



For Immediate Release  
September 21, 2021

Mike Kern

Illinois State • Indiana State • Missouri State • North Dakota • North Dakota State • Northern Iowa  
South Dakota • South Dakota State • Southern Illinois • Western Illinois • Youngstown State

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## 2021 Valley Football Standings (thru Sept. 18)

Team	Overall		MVFC		Total Points		H	A	N	Stk.
	W-L	Pct.	W-L	Pct.	For	Opp				
North Dakota State	3-0	1.000	0-0	.000	127	13	2-0	1-0	0-0	W 3
South Dakota State	2-0	1.000	0-0	.000	94	30	1-0	1-0	0-0	W 2
Indiana State	2-1	.667	0-0	.000	55	66	1-0	1-1	0-0	W 1
Illinois State	2-1	.667	0-0	.000	80	59	1-0	1-1	0-0	W 1
North Dakota	2-1	.667	0-0	.000	97	62	1-0	1-1	0-0	W 1
UNI	2-1	.667	0-0	.000	88	35	1-0	1-1	0-0	W 2
South Dakota	2-1	.667	0-0	.000	96	38	1-0	1-1	0-0	W 2
Southern Illinois	2-1	.667	0-0	.000	125	55	1-0	1-1	0-0	W 1
Missouri State	1-1	.500	0-0	.000	59	57	1-0	0-1	0-0	W 1
Youngstown State	1-1	.500	0-0	.000	58	83	1-0	0-1	0-0	L 1
Western Illinois	0-3	.000	0-0	.000	84	135	0-1	0-2	0-0	L 3

## • • Media Services • •

### Players of the Week

Each week a panel will select players of the week for offense, defense, newcomer, offensive line and special teams.

### Weekly Features

The league produces weekly video segments (Two Minute Drill and The Extra Point) and a bimonthly audio podcast (First and Goal). Each is available by visiting the league's web site (valleyfootball.org) - under the Multimedia tab on the main menu bar.

[www.valley-football.org](http://www.valley-football.org)



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## 2021 Schedule / Results

### Saturday, Sept. 18

#7/6 Eastern Washington at Western Illinois EWU, 62-56  
St. Thomas at #18/15 UNI UNI, 44-3  
Drake at #11/14 North Dakota UND, 38-0  
#5/4 North Dakota State at Towson NDSU, 35-7  
Illinois State at Eastern Illinois ILS, 31-24  
Dayton at #8/9 Southern Illinois SIU, 55-3  
Indiana State at Eastern Kentucky INS, 23-21  
RV South Dakota at Cal Poly USD, 48-14

### Saturday, Sept. 25

\*#2/3 South Dakota St. at Indiana State, 12 p.m. CT (ESPN+)  
\*RV Illinois State at #7/8 Southern Illinois, 2 p.m. CT (ESPN+)  
\*Western Illinois at Youngstown State, 5 p.m. CT (ESPN+)  
\*RV South Dakota at #18/18 Missouri St., 7 p.m. CT (ESPN3)  
Idle: UNI, North Dakota State, North Dakota

### Saturday, Oct. 2

\*Missouri State at Illinois State, 1 p.m. CT (Marquee/ESPN+)  
\*NDSU at North Dakota, 2 p.m. CT (ABC ND/Midco/ESPN+)  
\*Indiana State at South Dakota, 2 p.m. CT (ESPN3)  
\*Southern Illinois at Western Illinois, 3 p.m. CT (ESPN+)  
\*Youngstown State at UNI, 4 p.m. CT (PSN/ESPN+)  
Dixie State at South Dakota State, 6 p.m. CT (Midco/ESPN+)

Top-25 designations list Stats Perform poll first, followed by the AFCA Coaches rankings. RV = receiving votes. \*Designates MVFC game.

## 6 MVFC Teams in Top 25

The Missouri Valley Football Conference continues to dominate the Top 25 rankings, with six teams in both the Stats Perform and AFCA FCS top-25 polls. South Dakota State, ranked No. 2 in the Stats Perform poll this week, leads the way for MVFC schools.

