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Pigskin

Crystal Ball

0

Tech has what it takes to make a run for CUSA crown

By Brian Trahan
editor@rustonleader.com

It's not quite a state of the union address, but more of a fact-finding mission.

Bye week came to Ruston this week with an undefeated record and left Joe Aillet Stadium with a loss.

A bye week couldn't have come at a better time for the Louisiana Tech Bulldogs, as they sit 2-3 on the season on the heels of yet another one-score defeat that could have been a different story.

While the Dogs are 1-0 versus Bye week, they are 0-3 versus Fourth Quarter, and following last week's 34-27 defeat at No. 23 North Carolina State, Tech head coach Skip Holtz wanted no part of moral victories.

"I feel bad for our guys with how hard they are playing that we're just not able to come away with a victory in these tough football games. We've played against some really good opponents. There is no moral victory," Holtz said following the loss to the Wolfpack.

Tech had its chances in that game and showed a lot of resiliency. N.C. State forged ahead by two touchdowns twice in the second half, yet Tech bounced back and had a chance to tie the game at the end, but alas, it was not meant to be.

Much like the Mississippi State and SMU games, Tech couldn't make the plays it needed to make as time was running out.

Photo by Darrell James

Louisiana Tech quarterback Austin Kendall rolls out to complete a pass against SMU earlier this season. Kendall is averaging nearly 300 yards passing per game this season.

"It's tough for this to be our third loss in that locker room to be so close but yet to be 2-3 as a football team," Holtz said.

The Bulldogs are 1-0 in Conference USA and after the hiatus this weekend, will be playing nothing but conference games from here on out.

There is reason for optimism, so it's time to take stock heading into the next stretch of the schedule.

KEEP THE QB HEALTHY

If there is one enormous statement to make regarding the rest of the season it would have to

be keeping quarterback Austin Kendall healthy.

Kendall missed the North Texas game at home due to what is believed to be COVID measures, but he returned against N.C. State to play perhaps his best game of the season.

With him, the Bulldogs were on the verge of beating Mississippi State and N.C. State on the road and had undefeated SMU on the ropes.

Kendall is thriving in Ruston. In the four games he has played, he has completed 89-of-145 passes at a clip of 61% with 1,178 yards passing. He has tossed 10 touchdowns with 5 in-

terceptions.

The most impressive part of Kendall's season thus far has to be his penchant for escaping the pocket and making something happen with his legs. He has rushed for 169 yards on 33 carries (5.1 avg.) with 3 more touchdowns.

Without him, the Bulldogs struggled to generate offense the final three quarters against North Texas.

BATTLE TESTED

There won't be a team left on the schedule as good as N.C. State, MSU or SMU. Their combined record is 13-3. MSU has a win over Texas A&M and the

Wolfpack took down Clemson. SMU has wins over TCU and Navy.

The rest of the schedule is a mixed bag of results and records. The next two games are against Texas El-Paso and Texas-San Antonio — teams that entered Saturday with a record of 9-1. That is a bit deceiving.

UTEP's best win is against New Mexico and the one team they played with any clout is Boise State — which handed them a 54-13 beatdown.

Unlike UTEP, UTSA is a legit contender in conference play. They are 5-0 and own wins over the Big Ten's Illinois and American member Memphis. The good thing is, Tech gets them at home for Homecoming.

ESPN's matchup predictor gives Tech a 46% chance of beating UTSA. The only other game where Tech will be an underdog is against Alabama-Birmingham on the road on Nov. 6. ESPN gives the Bulldogs a 30% chance to win.

The rest of the games against Old Dominion, Southern Miss, Charlotte and Rice feature Tech as a decided favorite.

DEFENSE WILL BE DIFFERENT

If you go by statistics alone, you would probably surmise that Tech's defense has struggled. Statistics can be like trying to see a hidden image within a painting. You can stare at them for hours and never see what you need to see.

At first glance, Tech's defense is giving up 33 points per game and 472 yards every four quarters.

Those numbers will go down and they will go down rather quickly.

Having played high-powered offenses in every game thus far, the Bulldogs have been pounded, stretched and tossed about like kneaded dough.

From this point, they won't face a Will Rogers type quarterback at MSU, or Tanner Mordecai at SMU. They won't likely face anyone as talented as Southeast Louisiana's Cole Kelley. They won't face a running back tandem like N.C. State's Ricky Person and Zonovan Knight.

The Bulldogs are not void of talent on that side of the ball. Trey Baldwin and Tyler Grubbs have 39 tackles apiece through five games, while Baylen Buchanan and BeeJay Williamson have played well on the back end. The key for the defense is to keep the defensive line healthy. Brothers Ben Bell and Levi Bell have been a handful thus far, but have been banged up the past few weeks.

KASH IN THE KARMA

Tech's season so far has been an exercise in Murphy's Law toward the end of games. If anything can go wrong, it will.

Tech takes a 20-point lead over MSU into the fourth quarter and loses when a field goal falls short with no time left.

See WHAT IT TAKES, page 2

Photo courtesy of LSU

With a big loss at Kentucky Saturday and a 3-3 record, is Ed Orgeron's seat on fire at LSU?

Seat Getting Hotter

LSU roughed up by Kentucky 42-21 to fall to 3-3

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP)—Will Levis threw for three touchdowns and ran for two more scores and No. 16 Kentucky dominated LSU throughout in a 42-21 blow-out Saturday night.

The Wildcats have their first 6-0 start since 1950, improved to 4-0 in the Southeastern Conference and earned a second consecutive win over a conference heavyweight. Their biggest challenge looms at No. 2 Georgia next week in an East Division showdown, and they'll enter with their best performance since the season opener.

Levis had a huge hand in that, with the quarterback bouncing back from a lackluster stretch to account for three second-half scores alone as Kentucky pulled away to a 35-7 lead early in

the fourth quarter. The Penn State transfer sandwiched TD passes of 25, 11 and 3 yards between rushing scores of 5 and 1 yards as the Wildcats outgained the Tigers 475-408, though much of LSU's yardage came after the game was out of reach.

Levis finished 14 of 17 passing for 145 yards. Chris Rodriguez Jr. rushed for 147 yards and a touchdown on 16 carries.

LSU (3-3, 1-2) sought to rebound from last week's 24-19 loss to No. 18 Auburn. Instead, the Tigers played catch-up and by the time Tyrion Davis-Price rushed for the first of two TDs midway through the third quarter, the Tigers trailed 21-0.

