	102	1	20	25-79	3.2	24-47	305	5
Bye																
† Navy																
Average	35-23	71.3	4.8	0.6	21	61-302	5.0	55.3%	94	7.1%	16	28-104	3.7	57.0%	220	8.3%
Conference	35-45	-43.5	2.0	-1.0	22	60-298	5.0	78.9%	133	10.5%	20	33-189	5.7	70.5%	285	2.3%
Away	25-18	0.8	-0.4	0.6	17	57-196	3.5	57.1%	113		17	34-107	3.1	55.6%	201	9.0%

Navy Midshipmen

Midshipmen Logs

TM REC	FOE REC	TM CONF	FOE CONF	TM +/-	FOE +/-	AP TM	AP FOE	DATE	FOE	SCORE	W/L	TEAM OFF	DEF	ST	FOE OFF	DEF	ST
0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	121	114			9/4	Marshall	7-49	L	117	92	120	93	61	39
0-1	1-0	0-0	0-0	116	121			9/11	Air Force	3-23	L	117	88	120	74	103	101
0-2		0-0		113				9/18	Bye			122	88	127			
0-2	2-1	0-0	0-0	113	123			9/25	Houston	20-28	L	128	94	130	96	45	11
0-3	2-1	0-0	0-0	114	128			10/2	UCF	34-30	W	128	96	127	7	70	107
1-3	5-0	1-1	1-0	117	128		24	10/9	SMU	24-31	L	128	92	126	4	94	91
1-4	3-3	1-2	0-2	117	119			10/16	at Memphis	17-35	L	128	93	123	21	94	18
1-5	6-0	1-3	2-0	115	148		2	10/23	Cincinnati	20-27	L	128	101	126	24	3	23
1-6	3-4	1-4	2-1	119	119			10/30	at Tulsa	20-17	W	128	96	122	45	66	129
2-6	7-1	2-4	0-0	121	137		8	11/6	at Notre Dame	6-34	L	127	91	120	64	14	42
2-7		2-4		120				11/13	Bye			127	91	119			
2-7	6-4	2-4	4-2	120	128			11/20	East Carolina	35-38	L	128	93	116	53	64	65
2-8	3-8	2-5	1-6	120	99			11/27	at Temple	38-14	W	127	105	105	117	117	124
3-8		3-5		121				12/4	Bye			127	104	91			
3-8	8-3	3-5	3-0	121	122			12/11	† Army West Point			127	104	91	59	75	94

Score / Offense / Defense (Navy)

Score		Yds	Net FD	TO's	FD	RA-RY	YPC	Comp Att	Pass	Sks	FD	RA-RY	YPC	Comp Att	Pass	Sks
Marshall	7-49	-66	1	1	24	76-337	4.4	5-16	61	9	23	21-33	363	1		
Air Force	3-23	-157	-8	-1	6	34-36	1.1	3-10	32	5	14	59-176	3.0	3-10	49	1
Bye																
Houston	20-28	-89	-5	-1	15	52-190	3.7	4-8	98	2	20	34-120	3.5	22-31	257	2
UCF	34-30	80	9	0	26	76-348	4.6	2-4	58	1	17	29-148	5.1	16-27	178	0
SMU	24-31	-163	-10	2	12	53-177	3.3	4-7	64	3	22	29-80	2.8	30-40	324	1
at Memphis	17-35	-174	2	1	17	65-198	3.0	4-6	43	4	15	34-200	5.9	8-12	215	0
Cincinnati	20-27	37	8	0	22	67-192	2.9	11-17	116	1	14	21-95	4.5	18-30	176	1
at Tulsa	20-17	8	3	2	16	60-302	5.0	0-4	0	0	13	30-129	4.3	13-23	165	3
at Notre Dame	6-34	-246	-10	0	11	55-166	3.0	1-3	18	2	21	31-150	4.8	24-30	280	2
Bye																
East Carolina	35-38	-181	-7	0	17	44-345	7.8	4-4	37	1	24	35-158	4.5	27-32	405	0
at Temple	38-14	109	10	2	21	60-219	3.7	6-12	72	1	11	28-84	3.0	15-22	98	4
† Army West Point																
Average	20-30	-76.5	-0.6	0.5	17	58-228	3.9	48.4%	54	31.9%	18	33-131	4.0	67.9%	228	5.2%
Conference	26-28	-46.6	1.3	0.8	18	60-246	4.1	56.5%	61	21.0%	17	30-127	4.2	68.7%	227	5.1%
Home	21-33	-75.0	-1.2	0.3	18	58-239	4.1	50.0%	61	34.5%	19	34-126	3.7	66.9%	249	2.3%