### Stats Perform Top 25 (Sept. 20)

	School (first-place votes)	Rec.	Pts.	Prev.
1	Sam Houston (31)	2-0	1,210	1
2	<b>South Dakota State (8)</b>	<b>2-0</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>2</b>
3	James Madison (9)	3-0	1,179	3
4	Montana (2)	2-0	1,100	4
5	<b>North Dakota State</b>	<b>3-0</b>	<b>1,071</b>	<b>5</b>
6	Eastern Washington	3-0	942	7
7	<b>Southern Illinois</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>8</b>
8	Delaware	2-1	837	6
9	Jacksonville State	2-1	771	10
10	<b>North Dakota</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>11</b>
11	Villanova	3-0	747	12
12	UC Davis	3-0	718	14
13	Montana State	2-1	672	13
14	Weber State	1-2	622	9
15	ETSU	3-0	530	16
16	Southeastern Louisiana	2-1	517	15
17	<b>Northern Iowa</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>18</b>
18	<b>Missouri State</b>	<b>1-1</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>17</b>
19	Austin Peay	2-1	357	19
20	Monmouth	2-1	319	20
21	New Hampshire	3-0	198	23
22	VMI	2-1	178	22
23	Kennesaw State	2-1	135	24
24	Richmond	2-1	115	21
25	Central Arkansas	1-2	110	25

### AFCA Coaches Top 25 (Sept. 20)

	School (first-place votes)	Rec.	Pts.	Prev.
1	Sam Houston (24)	2-0	696	1
2	James Madison (3)	3-0	667	2
3	<b>South Dakota State (1)</b>	<b>2-0</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>3</b>
4	Montana	2-0	586	5
5	<b>North Dakota State</b>	<b>3-0</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>4</b>
6	Eastern Washington	3-0	508	6
7	Villanova	3-0	490	T-9
8	<b>Southern Illinois</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>T-9</b>
9	Jacksonville State	2-1	447	11
10	UC Davis	3-0	403	12
11	Delaware	2-1	399	7
12	Montana State	2-1	385	13
13	<b>North Dakota</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>14</b>
14	<b>Northern Iowa</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>15</b>
15	Weber State	1-2	313	8
16	Southeastern Louisiana	2-1	295	16
17	East Tennessee State	3-0	290	17
18	<b>Missouri State</b>	<b>1-1</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>19</b>
19	Monmouth (N.J.)	2-1	199	20
20	Austin Peay	2-1	143	21
21	Richmond	2-1	126	18
22	New Hampshire	3-0	105	23
23	Chattanooga	1-2	99	22
24	Central Arkansas	1-2	67	24
25	Kennesaw State	2-1	67	NR



## FCS ALL IN

"FCS ALL IN" is a weekly news program dedicated to promoting all FCS conferences. The program is distributed via YouTube (youtube.com/c/FCSALLIN) and launched each Saturday at 10 a.m. ET.

## Players of the Week

### Offense

**QB Connor Sampson, Western Illinois**

6-3, 215, Sr. Belleville, Mich. (Belleville High)

Saturday was a career day for Sampson, who led Western Illinois to a heroic comeback attempt against No. 6 Eastern Washington. In the 62-56 loss, Sampson set a career high in single-game passing yards – going 31-of-46 for 425 yards. It currently ranks as the fifth-highest spot in the program's single-game records. His previous single-game best was 368 yards vs. South Dakota on Nov. 2, 2019. He also threw for a career-high four touchdowns. The 425-yard game was the best in the league last week, and the four TD passes tied for the MVFC's best this year.

### Defense

**DE Braydon Deming, Illinois State**

6-4, 255, Jr., Billings, Mont. (Billings West High / Montana)

Deming had a career night in ISU's 31-24 win over rival Eastern Illinois in the Mid-America Classic. The Billings, Mont., native made his presence known on the defensive line for the Redbirds, tying for the team lead with a career-best 10 tackles and added a sack and four TFLs in the victory for the Redbirds. The four TFLs are a league single-game high this season.