Kentucky answered with two more scores to pad its lead.

Davis-Price rushed for

147 yards on 22 carries, while quarterback Max Johnson completed 22 of 38 passes for 261 yards and a 41-yard TD to Malik Nabers. LSU star receiver Kayshon Boutte, who entered with nine TD receptions, left the field on a cart after injuring his leg in the fourth quarter.

THE TAKEAWAY

LSU: Social media speculation about the future of Tigers coach Ed Orgeron began before halftime of a game and is certain to increase in which they were dominated on both sides of the ball.

A lost fumble on the opening drive set up one Kentucky touchdown before LSU turned it over on downs to set up another TD and a hole it never came close to climbing from.

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PREP EXTRA

Panthers back on track with 44-27 romp over Lakeside

By Josh Evans
josh@rustonleader.com

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Close But No Cigar

24

Alcorn State holds off Grambling charge late

By Jessieca Carr
jessieca@rustonleader.com

SIBLEY — Lincoln Prep shook back from last week’s loss and crashed Lakeside High’s homecoming celebration with a 44-27 win.

How’d it go down?

In a first quarter when only the Warriors would score seven points with a fumble returned on fourth down by CJ Watts for a touchdown and a successful PAT afterwards, the rest of the game was all offense for the Panthers, as they would ruin pomp and circumstance plans by taking the lead and keeping it.

Lincoln Prep was plagued by six first quarter penalties, but with a late first quarter drive the Panthers would capitalize on their very first play at the top of the second with Ty’Rell Simmons expanding the pocket on first down and dumping it to Chauncey Harper for a touchdown on first and goal. The PAT would be no good.

After a Harper interception stopped a Warriors drive, the Panthers would pounce again and at this point the Lincoln Prep fans were deeply involved in the game, helping the team out with the play clock to substitute for a faulty scoreboard.

Eight plays following the interception, a healthy drive from the Panthers and an unsportsmanlike conduct call against the Warriors, Simmons would end the drive with a 6-yard scramble to the end zone. A failed two-point conversion followed.

The Panther defense would cause a three-and-out on the next drive, and Simmons would return the punt back to the Lakeside 30 yard line. Just two plays later, Simmons found Emmanuel Bryant for a 20-yard touchdown pass. The PAT attempt was no good, but with a lead at nine, the second half would see much of the same from the Panther offense.

Nine would not be the biggest lead for the Panthers, but the Warriors would never seriously challenge again.

“It showed that we can play with anybody. We’re a big strike team. We can score on offense, defense, and special teams,” said Lincoln Prep head coach Glen Hall.

What could’ve been an even higher scoring game for the Panthers was cut short at 44 with a second-half explosion of 26 points.

Dmitry Payne returned a punt 65 yards for a touchdown, resulting in a 25-7 score after a successful PAT.

Two drives later Simmons found Harper again for a long touchdown, leaving the score 31-7 after a blocked field goal.

After a not so controversial touchdown by Braylin Mayfield was called a fumble, the Warriors started the put on points at the end of the third with a rushing touchdown leaving the score 25-14.

“They should’ve just had 14 at the most,” said Hall.

Extending the lead with two more scores, Simmons would find Jamarrion Bugs on a 28-yard touchdown catch and run, and then Simmons would score on a 38-yard scramble. Lakeside would score two more times to end the game.

On the second half scoring for the Warriors Hall mentioned, “We got lazy and satisfied, it’s a recipe for disaster. We thought we had the game won and we didn’t play in the fourth quarter and with a good team we can’t win that way.”

For the night Simmons had 3 touchdowns through the air and 2 on the ground, while Harper ended the night with 2 interceptions.

The Panthers will work on finishing strong to finish the season and getting another center as Xavaian Hamilton will be out for the remainder of the season with a leg injury on the second drive of the game.

Getting reps for a new starter and finishing strong are things on the top of coach Hall’s bucket list as he said, “Those are things we’ll practice this week and make sure we have right.”

With the win, the Panthers improve to 4-2 (3-2). The Panthers will travel Friday to take on Homer, a team that fell to Calvary Baptist this week.



Photo by Tony Valentino
Lincoln Prep junior quarterback Ty'Rell Simmons scored 5 touchdowns Friday night in a win over Lakeside.

With 1:24 left on the clock, an interception by Alcorn State University’s Juwan Taylor ended a late game rally for Grambling State Saturday in Lorman, Miss.

The Tigers battled back in the second half of their contest scoring two touchdowns but fell short in their bout with the Braves, 24-20.

“I felt offensively we struggled at times and our defense did a good job keeping us in the game and giving us an opportunity to win the football game,” said Broderick Fobbs, GSU head coach.

Grambling State (2-4, 1-2 SWAC) fell behind early in the first quarter of play as Alcorn (3-2, 2-0 SWAC) scored with two quick strikes to the end zone. The first came when Felix Harper threw a 45-yard touchdown to LeCharles Pringle with 13:26 left in the first quarter for 7-0 lead.

GSU answered back with a field goal from Garrett Urban to get on the board 7-3 at the 10:57 mark. Harper’s second score of the quarter came as he rushed for 14 yards for a touchdown with 6:53 left in the quarter.

The GSU defense worked hard to steady the team in the second quarter but Harper and the Braves offense took advantage of their confusion.

Harper connected to Pringle for a 13-yard touchdown at the 13:48 mark of the second quarter to up the lead to 21-3. Again, the Tigers’ answer was a field goal from Urban to make the



Photo courtesy of GSU
Grambling State defenders Kenan Fontenot (23), Toddrick Paul (96) and Lane Lewis converge on an Alcorn State player Saturday.

score 21-6 with 5:17 left in the half.

GSU entered the second half of play with renewed confidence and focus as they grounded out two touchdowns to make the contest interesting. Alcorn scored for the last time with 4:55 left in the third as kick Noah Kiani put one through the uprights and GSU trailed 24-6.

Grambling State scored a touchdown in each quarter of the half using different methods to get the job done. With 1:24 left in the third quarter, Bodden beamed a 20-yard touchdown pass to Darrell Clark to cut the lead to 24-13.

GSU’s last score came when Aldon Clark got the nod from the staff to close out the game at quarterback. Clark hit Greg

White with a 20-yard strike at the 14:18 mark of the fourth quarter to make it 24-20. Grambling State’s defense held the line and kept the Braves from reaching the end zone again.

