New Hampshire (10-2)

Rodney Landers and the Dukes host Villanova on Saturday. JMU beat Wofford 38-35 to advance.

Northern Iowa (11-2)


Richmond (10-3)

Wide receiver Kevin Grayson and the Spiders travel to three-time defending national champions, Appalachian State. UR advanced with a 38-10 win over Eastern Kentucky.

Villanova (10-2)

Running back Angelo Babbaro and the Wildcats lead No. 3 Northern Iowa, after winning 29-20 at Southern Illinois.

Weber State (10-3)

Quarterback Cameron Higgins and the Wildcats prevailed in a 49-35 shootout at Cal Poly and will travel to Montana for round two.

Montana (12-1)

The Grizzlies host Weber State. Montana advanced with a 31-13 win over Texas State.

Appalachian State (11-2)

Quarterback Armanti Edwards and the Mountaineers host Richmond, after handling South Carolina State, 37-21.

Photo attributions clockwise starting with Richmond:

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Baffling Call Turns Game in Dukes Favor

When you play option football, it really helps to have really good linemen — two of them are having shoulder surgery, I think after the season. They’re the ones healthy that are playing. So we’re struggling at linebacker and I think Wofford did a good job exposing us.

— MICKEY MATTHEWS, JMU football coach

JMU coach Mickey Matthews and staff made two critical calls late in Saturday’s game that ultimately led to a 28-27 loss to Appalachian State.

Wofford coach Mike Ayers and company also made a fatal error Saturday in Harrisonburg. It wasn’t as obvious as JMU missing on a field goal and it hit the own 32-yard line, or running the ball with 22 seconds left and fumbling (instead of knowing to set up a chip-shot field goal).

Wofford had the ball late, still sticks by the first call, but conceded that he shouldn’t have put an experienced freshman in a situation like the one where Jamal Sullivan coughed it up.

“Never, never, never, never,” Matthews said when asked if decisions like those at App State affect a coach’s play-calling in the future. “An answer like that ends both stubbornness and confidence. No two coaches are alike in a pressure-filled playoff game against a strong Southern Conference team. Luckily for the Dukes, they came out on top this year and will avoid any serious scrutiny of the Xs and Os.

While it’s obvious that the losers are put under serious scrutiny, and Ayers’ explanation of a wasted second down with about 10 minutes left in the fourth quarter definitely didn’t erase stubbornness.

Matthews said two first downs on the ground, after Wofford took a 31-28 lead Wofford three downs on second and nine. Ben Widmyer’s pass was thrown well out of the reach of Brenton Bersin and the Terriers came up a yard short in the next two plays.

What was available was the running game with JMU’s shoddy tackling. Wofford would have likely gotten that pivotal first down — and as much of a Harvey’s as it gets the first two touchdowns of the half, when Wofford took 16-14 lead early in the second quarter. Wofford and Widmyer did run two更多 times — both short and safe incompletion... compared to 27 carries. Seven consecutive runs set up the tie-breaking field goal and two consecutive runs ended with a fumble... bulldozing touchdown from Landers.

That’s what you call a nutmeg but smart football. JMU did what Wofford should have: go back to what made them the No. 1 team in the country: running the football.

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Big Fourth-and-6 Stop Keys JMU Victory

By WES SHAW
The Breeze

Dane Romero needed six yards to extend Wofford's drive and keep its hopes of winning alive. The go-ahead.

A fourth-and-6 stop by redshirt freshmen Pat Williams and Vidal Nelson gave JMU the ball and all the momentum it would need to advance to the second round of the NCAA tournament.

JMU held on to beat Wofford 38-35. Wofford controlled the game with just over nine minutes remaining and held the Dukes holding onto a slim, 31-28 lead.

"We knew they were gonna go for it," senior safety Marcus Haywood said. "It was very big for us to get those stops. We just had to step up and make big plays."

In between missed tackles and an overall poor defensive effort, JMU's fourth quarter, fourth-down stop negated all its many defensive miscues throughout the game. A stop when it mattered most gave the Dukes just enough to squeak by Wofford.

At the time, the Terriries were 2-of-2 on fourth down attempts, easily converting each try. They finished the game 3-of-4, while JMU finished 2-2.

"We've probably gone for it on fourth down more than anyone in the country," Wofford coach Mike Ayers said. "We just believe in that and it's part of our makeup."

Wofford has indeed converted more fourth down attempts than any FCS team this year, with 35. The Terriries are 14th, however, in conversion percentage, at 62.9 percent (19 of 30). The Dukes lead the nation at 72.9 percent (19 of 24 conversions).

The threat of defending the JMU rushing attack, especially Rodney Landers, was even more inclined to go for it on fourth down Saturday.