### Special Teams

**DB Hunter Lunsford, Indiana State**

6-1, 215, R-Sr., Elk Grove, Calif. (Consummes Oaks High / Columbia)

Lunsford put the first points on the board for the Sycamores on Saturday night as the red-shirt senior scooped up a fumble on a muffed punt and took it into the end zone to put Indiana State ahead early. The five-yard return was Indiana State's first fumble return TD since the 2019 season and highlighted his evening that featured two tackles on the day. Indiana State rallied to defeat Eastern Kentucky, 23-21.

### Newcomer

**WR Phazione McClurge, Indiana State**

6-2, 190, Gr., Chicago, Ill. (Mount Carmel High / Cornell)

McClurge hauled in a 10-yard touchdown pass in the second quarter to put the Sycamores ahead 14-7. He added the game-winning touchdown reception as time expired with the graduate student going up and over the defender for the 24-yard touchdown catch to silence the crowd at EKV and bring Indiana State onto the field in celebration. He finished with a career-high six catches for 75 yards in the win.

### Offensive Lineman

**LT Alex Jensen, South Dakota**

Jr. (5th), Plymouth, Minn. (Wayzata HS)

Top performer for a unit that rushed for 353 yards and four touchdowns and passed for 262 yards and two scores. Graded out at 94 percent. Offense generated 41 points and 452 yards in the first half despite not having its top two running backs.

## Open Season

The Missouri Valley Football Conference is celebrating its 37th anniversary this fall. Last spring, North Dakota State extended its active winning streak in MVFC season-opening games to 10 games with a 25-7 victory vs. Youngstown State on Feb. 21. Notably, Southern Illinois and Missouri State played in the league's first conference game on Sept. 7, 1985.

Team	Record	Home	Away	Streak
Illinois State	15-21	6-8	9-13	L3
Indiana State	11-23	9-10	2-13	L3
Missouri St.	17-19	7-11	10-8	W3
North Dakota	1-0	1-0	0-0	W1
NDSU	10-3	5-0	5-3	W10
UNI	24-12	14-3	10-9	L1
South Dakota	4-5	1-2	3-3	W4
SDSU	6-7	4-3	2-4	W2
S. Illinois	16-20	11-8	5-12	L6
W. Illinois	18-18	12-8	6-10	L2
Youngstown St.	18-6	11-0	7-6	L3

## MVFC is 17-2 vs. the FCS

Missouri Valley Football schools went 7-1 in non-league play on Sept. 18, and it has built its FCS-best record against peer conferences to 17-2. Here are the leaders (FCS vs. FCS) thru Sept. 18.

<b>Missouri Valley Football</b> .....	<b>17-2</b>
CAA Football .....	16-3
Big Sky .....	11-7
SoCon .....	8-5
ASUN .....	3-2

## Against the FBS

Counting South Dakota State's win at Colorado State on Sept. 3, MVFC schools have combined for 47 wins all-time against FBS opponents. During that last decade, the MVFC combined for 19 wins against FBS schools. The FCS has combined for 10 FBS wins during the 2021 fall season after recording just five total in 2019 (3) and the COVID-shortened 2020-21 season (2) combined.

## Dominant in the Massey Ratings

All 11 MVFC schools are ranked in the top 36 of the Massey Ratings. South Dakota State leads the league (and the nation), and the Jacks are one of eight MVFC schools in the Top 14. Four league teams are in the Top 6.

<b>1. South Dakota State</b>	<b>9. South Dakota</b>
2. Montana	10. Eastern Washington
<b>3. North Dakota State</b>	<b>11. North Dakota</b>
4. James Madison	<b>13. Missouri State</b>
<b>5. Southern Illinois</b>	<b>14. Youngstown State</b>
<b>6. UNI</b>	<b>19. Illinois State</b>
7. UC Davis	<b>22. Indiana State</b>
8. Sam Houston	<b>36. Western Illinois</b>

## Home-Opening Win Streaks

North Dakota continues to roll in home openers, notching its 35th straight win with a shutout over visiting Drake in the Alerus Center on Sept. 18. Earlier this season, North Dakota State extended its streak – second-best nationally – to 23.