Unfortunately, Grambling couldn’t find the end zone again either.

Bodden finished the day going 10-of-27 for 105 yards, one touchdown, an interception and was sacked once. Clark closed out the game for Grambling State going 5-of-5 for 172 yards and two touchdowns.

Alcorn’s Harper finished the game 15-of-23 for 150 yards, two touchdowns, an interception and was sacked twice.

Grambling’s top receivers for the game were Clark and White who combined for seven re-

ception for 104 yards and two touchdowns.

The Tiger defense was led by Joshua Reed who tallied 9 total tackles. Myron Stewart picked up an interception while Javon Carter and Lane Lewis each nabbed a sack. The Braves defense was led by Nichel Herron with 6 tackles.

“Hats off to a very good Alcorn State football team. I am proud of our guys for competing and fighting hard,” said Fobbs. “We had some key mistakes we made late in the game and you can’t make those against good teams and expect to win.”

Grambling State returns home on Saturday for Homecoming against Texas Southern University. Kickoff will be at 2 p.m. at Eddie Robinson Stadium.

Scores from Major College Football

EAST
Brown 31, Colgate 10
Columbia 22, CCSU 20
Dartmouth 24, Yale 17, OT
Delaware St. 56, Va. Lynchburg 6
Duquesne 39, Bryant 34
Elon 33, Maine 23
Fordham 56, Wagner 7
Harvard 24, Cornell 10
Lafayette 27, Bucknell 0
Marist 34, Stetson 3
Marshall 20, Old Dominion 13, OT
Michigan St. 31, Rutgers 13
Penn 20, Lehigh 0
Princeton 31, Monmouth (NJ) 28
Rhode Island 22, Delaware 15
Robert Morris 31, Charleston Southern 24
SMU 31, Navy 24
Sacred Heart 20, Merrimack 10
St. Francis (Pa.) 55, LIU Brooklyn 10
Towson 21, Stony Brook 14
Umass 27, Uconn 13
Wake Forest 40, Syracuse 37, OT

SOUTH
Alabama St. 35, Ark.-Pine Bluff 15
Alcorn St. 44, Grambling St. 20
Campbell 42, Gardner-Webb 28
E. Kentucky 30, Abilene Christian 15
ETSU 48, The Citadel 21
Florida 42, Vanderbilt 0
Florida A&M 30, SC State 7
Florida St. 35, North Carolina 25

Furman 42, Wofford 20
Georgia 34, Auburn 10
Georgia Tech 31, Duke 27
Jackson St. 61, Alabama A&M 15
Jacksonville St. 28, Stephen F. Austin 24
Kennesaw St. 34, Hampton 15
Kentucky 42, LSU 21
Liberty 41, Middle Tennessee 13
MVSU 20, Bethune-Cookman 14
Mercer 34, W. Carolina 24
Mississippi 52, Arkansas 51
Morehead St. 38, Presbyterian 30
NC A&T 38, North Alabama 34
SE Louisiana 58, Nicholls 48
SE Missouri 30, Austin Peay 14
Tennessee 45, South Carolina 20
Tennessee Tech 27, NC Central 16
Texas Southern 35, Southern U. 31
Troy 27, Georgia Southern 24
UAB 31, FAU 14
UCF 20, East Carolina 16
UT Martin 48, Murray St. 24
UTEP 26, Southern Miss. 13
UTSA 52, W. Kentucky 46
VMI 37, Chattanooga 34, OT
Villanova 28, James Madison 27
Virginia 34, Louisville 33
William & Mary 31, Albany (NY) 24

MIDWEST
Akron 35, Bowling Green 20
Ball St. 45, W. Michigan 20
Cent. Michigan 30, Ohio 27

Dayton 28, Drake 10
E. Michigan 13, Miami (Ohio) 12
Indiana St. 37, W. Illinois 27
Iowa 23, Penn St. 20
Kent St. 48, Buffalo 38
Missouri 48, North Texas 35
N. Dakota St. 34, N. Iowa 20
N. Illinois 22, Toledo 20
Ohio St. 66, Maryland 17
S. Illinois 42, S. Dakota St. 41, OT
San Diego 52, Butler 21
South Dakota 20, North Dakota 13
St. Thomas (Minn.) 20, Valparaiso 13
Wisconsin 24, Illinois 0
Youngstown St. 41, Missouri St. 33

SOUTHWEST
Baylor 45, West Virginia 20
Oklahoma 55, Texas 48
Sam Houston St. 41, Lamar 7
TCU 52, Texas Tech 31
Texas State 33, South Alabama 31, 40T

FAR WEST
Air Force 24, Wyoming 14
Boise St. 26, BYU 17
Colorado St. 32, San Jose St. 14
E. Washington 63, N. Colorado 17
Idaho 42, Portland 35
Idaho St. 27, UC Davis 17
Montana 31, Dixie St. 14
Montana St. 45, Cal Poly 7
Washington St. 31, Oregon St. 24

Texas Southern takes care of SU 35-31

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Jacorey Howard ran for three touchdowns, including a 4-yard score with 39 seconds to play, and Texas Southern beat Southern 35-31 on Saturday night at Global Life Park in the Arlington Football Showdown.

Freshman Andrew Body was 28-of-35 passing for 338 yards and added 16 carries for 85 yards for Texas Southern. LaDarius Owens had 59 yards rushing and two TDs on five carries.

TSU (2-3, 1-1 Southwestern Athletic Conference) beat the Jaguars for the first time since 2011.

Devon Benn had 151 yards rushing and a

score to lead Southern (2-3, 1-1).

Kobe Dillion ran for 96 yards and a touchdown on 18 carries and Marquis McClain scored on a 65-yard run.

Glendon McDaniel was 20-of-29 passing for 207 yards with an interception and his 2-yard TD run midway through the fourth quarter gave the Jaguars a 31-28 lead.

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COLLEGE ROUNDUP



No. 3 Iowa storms past No. 4 Penn State in key Big Ten tilt

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Spencer Petras threw a 44-yard touchdown pass to Nico Ragaini to complete No. 3 Iowa's comeback from a two-touchdown deficit, No. 4 Penn State's offense did next to nothing after quarterback Sean Clifford was knocked out of the game and the Hawkeyes held on for a bruising 23-20 victory Saturday.