"We knew going into that game that if we gave them too many opportunities with the football, it would be very difficult to win," Ayers said. "Our goal was to just keep it away from them."

Although it was not defending Rodney Landers, JMU's defense had nearly as much trouble as Wofford's on Saturday.

The Dukes surrendered 431 yards of total offense, 301 of which came on the ground. It was the most rushing yards the Dukes have given up all year. 431 total yards allowed is also the second-highest number for JMU in 2008. UMass gained 443 yards against the Dukes in early September, but JMU prevailed 52-38.

After Romero was denied a first down and the Dukes gained possession, tailback Eugene Holloman was called on to ensure JMU held onto its momentum. The senior had four straight carries after Wofford's turnover on downs, accounting for 35 yards and three first downs.

"That felt good," Holloman said. "On the line they just got after it and it was easy for me."

JMU's defense will get a chance to redeem itself Saturday against Villanova. The Dukes had trouble tackling against the Wildcats in late October, but only surrendered 19 points. After Patrick Sullivan and Vidal Nelson combined to make a huge fourth-and-6 stop in the fourth quarter, senior running back Eugene Holloman had four straight carries for 35 yards and three first downs. Holloman also broke open a 34-yard TD run early in the game to get JMU on the board.
Madison escapes Terrier third-quarter surge, wins 38-35

By MATTHEW McGOVERN

James Madison (11-1)

Wofford 35

First-round loss to Wofford for JMU coach Mickey Matthews and the Dukes would have gone for a touchdown on fourth down, even in a late 12-7 win over Wofford on Saturday.

But late in the fourth quarter of Madison first-round NCAA playoff game, Rodney Landers left nothing to chance.

On third-and-goal from the 6-yard line, Madison rushed toward the end zone — leaving halfback Dane Romero, who had been pushed outside the end zone by the Bulldogs, to deliver a key hit on Landers.

"It's a weight lifted off your shoulders," JMU quarterback Rodney Landers rushed for 166 yards and a touchdown in JMU's first-round playoff game against Wofford. He also went 8-of-15 with three touchdowns in the air and drew high praise from Wofford coach Mike Ayers, who said of Landers, "The cat's got it all."

Landers said he was "a big guy carrying the football and he gave great effort," Ayers said. "I didn't think that three [points] was gonna do us any good."

Fourth-down dramatics weren't necessary this time, and after a 14-play Wofford scoring drive that brought the score to 38-35, JMU recovered an onside kick to seal the win.

"It's a weight lifted off your shoulders," JMU senior safety Marcus Haywood said. "We've been talking about that this whole past week and it feels good to come in and get this win and get to the second round and hopefully we can keep it moving."

The Dukes will host Villanova on Saturday in the second round of the NCAA playoffs, after the Wildcats beat Colgate 55-28 in their first-round game held at Villanova Stadium. Redemption will likely be on the mind of the Wildcats after their last-second, 23-19 loss to JMU on Oct. 25.

JMU quarterback Rodney Landers rushed for 166 yards and a touchdown in JMU's first-round playoff game against Wofford. He also went 8-of-15 with three touchdowns in the air and drew high praise from Wofford coach Mike Ayers, who said of Landers, "The cat's got it all."

Wofford coach Mike Ayers called halfback Dane Romero (left) the Terriers' best player after the game. Romers rushed 25 times for 87 yards and four touchdowns, but could not convert a crucial fourth-and-6 play in the fourth quarter. Halfback Mike Rucker (middle) rushed 11 times for 107 yards and a touchdown, as JMU struggled to contain his explosiveness on the edge. Quarterback Ben Widmyer had 22 rushes for 56 yards, while also completing eight of 14 passes for 94 yards.
The second round match up between the Mountaineers and the Spiders is a rematch of the NCAA tournament semifinal game from last year. App St. is the three-time defending FCS national champion while Richmond is looking to reach the third round of the playoffs for the second time in school history.

Richmond (10-3)

Richmond defensive lineman Lawrence Sidurdy was named All-CAA First Team, and has 47 tackles for the Spiders. While Richmond is new to the NCAA tournament, the Mountaineers have been dominant at home this season, and knocking off the defending champs will be a tall order for the Spiders.

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Richmond quarterback Armanti Edwards had arguably the best game of his career as Appalachian State advanced into the second round of the NCAA playoffs. Edwards’ 433 passing yards in the Mountaineers’ 37-21 win over South Carolina State set a school record for passing yards in a game.

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The Breeze FCS Football Playoffs Guide
Monday, December 1, 2008

Second Round of NCAAs

Four CAA Teams advance to semifinals, but UNH vs. Maine rematch foiled by Northern Iowa

New Hampshire vs. UNI

New Hampshire kicker Tom Bishop punched the Wildcats’ ticket into the second round Saturday. The senior had five field goals, including one from 47 yards out, to lead UNH past host Southern Illinois in the opening round of the NCAA tournament. While UNH quarterback R.J. Toman completed just 16 of 32 passes for 257 yards, no touchdowns and three interceptions, Bishop’s right leg assured his team would live to see another day.