**35 – North Dakota (1987-21)**

**23 – North Dakota State (1999-21)**

22 – Central Arkansas (2000-21)

19 – James Madison (2003-21)

19 – Harvard (2001-2019)

18 – Montana (2004-21)

17 – McNeese (2005-21)

## Big Sky-MVFC Challenge Series

The Missouri Valley Football Conference has won the 2021 Big Sky-MVFC Challenge Series. The 2021 season is the fifth year of the series. Last year's series had no regular-season games, but the MVFC won both playoff meetings. The previous three seasons (2017-19) featured 26 total regular-season matchups. Including the six games this year, MVFC schools have a 20-12 overall edge in regular-season games played and have won the series each season (5-3 in 2017, 5-3 in 2018, 6-4 in 2019, 4-2 in 2021).

Sept. 4 -- #7 North Dakota at Idaho State	UND, 35-14
Sept. 11 -- Northern Arizona at South Dakota	USD, 34-7
Sept. 11 -- Western Illinois at #4 Montana	UM, 42-7
Sept. 11 -- #14 UNI at Sacramento State	UNI, 34-16
Sept. 18 -- #6 E. Washington at W. Illinois	EWU, 62-56
Sept. 18 -- South Dakota at Cal Poly	USD, 48-14

## Strong Tops 3,000 Yards

South Dakota State RB Pierre Strong, Jr. became the seventh player in program history to top 3,000 career rushing yards, hitting the milestone in the win over Lindenwood. Strong now has 3,089 yards and moved into sixth place on the SDSU career charts, passing both Cory Koenig (2,990 yards from 2004-07) and Les Tuma (3,018 yards from 1970-73).

Former Jackrabbit Zach Zenner holds the league record with 6,548 yards (2011-14). Strong is 143 yards away from overtaking former Indiana State star Derrick Franklin (3,231 career yards from 1989-91) for 25th place on the all-time MVFC list.

- 6,548, Zach Zenner, South Dakota State, 2011-14
- 5,195, Marshaun Coprich, Illinois State, 2012-15
- 4,746, Herb Donaldson, Western Illinois, 2005-08
- 
- 3,466, Jamie Jones, Eastern Illinois, 1988-91
- 3,452, Jeff Stovall, UNI, 1993-96
- 3,406, Adam Bengt, UNI, 1998-02
- 3,259, Jody Webb, Youngstown State, 2013-16
- 3,231, Derrick Franklin, Indiana State, 1989-91

# 2021 Missouri Valley Football Conference Weekly Release (Sept. 21)

## vs. Non-Conference (19-11)

Home: 11-1 / Away: 8-10 / Neut: 0-0

### NCAA FCS Teams (17-2)

ASUN.....	2-0
Central Arkansas.....	1-0
Eastern Kentucky.....	1-0
Big Sky.....	4-2
Cal Poly.....	1-0
Eastern Washington.....	0-1
Idaho State.....	1-0
Montana.....	0-1
Northern Arizona.....	1-0
Sacramento State.....	1-0
CAA.....	2-0
Albany.....	1-0
Towson.....	1-0
Ohio Valley.....	3-0
Eastern Illinois.....	2-0
SE Missouri State.....	1-0
PFL.....	5-0
Butler.....	1-0
Dayton.....	1-0
Drake.....	1-0
St. Thomas.....	1-0
Valparaiso.....	1-0
Southland.....	1-0
UIW.....	1-0

### NCAA FBS Teams (1-9)

Big 12.....	0-4
Iowa State.....	0-1
Kansas.....	0-1
Kansas State.....	0-1
Oklahoma State.....	0-1
Big Ten.....	0-2
Michigan State.....	0-1
Northwestern.....	0-1
Mid-American.....	0-2
Ball State.....	0-1
Western Michigan.....	0-1
Mountain West.....	1-1
Colorado State.....	1-0
Utah State.....	0-1

### Non Division I (1-0)

Lindenwood.....	1-0
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### vs. Ranked (FCS) Teams (1-2)

#16 UCA at Missouri State (9/11), W, 43-34  
 Western Illinois at #4 Montana (9/11), L, 42-7  
 #6 E. Washington at WIU (9/18), L, 62-56

### vs. Ranked (FBS) Teams (0-2)

UNI at #7 Iowa State (9/5), L, 16-10  
 Missouri St. at #22 Okla. St. (9/5), L, 23-16

## South Dakota State the Favorite

For the first time since joining the Missouri Valley Football Conference for the 2008 season, South Dakota State was tabbed as the league pre-season favorite in a poll conducted by league coaches, media and sports information directors. SDSU received 24 first-place votes and 454 total points to edge NDSU.