The Hawkeyes (6-0, 3-0) took control of the Big Ten West with their 12th straight win and thrust themselves into the College Football Playoff conversation.

Penn State (5-1, 2-1) lost for the first time in 10 games and headed back to Happy Valley with a list of injuries that could make its path through the rest of the season difficult.

When Petras took a knee in victory formation to end the game, students and other fans poured out of their end zone seats to celebrate. Bodies were packed together the entire width of the field from the south end zone to the 10-yard line on the other end.

"It's a pretty special



Photo courtesy of the University of Iowa
Iowa receiver Charlie Jones (16) dives for the pylon in the second half of the Hawkeyes' Big Ten win over Penn State Saturday.

place when the lights go on and the sun goes down," Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz said.

The Hawkeyes' grinding offense isn't built to play from behind, but it managed to come back in the biggest game at Kinnick Stadium since then-No. 1 Iowa beat then-No. 2 Michigan in 1985.

Iowa won the field-position battle thanks to the work of punter Tory Taylor, who repeatedly

pinned Penn State deep in its own end after Clifford went out of the game in the second quarter.

Iowa chipped away with field goals by Caleb Shudak to cut it to 20-16. The winning drive started when it got the ball at the Penn State 44 with 6:35 left.

Petras rolled to his right and found Ragaini alone on the left side. Linebacker Curtis Jacobs knocked him out of

bounds, but not before he got the ball over the goal line. All-America center Tyler Linderbaum was the first man to greet him in the end zone.

Penn State coach James Franklin didn't disclose the nature of Clifford's injury. He was hurt with the Lions leading 17-3 when he took a big hit from linebacker Jack Campbell, and he was out of uniform on the sideline.

Red River Rivalry

Rattler benched, Brooks runs wild as Sooners rally over Longhorns

DALLAS (AP) — Kennedy Brooks took the final snap for sixth-ranked Oklahoma, after freshman quarterback Caleb Williams had taken over when Spencer Rattler was again benched in the Red River rivalry game.

Brooks ran for 217 yards and two go-ahead touchdowns in the fourth quarter, including a direct snap for a 33-yard game-winner with 3 seconds left, and the Sooners beat No. 21 Texas 55-48 on Saturday in the highest-scoring game of 117 meetings in a series that will soon move to the Southeastern Conference.

"I just ran straight and scored," Brooks said, crediting the offensive line and the receivers blocking downfield. "Just a great call by Lincoln Riley. It's a great play setup."

The Sooners (6-0, 3-0 Big 12) appeared to be trying to set up for a game-ending field goal when Brooks instead broke free for a sprint to the end zone.

"Give him some clean lanes ... that was important regardless of who was playing quarterback," Riley said.

Oklahoma hadn't even led until Brooks had an 18-yard TD with 7:10 left that made it 48-41. His rush was the first play from scrimmage after OU tied the game and kicked off to Xavier Worthy, who had the ball stripped away by Caleb Kelly.

The Sooners overcame a 28-7 deficit after the first quarter, matching the second-largest comeback in program history. And when it was over, Oklahoma students who were part of the sellout crowd at 92,100-seat Cotton Bowl Stadium streamed onto the field to celebrate with their team.

No. 2 Georgia cruises past Auburn 34-10

AUBURN, Ala. (AP) — Stetson Bennett and No. 2 Georgia's defense were more than enough to take care of Auburn yet again.

Bennett passed for 231 yards and two touchdowns and led the Bulldogs past No. 18 Auburn for the second straight year in a 34-10 victory Saturday even if the defense did allow an opponent to reach the end zone for a change.

The nation's top defense gave up only its second touchdown of the year for the Bulldogs (6-0, 4-0 Southeastern Conference), who were still without injured starting quarterback JT Daniels. None of that kept Georgia from another comfortable SEC win and a fifth straight in the Deep

South's Oldest Rivalry.

Bennett, who made his first college start in a Top 10 matchup with Auburn (3-2, 1-1) last season, completed 14 of 21 passes and hit Ladd McConkey in stride for a 60-yard third quarter score. He also had a 30-yard run.

Daniels is out with a lat injury for the second straight week, along with some sidelined receivers.

"It's next man up mentality," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said. "That's what we talked about all week. We've got a lot of guys hurt and beat up, including the quarterback. We feel like he's getting better, but Stetson played a heck of a game."

But the Jordan-Hare Stadium crowd didn't seem to bother the Bulldogs, who dominated in the trenches on both sides.

"We won the line of scrimmage battle," Bennett said. "It was so much fun. I had a blast."

Zamir White ran for 79 yards on 18 carries with two touchdowns, doing most of his damage in the second half.

Bo Nix and the Tigers came in averaging 40 points per game but couldn't solve the Georgia defensive puzzle despite moving the ball at times. Nix completed 21 of 38 passes for 217 yards with an interception off a dropped ball a week after delivering a comeback win at LSU.

Late field goal lifts Irish past Hokies

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP) — Jonathan Doerer kicked a 48-yard field goal with 17 seconds remaining, capping a dramatic rally to give No. 14 Notre Dame a 32-29 victory over Virginia Tech on Saturday night.

The Fighting Irish (5-1) tied it at 29 on Jack Coan's 4-yard pass to Avery Davis and a two-point conversion completion to Kevin Austin with 2:26 left.

After forcing the Hokies to punt, Coan drove them 45 yards in seven plays, and Doerer split the up-rights, sparing the Fighting Irish a second straight loss.

Virginia Tech (3-2) had taken command with an interception return for a touchdown by Jermaine Waller and another touchdown drive started by

an interception and finished with a 19-yard run by Braxton Burmeister with 3:55 to play, but Coan returned after playing just the first quarter to lead the comeback.

Freshman Tyler Buchner ran for a touchdown and threw for another for Notre Dame (4-2) after replacing Coan to start the second quarter, but his two second half interceptions both turned into Virginia Tech touchdowns.

Kyren Williams ran for 81 yards and one touchdown and caught an 8-yard pass from Buchner for another score the Irish.

Raheem Blackshear also ran for a touchdown for the Hokies and John Parker Romo kicked three field goals.

No. 1 Bama kicked to the curb by Aggies 41-38

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — Seth Small made a 28-yard field goal as time expired and Texas A&M stunned top-ranked Alabama 41-38 on Saturday night to end the Crimson Tide's winning streak at 19 games.