UNH will now travel to play at No. 3 seed Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. The Wildcats are 10-2, having won three straight and six of seven. Their only losses this year have come to Villanova and a 38-34 stunner from William & Mary in Durham, N.H.

With the win, UNH snipped Southern Illinois’ seven-game winning streak. The Salukis finished their season at 9-3, having reached the NCAA tournament after winning the Missouri Valley Conference.

UNH will face an 11-2 Northern Iowa team that lost a 27-24 stunner to Southern Illinois earlier this year. No. 3 UNI will be seeking its 10th straight win and its 12th in its last 13 games.

Weber State vs. Montana

After losing its season finale to Eastern Washington, Weber State rebounded with a 49-35 win at Cal Poly. Weber State was led by sophomore quarterback Cameron Higgins, who threw for 399 yards and two touchdowns. Junior running back Terren Smith also added 157 yards and two scores on the ground.

Other than its slip against EWU, Weber State boasts an impressive resume — its two other losses came at Hawaii and Utah, both Football Bowl Subdivision (former I-A) teams.

Despite the Wildcats’ win over Montana in early October, Weber State was sent to Cal Poly for its first-round game, while the Grizzlies were given the No. 4 seed in the playoffs and the privilege of hosting through the first two rounds.

Weber State will look for further redemption Saturday in Missoula, Mont., as it plays the Grizzlies once again. Montana advances to a second-round matchup with Weber State after a 31-15 win over Texas State. Montana outscored the Bobcats 24-3 in the second half after trailing 7-10 through two quarters. The Grizzlies improved their record to 12-1 and extended their winning streak to eight.

At 8-4, Texas State was in the playoffs via an automatic bid after winning the Southland Conference. No. 23 in The Sports Network poll, Texas State had won three straight and four of five before losing to Montana.

As the No. 4 seed of the NCAA playoffs, Montana’s lone loss came Oct. 4 against fellow Big Sky member Weber State. Idaho State will be given an opportunity to avenge its 45-28 loss against WSU this weekend at home.

The Grizzlies survived the rest of their regular season without losing another game, and the NCAA selection committee rewarded them with a seed, while the 9-3 Wildcats were sent to Cal Poli in the first round as an unseeded team.

Top 3 Rushing Performances, First Round Games
1. Chase Reynolds, Montana
   38 carries, 233 yards
2. Jonathan Dally, Cal Poly
   23 carries, 177 yards
3. Rodney Landers, JMU
   24 carries, 146 yards

Top 3 Passing Performances, First Round Games
1. Armanti Edwards, Appalachian State
   29-41, 433 yards
2. Cameron Higgins, Weber State
   21-33, 399 yards
3. Bradley George, Texas State
   21-33, 259 yards

Top 3 Receiving Performances, First Round Games
1. Tim Toone, Weber State
   10 catches, 199 yards
2. Mike Phillips, Weber State
   3 catches, 121 yards
3. Mike Boyle, New Hampshire
   7 catches, 131 yards

Weber State tailback Tyroo Smith has rushed for 1,465 yards and 20 touchdowns this season.

Weber State vs. Montana

New Hampshire Athletic Public Relations

New Hampshire quarterback R.J. Toman has passed for 27 scores with only 11 interceptions in 12 games this season for the Wildcats.
LOOK BACK

1. Mickey Matthews celebrates his team’s victory over Villanova on Oct. 25.
2. Scotty McGee has four kick return touchdowns and 854 total return yards in 2008, providing JMU with a vital spark on numerous occasions.
3. Fans rush the field after JMU’s thrilling come-from-behind victory against No. 1 Appalachian State. A school record crowd of 17,163 was in attendance to witness Madison’s 25-32 victory.
4. Rockeed McCarter and Scott Lemm celebrate a touchdown against Villanova.
5. Rodney Landers rushed for 133 yards on 13 carries in JMU’s 56-0 victory over Hofstra on Oct. 4. It was Madison’s largest-ever margin of victory in a conference game.
7. Rodney Landers falls to the ground in disbelief after JMU’s improbable, last-second win over Villanova.
8. Hassan Abdul-Wahid recovers a Delaware fumble early in JMU’s 41-7 homecoming victory against the Blue Hens.

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The new Urban Exchange building lets you live your life right in the heart of it all. With completion scheduled for August 2009, Urban Exchange features four levels of condominiums (both for sale and lease), two levels of underground parking, and 12,000 square feet of retail space at street level, making it a central hub for commerce in downtown Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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