### MVFC 2021 Preseason Poll

1. South Dakota State (24).....	454
2. North Dakota State (18).....	435
3. North Dakota.....	357
4. Southern Illinois.....	345
5. UNI (1).....	311
6. Missouri State.....	256
7. Illinois State.....	196
8. South Dakota.....	163
9. Youngstown State.....	126
10. Indiana State.....	112
11. Western Illinois.....	83

## NDSU Leads the Nation

North Dakota State continues to lead the FCS in rushing with 348.3 yards per game through three non-conference games. The Bison have used 13 ball carriers with eight of those players averaging more than 8.0 yards per carry, and seven players have rushed for touchdowns led by fullback Hunter Luepke's three. Dominic Gonnella leads the Bison with 29 carries for 238 yards and SMU transfer TaMerik Williams is second on the team with 172 yards on 19 carries.

<b>1 North Dakota State (MVFC)</b>	<b>348.3</b>
2 Harvard (Ivy League)	335.0
3 Columbia (Ivy League)	312.0
4 Mercer (SoCon)	293.5
5 Sam Houston (WAC)	291.0

## Good to the Last Drop

On Saturday, Sept. 18, 2021, Indiana State knocked off Eastern Kentucky on the game's final play. Not counting overtimes, there have now been 24 games in which a league team won or lost on the final play. All but the four below have been decided by a field goal. Notably, the Conference is 8-1 in non-league games decided on the final play.

10-5-02	Southern Illinois 54, Western Illinois 52 Joel Sambursky-to-Brandon Robinson 6-yard pass
9-27-08	South Dakota State 50, S.F. Austin 48 Kyle Minett 1-yard TD run
10-25-08	Southern Illinois 23, Missouri State 17 Chris Dieker-to-Marc Cheatham 51-yard TD pass
9-18-21	Indiana State 23, Eastern Kentucky 21 Kurtis Wilderman-to-Phazione McClurge 24-yard TD pass

## Winning with Waring

Freshman QB Jackson Waring has seen limited action during his young Redbird career, but an injury to starter Bryce Jefferson early in the contest against Eastern Illinois forced him into action. Waring controlled the game for ISU and led the Redbirds to the 31-24 victory in the 109th Mid-America Classic, completing 5-of-7 passes and running for a crucial touchdown late in the third quarter to put the 'Birds up by a score.

## Breaking Loose

Freshman RB Cole Mueller of Illinois State broke loose for an 80-yard touchdown run in the opener against Butler on way to 111 yards rushing and followed that up with a career-high 144 yards rushing to help the Redbirds pick up a rivalry win over Eastern Illinois. He's currently averaging 9.3 yards per carry and currently ranks second in the MVFC with 261 yards on the ground.

## 2021 Valley Football Teams in the Top 25

Team	Pre	S6	S13	S20
Illinois State	rv	rv	--	rv
Indiana St.	--	--	--	--
Missouri St.	24	23	16	18
UND	7	7	11	10
NDSU	3	4	4	5
UNI	16	15	15	14
S. Dakota	--	rv	rv	rv
SDSU	3	2	2	2
S. Illinois	7	8	8	7
W. Illinois	--	--	--	--
Youngstown	rv	rv	--	--

\*Rank represents highest position in the two polls (Stats Perform or AFCA FCS Coaches polls)



## Getting Defensive

The Redbirds have become accustomed to finding the end zone on the defensive side of the football in recent years, and they kept that streak alive at Eastern Illinois thanks to an impressive pick six by Jarrell Jackson. The 95-yard interception return for a touchdown was the first of the season for the Redbirds and the first since Kenton Wilhoit's 26-yard pick six last spring at UNI. ISU has now scored a defensive touchdown in each of the last 13 seasons under the leadership of Brock Spack.