The Crimson Tide (5-1, 2-1 Southeastern Conference) had scored 21 straight points — capped by a TD reception and 2-point conversion grab by Jameson Williams — to take a 38-31 lead with five minutes to go.

Texas A&M (4-2, 1-2) tied it at 38 when Zach Calzada connected with Ainiyah Smith for a 25-yard touchdown strike with three minutes left. Calzada was hit as he threw the strike and had to be helped off the field but returned for the next drive after a visit to the medical tent.

Calzada returned after the Aggies forced a

punt to orchestrate the winning drive, highlighted by a 17-yard pass to Isaiah Spiller before Small finished it off to send fans streaming onto the field to celebrate.

Calzada threw for 285 yards and three touchdowns, as the former backup played like a star to take down the reigning champs.

Devon Achane returned a kickoff 96 yards for a TD in the third quarter and A&M's defense got after Bryce Young all night.

Alabama hadn't lost since a 48-45 win by Auburn on Nov. 30, 2019.

It's the first time Alabama coach Nick Saban has lost to one of his assistants after entering the game a perfect 24-0 in those games.

He'd beaten Texas A&M coach Jimbo Fisher four times, the most of any of his former staffers.



Photo courtesy of Ole Miss
Snoop Conner rushed for 110 yards and Ole Miss outlasted Arkansas when the Hogs failed on a two-point conversion to win the game.

Ole Miss wins wild one over Hogs 52-51

OXFORD, Miss. (AP) — Matt Corral promised it would be different this time against No. 13 Arkansas. The Mississippi quarterback, who threw six interceptions last year against the Razorbacks, delivered, leading the Rebels to a wild victory that was sealed by the defense.

Sam Williams and Tavius Robinson pressured Arkansas quarterback KJ Jefferson on a potential game-winning 2-point conversion and No. 17 Mississippi held on 52-51 Saturday after allowing a touchdown on the final play of regulation.

Arkansas (4-2, 1-2 SEC) scored on a 9-yard pass from Jefferson to Warren Thompson as time expired to pull within a point and decided to go for the win. Jefferson rolled right and under extended pressure from Williams and Robinson, overthrew Trey-lon Burks in the end zone.

"However it works, it's a win," Mississippi coach Lane Kiffin said. "Obviously, it's a huge play at the end. Offensively, we did well. I've been in games like this before and it's a lot better when you win."

Ole Miss (4-1, 1-1) took the lead with 1:07 remaining as Corral threw a 68-yard touchdown pass to Braylon Sanders.



NCAA Single Season Rushing Leaders

Name, School	Year	Yards	8. Troy Davis, Iowa State	1996	2185
1. Barry Sanders, Oklahoma St.	1988	2628	9. Andre Williams, Boston College	2013	2177
2. Melvin Gordon, Wisconsin	2014	2587	10. LaDainian Tomlinson, TCU	2000	2158
3. Kevin Smith, Central Florida	2007	2567	11. Tony Dorsett, Pittsburgh	1976	2150
4. Marcus Allen, Southern Cal	1981	2427	12. Mike Rozier, Nebraska	1983	2148
5. Rashaad Penny, San Diego St.	2017	2248	13. Donnel Pumphrey, San Diego St.	2016	2133
6. Derrick Henry, Alabama	2015	2219	14. Matt Forte, Tulane	2007	2127
7. Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin	2018	2194	15. Ricky Williams, Texas	1998	2124

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HIGH SCHOOL

FULL ON BEARCAT



“Devian may be the best blocking fullback I’ve seen in all my years in coaching. He is so good in all three phases – blocking, running the football and in the passing game.”

*Jerrod Baugh
Ruston High
Head Coach*

Devian Wilson returns to give Ruston more firepower on offense

BY BRIAN TRAHAN | EDITOR@RUSTONLEADER.COM

For the first month of the 2021 season, Devian Wilson was champing at the bit on the Ruston High sidelines — spending part of that time in a walking boot.

While he was rehabbing from his second foot surgery in two years, he was forced to watch as his teammate Dyson Fields was carving up defenses. “I can’t wait until I can get in there. Wait until you see me,” Wilson said to the *Ruston Daily Leader* as he paced along the sidelines while the Bearcats were battering Airline High 50-0 on Sept. 17.

That’s the confidence of a man who knows his position. He may be a fullback, but Wilson is full-on Bearcat.

By the time head coach Jerrod Baugh mentioned that Wilson could return for the road game at St. Thomas More in Lafayette in week five, Fields had already carried the ball 121 times in the first four games.

Baugh was concerned at that point about putting too much of a workload on his tailback. Wilson returned for STM and the offense kicked it up another notch the last two weeks.

Case in point Friday night against Pineville.

The Rebels decided they would take Fields out of the offense in the first quarter, loading the box and keying on him on every play. He managed only 19 yards by halftime.

When one door is closed, there is another open — wide open.

The 6-0, 236-pound Wilson put the team on his broad shoulders with no problem. On Ruston’s first two drives — both reaching the end zone — Wilson carried the ball 5 times for 75

yards and scored both touchdowns.

“Our style of offense it’s imperative to have a good fullback. You don’t really see it a lot these days though,” Baugh said.

When Pineville altered its defense, Ruston shifted its offense as an answer. In the third quarter, Wilson became more of a punishing blocker for Fields, who put up 147 of his 166 rushing yards in the third before leaving the game.

That type of versatility from the fullback position opens the RHS offense up even more. And nobody plays the hybrid full-on Bearcat better than No. 3.

“Devian may be the best blocking fullback I’ve seen in all my years in coaching,” Baugh said emphatically. “He is so good in all three phases — blocking, running the football and in the passing game.”

Baugh doesn’t hand out hyperbole often, if you know him. He went a step farther to describe Wilson’s abilities.

“We had Chris Ivory when I was at Longview (Texas) and he played that same position for us. I think Devian is even better at this stage of his career than Chris was. Two two of them are very similar type players though.”

Ivory, who was signed by the New Orleans Saints as an undrafted free agent in 2010, also played for the Jacksonville Jaguars, New York Jets and Buffalo Bills during his 9 seasons in the NFL out of Washington State. Ivory played at 6-0 and 225 pounds, very similar to Wilson’s stature.

