

Division IAA Football Championship - Quarterfinals

(#1) MONTANA 35 Stephen F. Austin 31 - The Big Sky had 3 teams make the playoffs but only top seed Montana made it out of the first round. Montana leads the series 3-0 including a playoff win in 1995, but they last met in 1998. The Grizzlies showed what 20 years of playoff experience can mean as they trailed first timer South Dakota St 48-21 in the 3Q but didn't panic, scoring 40 unanswered points in the final 20:25. They had a 391-324 edge in a game where each team had 4 TO's and each had a special teams score. SFA is off a win over Big Sky member Eastern Washington 44-33 in a game they only trailed once (3-0) for less than 3:00. Despite being outgained 595-563 they had a commanding 37-12 lead in the 3Q. Montana beat that same EWU team, 41-34 but was outgained 489-353. However, Montana has won 16 straight home games and has the playoff experience edge as this is SFA's first playoff appearance since 1995 and the Lumberjacks must now leave the comfort and warmth of home (68°) and travel to chilly Montana in December (expect 34°). Look for the Grizzlies to make it one step closer to their 2nd straight Championship Game.

(#4) RICHMOND 21 Appalachian St 20 - Appalachian St is following a similar playoff path to last year as after a close win over South Carolina St they played Richmond in the quarterfinals, but this time they must face them on the road. They hope this year will be different as they lost 33-13 despite a 362-359 yd edge as QB Edwards was intercepted a career worst 5 times which led to 4 scores for the Spiders. This is the 3rd straight year these teams have met in the playoffs as in 2007 App St won 55-35 in the semifinals on the way to their third straight FCS Championship. The Mountaineers had a season high 5 TO's vs SCSt LW (even TO margin), including an IR TD that tied the score at 10-10. They were tied 13-13 in the 4Q and stopped SCSt on a 4th & 1 at the ASU15 and scored the game winning TD on a 50 yd fumble return. While App St had a 302-229 yd edge, QB Edwards threw 3 int and was held to -1 yd rushing by the Bulldogs. Richmond had a 13-3 halftime lead and a 16-6 4Q edge and held on for a 16-13 win over SoCon member Elon. The Spiders had a 400-336 yd edge and won despite a -3 TO margin. The Mountaineers had a 486-271 yd edge vs Elon in a 27-10 win that decided the SoCon Champion. In what should be a close game probably determined by TO's, we will side with the home team.

(#2) VILLANOVA 24 New Hampshire 21 - Both teams were knocked out in the quarterfinals LY. This year all 4 CAA teams advanced in the playoffs, but that number will drop to at least 3 as CAA Champion Villanova will get a chance at revenge vs a New Hampshire team that handed them their only conf loss this year. Villanova leads the all-time series 10-9 but has lost 3 of the last 4 but did win the last meeting at home. In the earlier meeting of the Wildcats, NH won 28-24 at home with a 368-352 yd edge. New Hampshire was the only road team to win in the opening round this year with an impressive 49-13 win at McNeese St. They led just 21-13 at the half but scored 28 unanswered points in the 2H and finished the game with a 460-326 yd edge. That is even more impressive as McNeese came in with the #2 scoring (37.0 ppg) and #5 total offense (443.0) in the FCS. Villanova won a shootout with Patriot League Champion Holy Cross 38-28 where the teams combined for over 950 yds of offense with neither team turning the ball over. Villanova only led 35-28 in the 4Q despite finishing with a 537-393 yd edge. Since their 1st meeting Villanova has won 6 straight while NH went 5-2. We look for Villanova to take the rematch and move on.

(#3) SOUTHERN ILLINOIS 20 William & Mary 14 - First meeting. SIU is in their 7th straight playoff and has been knocked out the last 2 yrs by a CAA team. W&M is in their 1st playoff since 2004. Both teams are off dominating opening round wins. W&M shutout Weber St 38-0 with a 408-161 yd with a 5-0 TO edge and held WSU to just 20 net yds in the 2H. SIU allowed EIU a TD in the 1Q, but then scored 48 unanswered pts the rest of the game and finished with a 389-189 yd edge with a 6-2 TO margin. Now after hosting a team that had to travel in from Utah, the Tribe must hit the road and face an SIU team that has won 11 straight since just falling short 31-28 to FBS Marshall in their season opener. W&M's 2 losses were to fellow CAA members Villanova (#2 seed) and Richmond (#4 seed) both on the road. W&M has only allowed 1 team over 20 pts this year (Nova 28) but SIU has scored 24 or more in every game and has scored 42 or more in 5 games this year. Some streak must be broken, so look for the third time to be the charm as we will call for SIU to get the win over the CAA team.