Position by Position Edges

	Army	Navy
Army QB/WR vs. Navy DB's	0.34	
Army RB's vs. Navy LB's	1.33	
Army OL vs. Navy DL	1.32	
Army DL vs. Navy OL	1.72	
Army LB'S vs. Navy RB's	0.14	
Army DB's vs. Navy QB/WR	1.27	
Army ST's vs. Navy ST's	1.00	
Army K vs. Navy K		
Army Coaches vs. Navy Coaches		
Army Pts vs. Navy Pts	7.12	0.00

POSITIONAL EDGE AWARDED TO: Army By 7.12 Points

Projected Box Score

Projected Rushing: Army 243 yards — Navy 208 yards

Projected Passing: Army 63 yards — Navy 79 yards

Projected Yardage Total: Army 306 yards — Navy 287 yards

Projected Final Score: Army 23 points — Navy 18 points

Experience Rankings: Army 54 — Navy 102

Team Schedule Strength: Army 123 — Navy 32

Phil's Forecast

Category	Team & Margin
Las Vegas Line	Army By 7
Las Vegas Total	34.5 Points
+/- Ratings	Army By 1.0
Game Grade	Army By 7.0
Computer Yards	Army 306-287
Computer Points	Army 23-18
Phil Steele	Army by 3

Last year was played at Army for first time s/1943. Army had 3-2 FD edge in the fog and led 3-0 HT. Navy got a 52 yd run down to 1 early 3Q but was SOD. Early 4Q Navy fumble on own 13 set up Army TD. Army added FG and safety. Army 8-4 FD edge for game in 15-0 shutout win. Army is 10-4 ATS in neutral sites under Monken upsetting Air Force this year in Arlington 21-14. Army is 11-15 ATS as SD favorites under Monken. Navy is 14-9-1-1 ATS as SD dogs since '14. This is the first meeting at Metlife Stadium and the 1st in New Jersey since 2002 when Navy won in Giants stadium in what would be the first for 14 straight wins in the series. While Navy has only been a dog 5 times in this series since 1997 they are 3-2 ATS but their last outright upset was 2000 (+2). Navy comes into this just 3-9 but has taken on the much tougher schedule (#8 vs #69) and are on a 7-2 ATS run including only losing to Cincinnati by 7. While the overall AGG has Army by 12.2 the last 4 weeks has Navy playing at an AGG of 95.3 and Army at 91.0 so that would favor Navy outright. Navy is +7' so those factors clearly have me siding with the underdog Midshipmen here. If you have been reading my writeups thru the years you know that I ALWAYS play the UNDER in this game and it is an automatic play. The first time I used a big play on it was 2007 when I had UNDER 65 and the final set 38-3. Since then the totals have fallen into the 50's and then the 40's and now the last two years the upper 30's but I keep playing it. Go look at the Phil Steele Plus last 24 year matchups and you will see 15 STRAIGHT UNDERS in this series. You know how I feel about streaks (when you play on a streak you can win MANY times and you lose only once. When option teams face each other they know how to defend the option and the constant run games shrinks the clock so there are less plays. Giving me even more confidence despite the low 35 number is that Navy's offense gains 87 ypg less than their opp's allow but their defense holds foes to 65 ypg below their season average. Army's D is holding foes to 61 ypg below their season avg and despite a soft schedule the offense is putting up just 5 ypg above opp avg's. You knew the play on this before you even started reading didn't you? I will go with the UNDER and lean with the dog.