Since his return to the lineup, Wilson has flexed his muscles in the run game as well as blocking for Fields



Photo by Bret McCormick

Ruston High senior fullback Devian Wilson drags a Pineville defender into the end zone for a touchdown in Friday night’s 41-0 victory.

and quarterback Jaden Osborne. Against STM, he rushed 16 times for 84 yards and 2 TDs. Friday night he finished with 6 carries for 78 yards and 2 TDs. In two games, he’s averaging 7.4 yards per carry and he scores a touchdown every 5.5 touches.

He hasn’t been involved much in the passing game, yet, simply because the Cats were trying to control the clock against STM and get out of Pineville with the blowout win without injuries piling up.

Make no mistake, his presence in

the offense gives the Bearcats a Ghidra-type feel — a three-headed monster with Osborne, Wilson and Fields.

It wasn’t like the Bearcats were suffering without Wilson, though. Junior Jachua Knighton (5-11, 259) filled in admirably. His ability to lead Fields through the line of scrimmage played a huge part in the Ruston offense building to its crescendo.

“It’s not a knock on Jachua because he did a fantastic job for us when De-

See FULL ON BEARCAT, page 5



By Brian Trahan
editor@rustonleader.com

Week six is in the books and our teams are all in district play. Give it up for our teams going 4-0 for the first time this season.

Each and every weekend on The 5th Quarter, we’re going to highlight, spotlight and throw tidbits about this week’s prep football action.

With four blowout wins, follow the rather large Cat Tracks.

THE CREEK FLOODS THE ISLAND WITH PEANUTS

Cedar Creek traveled to Sicily Island Thursday night hoping to get its passing offense into gear. Already with a potent ground game and a stellar defense, the one missing piece was airing it out. Head coach Matt Middleton called on his son Caden “Peanut” Middleton early and often. Peanut flooded the Island with a career-best 6 touchdown passes and 232 yards before exiting the game after playing one play in the second half.

DISPATCH, WE HAVE A 187 ON THE GRIDIRON

Don’t worry, nothing violent happened Friday night unless you count four teams inflicting blowout losses on opponents. Cedar Creek, Ruston, Lincoln Prep and Jonesboro-Hodge scored a total of 187 points this week, averaging 46.8 points per win. J-Hodge and Creek scored 51 points apiece while Lincoln Prep put up 44 and Ruston 41. It’s the first time this season all four have scored at least 40.

DOUBLE NAUGHT SPY

With a pardon to the great Jethro Bodine, double naught spy, there were some double zeroes tossed up this week in prep football. Ruston and Jonesboro-Hodge pitched shutouts over Bunkie and Pineville. It was Ruston’s second shutout of the season. They beat Airline 50-0 in week 3. This was the Tigers’ first actual shutout of the season, although technically on their schedule they own a 2-0 forfeit win over Vidalia — also in week 3.

YOU GET A PICK SIX AND YOU GET A PICK SIX AND ... YOU GET A PICK SIX

The Jonesboro-Hodge Tigers were handing out interceptions returned for touchdowns Friday night like Halloween candy. Free safety Devaontae Mozee scored on a pick 6 and his buddy Xavier Atkins wanted in on the action with his own pick 6 against Bunkie. Not to be outdone, Cedar Creek’s Jed Worthey scored on a 52-yard pick 6 against Sicily Island Thursday night.

PREP WITH THE PREFERRED POWER POINTS

This is one sentence Lincoln Prep fans haven’t heard in some time: The Panthers are maneuvering for a playoff berth. Early power ratings at geaux-preps.com have the Panthers well within the playoffs in Class 1A. In fact, after beating 2A Lakeside Friday to move to 4-2, Prep unofficially sits at No. 9 in the power ratings. That would give them a home game, should they find a place to play with no home this season.

THE LONG AND SHORT OF FIELD GOAL KICKING

He may be the shortest player on the field for Cedar Creek, but Davis Long is playing like a giant. The 7th-grade kicker made 6-of-7 PATs against Sicily Island Thursday and connected for his first career field goal — from 26 yards out.

DYSON HIT THE RT BUTTON

With only 19 yards rushing at halftime, Ruston running back Dyson Fields hit his own Right Trigger in the third quarter Friday night. He rushed for 147 yards and 2 TDs before leaving the game at the end of the third. On the season, Fields now has 1,267 yards rushing in 6 games on 164 carries with 18 TDs.

THE X-MAN COMETH

The biggest story to come out of Jonesboro-Hodge’s blistering start has been linebacker Xavier Atkins. Three weeks ago against Logansport Atkins had 22 tackles, a sack and fumble recovery. Against West Ouachita he had 19 tackles. Friday night against Bunkie, Atkins had 13 tackles and a pick 6 interception for a 35-yard touchdown.

DUAL THREAT TO PERFECTION

Lincoln Prep quarterback Ty’rell Simmons is putting together a breakout season. Friday night, he scored 5 touchdowns for the second time this season and 4 or more for the third time. Simmons had 3 TDs passing and 2 rushing against Lakeside. In



Photo by Tony Valentino

Cedar Creek 7th-grade kicker Davis Long kicked his first field goal Thursday night, from 26 yards.

all three games — the other two being Beekman Charter and Arcadia — the Panthers came out on the winning end of things.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Under those circumstances when the score gets out of whack, a lot of people’s emotions run high. We have to learn to keep our composure. I tell them if they get one, they won’t get back into the ballgame,” Ruston head coach Jerrod Baugh said after a number of unsportsmanlike penalties against Ruston and Pineville during the fourth quarter.

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LAGNIAPPE

Looking ahead at prep playoff positioning

What a difference a year makes in high school football. Nevermind the obvious hurdles teams had to overcome during the pandemic season, a few of our local teams were struggling to put together competitive years.

Of the four teams that we are covering now, two of them made the playoffs a year ago and only Ruston made it past the second round.

Tip of the cap to the Bearcats really, because they had to overcome so many injuries and games missed due to COVID, but still managed to make it to the Class 5A quarterfinals.

Cedar Creek made it to the Division IV second round a year ago, while Jonesboro-Hodge and Lincoln Prep missed out on the show. J-Hodge had only three wins last season and the Panthers had one single victory.

As I tap away on my keyboard Saturday, all four teams are in great position to make a playoff run. In fact, not only are they in prime position to make the playoffs, our players are battling to host first round playoff games.

That would be fantastic. For Ruston fans, it would be downright fitting. A year ago, the Bearcats were playing away from Hoss Garrett due to the stadium and field not being ready after the 2019 Ruston tornado caused extensive damage.

Can you imagine how crazy the student section will be for a first-round playoff game at RHS? I'd buy a ticket and a bucket of popcorn and sit with the students just to witness the crazy atmosphere.

And since we're heading into week 7 of the regular season, my Aunt Florence said it's OK to take a look at the unofficial power rankings for the state of Louisiana, with a thank you to geauxpreps.com website.

In Class 5A, the Ruston Bearcats are unofficially sitting at No. 7 in the power rankings with plenty of chances to pile up more points ahead on the schedule. Imagine if the Bearcats win-out, they would be 9-1 with wins over West Monroe, Alexandria, Carencro, St. Thomas More, Ouachita and Oxford, Miss.

That's a murderer's row of a schedule. Finishing in the top 10 in Class 5A would set the bracket up nicely for Coach Jerrod Baugh and the Cats.

In Class 2A, Jonesboro-Hodge has already gone from three wins a year ago to a 5-1 start in 2021. Head coach Terrance Blankenship deserves an immense amount of credit for rallying his team from a tragedy in the summer.

It was back in late July when LaJermanique Nichols, 19, her brother JaJavion Nichols, 17, and Javious Holden, 17, were tragically killed in an automobile accident. LaJermanique Nichols was a student at Grambling State, while LaJavion Nichols and Holden were members of the Jonesboro-Hodge football team.

I can't even fathom how these young men have coped with losing not one, but two, teammates and a third friend so suddenly.

It makes what the Tigers are accomplishing on the field more impressive.

When it comes to the power rankings, maybe seven is the magic number. The Tigers are also sitting at No. 7 at the moment after a 51-0 shellacking of Bunkie. Unlike Ruston, J-Hodge does not have the benefit of a strong schedule from this point forward.

They will need to keep winning to maintain their status in the top 10. Class 2A is always so competitive.

This team has captured the imagination of locals and you have to be rooting for them each week.

Unless you are Matt Middleton and the Cedar Creek Cougars. They happen to host the Tigers this week. Beating a 2A school with five wins would be a feather in Creek's playoff cap.

Scheduling this game was a stroke of genius for Middleton. He knows his team couldn't afford a bye week fighting for position in Division IV. Unofficially, the Cougars are sitting at No. 18 in the power rankings.

As it stands now, 16 teams advance to the Division IV bracket. The good news is, the Cougars have four weeks to move up. With games against J-Hodge, Oak Grove and Delta Charter ahead, they certainly control their own destiny. I like their chances. Creek has won three of four and should have beaten top-ranked Ouachita Christian.

Last, but certainly not least, is Lincoln Prep. Man, this is a team I'm pulling for every week. Nevermind they play 10 road games which is tough enough. These kids play both ways and have managed to go 4-2 so far in Class 1A.

And if you can't get behind a coach like Glen Hall, I'll have to check your pulse. There aren't many coaches I would rather talk football with than Coach Hall. He and Coach Baugh in Ruston can keep me going for hours.

The Panthers pulled away from Lakeside Friday night 44-27. With that win, Prep is now sitting No. 9 in the power rankings in Class 1A.

Their schedule may be the toughest out of all our schools. They still have to play Homer, Haynesville and Plain Dealing with a gimme win against Magnolia School of Excellence. It will be hard for Prep to stay in the top 10 but hosting a game is not out of the question. Where they would host is another issue.

This is getting good, folks.

How the LSWA High School Top 10 Fared

CLASS 5A

1. Catholic-BR (6-0) beat E Ascension 48-29
2. Zachary (6-0) beat Live Oak 54-21
3. Brother Martin (4-0) beat Rummel 45-14
4. Ponchatoula (4-0) beat Mandeville 37-21
5. Alexandria (5-1) lost to W. Monroe 28-14
6. Acadiana (4-2) beat Comeaux 65-47
7. Captain Shreve (6-0) beat Benton 48-35
8. Ruston (5-1) beat Pineville 41-0
9. John Curtis (2-1) beat Shaw 37-16
10. Destrehan (3-0) beat C. Lafourche 56-6

Others receiving votes: West Monroe (3-2) beat Alexandria 28-14, Natchitoches Central (6-0) beat Southwood 37-6, Dutchtown (4-1) lost to Woodlawn-BR 27-14, Rummel (3-1) lost to Brother Martin 45-14, Byrd (5-1) beat Parkway 35-24, Benton (4-2) lost to Captain Shreve 48-35, East Ascension (1-3) lost to Catholic-BR 48-29.

CLASS 4A

1. Karr (3-0) plays Warren Easton Saturday
2. Neville (5-1) beat Franklin Parish 42-0
3. Westgate (5-1) beat St. Thomas More 41-13
4. Warren Easton (2-1) plays Karr Saturday
5. Carencro (4-2) beat Teurlings Cath. 60-13
6. Northwood-Shv (4-2) beat BTW 34-6
7. Teurlings Cath (5-1) lost to Carencro 60-30
8. St. Thomas More (2-4) lost to Westgate 41-13
9. Liberty (5-0) beat St. Michael 21-14
10. Carver (4-0) beat McMain 29-8

Others receiving votes: Cecilia (4-2) beat

- Breaux Bridge 25-6, Huntington (5-1) beat Bastrop 64-0, Vandebilt Catholic (2-2) beat Ellender 40-24, Leesville (4-2) beat Bolton 42-6, Istrouma (2-2) did not play, Assumption (3-2) beat South Terrebonne 20-7.

CLASS 3A

1. University (6-0) beat Brusly 42-6
2. Madison Prep (6-0) beat Collegiate-BR 72-0
3. Sterlington (6-0) beat Union Parish 28-12
4. De La Salle (2-1) plays L.B. Landry Sat.
5. St. James (3-2) lost to Lutchter 41-19
6. Union Parish (3-3) lost to Sterlington 28-12
7. E.D. White (4-0) beat Donaldsonville 41-0
8. Church Point (6-0) beat Iota 43-6
9. Iowa (6-0) beat South Beauregard 49-7
10. Lake Charles Prep (3-3) beat Westlake 40-7

Others receiving votes: Jena (5-1) beat Caldwell 34-12, Lutchter (4-0) beat St. James 41-19, Mansfield (2-3) lost to General Trass 64-48, Brusly (5-1) lost to University 42-6, Abbeville (5-1) lost to St. Martinville 27-24, Westlake (5-1) lost to Lake Charles college Prep 40-7, Donaldsonville (4-1) lost to E.D. White 41-0, St. Martinville (4-2) beat Abbeville 27-24.