Army 13 Navy 10

Category	Team & Margin	Phil's Forecast:
Las Vegas Line		This will be the lone Friday Night FCS playoff game. Series is tied at 1-1 with JMU winning their first National Title in 2002, 31-21 over Montana but the Grizzlies winning 35-27 in the semi-finals in 2008. #6 seed Montana is making their longest trip of the season (2,299 miles) to Harrisonburg, Virginia to play #3 seed James Madison. Both teams are off wins over foes with top 3 offenses. Montana got revenge for a regular season loss to Eastern Washington. They trailed EW 21-10 in 2Q but outscored them 47-20 the rest of the way. That was despite being outgained 608-368 & out FD's 32-13 as they were +2 TO's including a 55 yd IR td. Montana QB Cam Humphrey threw for just 160 yds but had a 3-0 ratio The Dukes only led Southeastern 14-10 after 1Q but led 38-13 at HT & 59-13 into the 4Q. That was despite only finishing with a 484-439 yd edge & 21-20 FD edge but had a 5-1 TO edge including a 43 yd IR td. JMU QB Cole Johnson threw for 321 yds with a 5-0 ratio and rushed for 44 yds (11.0) & another td. Both these teams have solid defenses. Montana is # 8 in scoring defense (15.33 ppg) & #18 in Total defense (318 ypg). James Madison is #9 in scoring defense (15.83) & #5 in Total defense (268 ypg). JMU does have a bit of an edge on offense putting up 41 ppg (#4 FCS) & 443 ypg compared to Montana's 32 ppg (#28) & 367 ypg. Montana enters the game with a +8 TO margin but JMU leads the FCS with a +17 Margin. For the season JMU is #2 overall in my game grades compared to Montana at a still impressive #14 (JMU by 10.2). My computer calls for James Madison to win 31-21 and with Montana making this long trek across country I will definitely lean with the Dukes at home.
	James Madison By 7.5	
Las Vegas Total		
	45.5 Points	
+/- Ratings		
	James Madison By 17.0	
Game Grade		
	James Madison By 9.3	
Computer Yards		
	James Madison 369-259	
Computer Points		
	James Madison 34-21	
Phil Steele		
	James Madison by 13	**James Madison 34 Montana 21**

Category	Team & Margin	Phil's Forecast:
Las Vegas Line	South Dakota St By 7	Only prior meeting was in the playoffs in 2016 when South Dakota St won 10-7 at home. South Dakota St is the only unseeded team left in the FCS playoffs as they "upset" (were favored in game) #4 seed Sacramento St last week. That saved #5 seed Villanova a cross country trip and has the Wildcats hosting this week's game. The Jackrabbits who spent last year's playoffs hosting 3 playoffs games will need 3 straight road wins (have 1) to return to the FCS Championship for a 2nd straight season. Last week they were favored over Big Sky Champion Sacramento St, who had avoided 3 of the other 4 Big Sky playoff teams in the regular season. SDSU led 24-0 with 1:43 left 2Q. They allowed a FG as time expired in the 1H & then were outscored 16-0 in the 2H but held on to win 24-19. They were outgained 480-363 & out FD'd 28-19. QB Chris Oladokun hit just 12 of 23 for 158 yds with a 0-0 ratio. Last week CAA Champ Villanova led Holy Cross 14-0 at HT but were outscored 16-7 in the 2H. They were outgained 347-281 & out FD'd 23-14 as QB Daniel Smith struggled hitting just 8 of 22 for 133 yds with a 0-0 ratio. South Dakota St has the offensive edge avg 37.7 ppg (#8) & 440 ypg (#14) compared to Villanova avg just 30.8 ppg (#33) & 380 ypg (#45). Villanova has the defensive edge allowing 15.2 ppg (#7) & 283 ypg (#3), while SDSU is allowing 18.8 ppg (#15) & 344 ypg (#35). My computer has SDSt winning 27-26 and Villanova is +7 but my AGG and last 4 weeks AGG both have Villanova winning outright. The Wildcats are at home with SDSt making a 2nd straight road trip and a long one at that and I will call for Villanova to win outright.
Las Vegas Total	47.5 Points	
+/- Ratings	Villanova By 0.0	
Game Grade	Villanova By 4.7	
Computer Yards	Villanova 378-340	
Computer Points	South Dakota St 27-26	
Phil Steele	Villanova by 1	
		BEST BET: ★ Villanova 28 South Dakota St 27