CLASS 2A

1. Many (5-1) beat Winnfield 50-0
2. Lafayette Chr. (5-1) beat Lake Arthur 49-0
3. Newman (4-0) beat Fisher 70-0
4. Amite (4-0) beat Varnado 35-14
5. Mangham (5-1) beat Vidalia 42-14

JACKSON PARISH

Red hot J-Hodge blanks Bunkie 51-0

By Brian Trahan
editor@rustonleader.com

Jonesboro-Hodge head coach Terrence Blankenship was a little concerned heading into his week 6 matchup with Bunkie on the road. His team had won four straight since losing to rival Winnfield in week one.

Following back-to-back big wins over Logansport and North Webster, Blankenship didn't know what to expect taking on the Panthers.

Full On Bearcat

Continued from 4

vian was out, but Devian gives us more experience in the offense," Baugh explained. "It's been really good to have him back out there. He gives us such a physical presence in our offense. Then you have Jachua who can come in and play and we don't drop off. It's a luxury to have two guys that size at such a key position. When you look at our style of offense, the full-back position is an extension of our offensive line."

While the Cats have played a tough schedule up to this point — wins over three teams (Oxford, Miss., Carencro and St. Thomas More) that have won state championships in the last two seasons — the most important games lie ahead like an intimidating obstacle course.

A road game this week at Ouachita High precedes two home games in the final three weeks against Alexandria Senior High and West Monroe. Fans who visit Hoss Garrett Stadium on the regular know the Rebels are Ruston's albatross. West Monroe has won 99 straight district games.

It will be all hands on deck for those battles. The Bearcats feel much better with Wilson back in the fray.

Only four games remain in Wilson's final regular season in red, silver and white.

It's full-on Bearcat time.

"We didn't know how the kids would respond with all the hoopla of us winning some games," Blankenship said. "But we came out and took them out of their rhythm right away."

How did the Tigers respond to their new accolades, even garnering attention in the Class 2A polls? They ran through Bunkie with efficiency and determination to the tune of a 51-0 shutout.

"I think the key was we came out with urgency from the get-go," Blankenship added. "We ran our offense, we played good defense and it was a complete win."

The offense did indeed come out with urgency. The game plan coming in was to get the running game going to set up quarterback Tydre Malone in the RPO scheme. It worked. Malone completed 11-of-18 passes for 191 yards and 3 touchdowns. The Tigers led 16-0 at half-time and then poured it on in the third quarter

with 22 more points to up the lead to 38-0.

J-Hodge's defense came up huge with not one, but two interceptions returned for touchdowns — one at the end of the first half and one in the third quarter.

Linebacker Xavier Atkins, who is making his name known on a state-level by leading Louisiana in tackles, had another monster game for the Tigers. Atkins had 13 total tackles, 10 of those solo (2 tackles for loss) and had one of the pick-6 TDs from 35 yards out.

"Our defense was outstanding," Blankenship said. "We had four turnovers and that played a big role in the outcome of the game. We had three interceptions and a fumble recovery and those two big touchdowns."

"Getting the shutout was also big for our defense. It's so hard to get kids in high school to focus for an entire game, and we even had our junior varsity in the game in the fourth quarter. We put up the

zero though," Blankenship said. "The big thing about that is we had a lot of new pieces to our defense coming into the season."

Defensive back Devonte Mozee had the other interception return for a TD for the Tigers. Mozee returned his pick for 60 yards. He also pitched in on offense. He caught one of Malone's 3 TD passes. He had two catches for 49 yards.

With the winning streak extended to five, the Tigers improve to 5-1 on the season. The Tigers will be in Ruston Friday night for a big matchup with Cedar Creek in a game that wasn't originally on the schedule.

Both teams had a bye week in week 7, which set up the game perfectly for the coaches. "Neither one of us wanted to miss out on a game," Blankenship said.

Cedar Creek (3-2) is also on a roll, having won two straight after nearly upsetting Class 1A No. 1 Ouachita Christian 3 weeks ago.

PERSONAL FOUL



Brian Trahan

Football Trivia

College Conferences with the most NFL players



Conference	NFL Players		
1. SEC	335	6. American	84
2. Big Ten	266	7. Conference USA	53
3. ACC	208	8. Mountain West	52
4. Pac-12	159	8. Independents	52
5. Big 12	138	10. Mid American	44
		11. Sun Belt	23



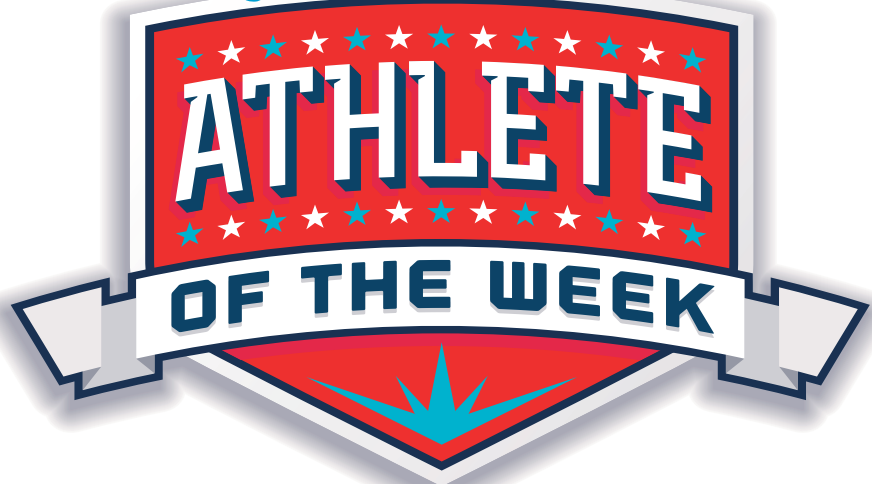
Photo by Amy Vessel

Lily Garrett Ruston High Cross Country

Lily Garrett has been dominating the competition so far this cross country season, winning three meets. Over the weekend, she captured the prestigious St. Joseph's Academy Invitational in Baton Rouge, winning by 15 seconds.

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