Category	Team & Margin	Phil's Forecast:
Las Vegas Line	North Dakota St By 25.5	First meeting. North Dakota St is 6-0 all time vs Southern Conference foes, while this is ETSU's first game against a MVFC Foe. This is the Bison's 12th straight FCS Quarterfinals. Last week the 7th seeded Buccaneers after leading Kennesaw St 17-7 early 3Q allowed 24 unanswered to trail 31-17 with 5:02 left. ETSU scored a td with 1:28 left, recovered the onside & scored a td with :35 left. Down by 1 they went for the 2 pt conv & the win & got it for their fifth 4Q comeback win of the season. QB Tyler Riddell did hit 22 of 35 for 238 yds & a 3-1 ratio despite being sacked 3 times. #2 seed NDSU dominated fellow MVFC member Southern Illinois last week, leading 24-7 at HT & coasting to a 38-7 win. They finished with a with a 477-281 yd edge & and an impressive 29-14 FD edge. The Bison rushed for 389 yds with 5 players rushing for 45 yds or more led by RB TaMeril Williams with 112 (6.6 ypc, 2 td). These teams are close on the offensive side. NDSU is avg 35.5 ppg (#11 FCS) & 436 ypg (#18), while ETSU is close behind avg 35.2 ppg (#12) & 430 ypg (#20). The defensive side clearly favors the Bison as they lead the FCS in Scoring defense (11.7 ppg) & #4 in total defense (264 ypg). ETSU is #27 in scoring defense (22.3 ppg) & #67 in total defense (382 ypg). The Bison also rank #1 in the FCS in my Game Grades while ETSU is #30 (NDSt by 21.6). This looks like a lopsided game and it should be as my computer calls for NDSU to win 36-17. At the start of the year I picked North Dakota St to win it all and my computer has they by 26 but the line is 26 so with East Tenn St a scrappy team I will call this right around the number.
Las Vegas Total	49 Points	
+/- Ratings	North Dakota St By 22.0	
Game Grade	North Dakota St By 20.8	
Computer Yards	North Dakota St 473-277	
Computer Points	North Dakota St 42-16	
Phil Steele	North Dakota St by 26	**North Dakota St 42 East Tennessee St 16**

Category	Team & Margin	Phil's Forecast:
Las Vegas Line	Sam Houston St By 7	Sam Houston won the only prior meeting 34-16 in the 2012 quarter finals. Returning FCS Champ & #1 seed Sam Houston have now won 22 straight games. However, they had to fight for their playoff lives last week against Incarnate Word as the lead changed 9 times. After trailing 14-10 2Q, the Bearcats led 31-21 at HT. They fell behind 35-34 in 4Q & allowed UIW to tie the game at 42 with 7:50 left. After scoring a td with 2:07 left the defense stopped UIW at the SH 1 on 4th&goal with :08 left to preserve the win. They were outgained 600-556 in a TO free game. QB Eric Schmid threw for 210 yds (45 rush) while RB Ramon Jefferson led with 166 rush (7.5, 2 td). #8 seed Montana St had their own interesting week, as their former NC State transfer & starting QB Matthew Mckay went in the transfer portal 2 days before their playoff game vs UT Martin. That had freshman QB Tommy Mellott making his first career start in the playoff & did I mention the game was played in high winds. Mellott hit just 8 of 20 for 51 yds but was the top rusher with 180 yds (7.8, 2 td). RB Isaiah Ifanse was close behind with 176 rush (6.3, 1 td). Sam Houston has the offensive edge as they have the #3 scoring (43.0 ppg) & #4 Total offense (496 ypg) while Montana St is #44 in scoring (28.9 ppg) & #29 in total offense (411 ypg). The Bobcats however have the defensive edge. Montana St has the #2 scoring (12.7 ppg) & # 8 total defense (272 ypg), while Sam Houston is #20 in scoring (19.6 ppg) & #36 in total defense (345 ypg). The Bobcats have played a tougher schedule (#48-#68) and rank higher in my game grades (#6-#10). While those factors and the fact that my computer only has Sam Houston winning 27-22 as a 7 pt HF, would normally have me on board with the underdog Bobcats. However, despite his impressive debut, it if hard to go with a freshman making his first road start against the returning FCS Champions. My computer has it 27-21 but with the QB situation I will add some points to that.
Las Vegas Total	49 Points	
+/- Ratings	Sam Houston St By 16.0	
Game Grade	Sam Houston St By 4.7	
Computer Yards	Montana St 372-366	
Computer Points	Sam Houston St 27-21	
Phil Steele	Sam Houston St by 13	**Sam Houston St 30 Montana St 17**