## McClurge's Big Day



The Indiana State wide receiver room has showcased a "next man up" mentality in the 2021 season and Phazione McClurge has taken advantage over the last two weeks to post nine catches for 101 yards and two touchdowns. His six-catch, 75-yard evening at Eastern Kentucky featured two touchdown catches, including the game-winning 24-yard catch in traffic as time expired at Roy Kidd Stadium. McClurge has taken over one of the top receiving roles on the season with Rontrez Morgan and provides a potent 1-2 punch in the Indiana State passing game.

## Morgan Catches Everything

Rontrez Morgan continues to be a vacuum for the football this season as the senior wide receiver has already surpassed his previous season-high for catches through just three games in the 2021 season. After opening up the year with a six-catch game against Eastern Illinois, he added nine more receptions at Northwestern two weekends ago. He added four more catches for a season-high 75-yards in the win against Eastern Kentucky and continues to sit among the Missouri Valley receiving leaders heading into conference play.

## There Goes That Man Again

Inoke Moala continues to terrorize opponent backfields through the first three games of the season as the Sycamores head into conference play. The redshirt senior defensive lineman has recorded multiple tackles for loss in each of the three games this season and paces the Missouri Valley with 5.5 TFLs after his 1.5 tackle-for-loss game against Eastern Kentucky. His 2.5 sacks also lead the Valley on the year with teammates Heath Stephen II (2.0) and Kaleb Brewer (1.5) in the top-six in the conference in QB takedowns this season.

## Coming From All Angles



Missouri State's 43-34 win over UCA in its Sept. 11 home opener included offensive, defensive and special teams touchdowns for the Bears. It marked the first time MoState has achieved that feat since its 27-24 win last season (March 13) against this week's opponent, South Dakota.

## Rant About Grant

Bears punter, Grant Burkett (So., Joplin, Mo.) is tops in the MVFC and 2nd nationally in punting average (50.8), while helping the Bears lead the nation in net punting (48.3) this fall. Five of his 10 punt attempts this season have been for 50 yards or more with a long of 62, while he has also placed half his attempts inside the 20. Last year, Burkett had a 43.0 punting average, which ranked 13th nationally and third in the MVFC while earning All-MVFC honorable mention distinction.

## Staying in Our Lane

Xavier Lane (WR, Montgomery, Ala.) is coming off a career-high 148 yards on 9 pass receptions in his last outing against UCA, the most receiving yards by a Bears wideout since 2018. He currently ranks 2nd in the MVFC in both receptions per game (8.5) and receiving yards per game (113.0) while checking in at No. 4 nationally in receptions per game and No. 7 among all FCS receivers in receiving yards per game.

## Hawks Extend Streaks



North Dakota extended its streak to 12-straight home wins and 35 consecutive home opening wins as the Fighting Hawks (2-1) shut out Drake (1-2) at the Alerus Center in the Hawks 38-0 victory. It was the first UND shutout since the 2017 home-opener in 2017 against Missouri State.

## Skokna Eclipses 100 Yards

Luke Skokna rushed for 101 yards on three carries in the first quarter to record his first 100-yard game as a Fighting Hawk ... He finished with 197 all-purpose yards, setting a new career-high one week after his previous best of 145 ... Skokna's 51-yard touchdown run was UND's longest play from the line scrimmage this season

## Players of the Week

### Sept. 5

Offense -- TB Jaleel McLaughlin, Youngstown State  
Offense -- QB Nic Baker, Southern Illinois  
Defense -- DB Michael Thomas, Indiana State  
Special Teams -- PK Colt McFadden, Youngstown St.  
Newcomer -- QB Jason Shelley, Missouri State  
Newcomer -- QB Chris Oladokun, South Dakota St.  
Offensive Lineman -- OL Matt Waletzko, UND

### Sept. 12

Offense -- WR Xavier Lane, Missouri State  
\*Defense -- MLB Spencer Cuvelier, UNI  
Special Teams -- CB Montrae Braswell, Missouri St.  
Newcomer -- WR Xavier Lane, Missouri State  
Offensive Lineman -- RT/RG Cordell Volson, NDSU

### Sept. 19

Offense -- QB Connor Sampson, Western Illinois  
Defense -- DE Braydon Deming, Illinois State  
Special Teams -- DB Hunter Lunsford, Indiana State  
Newcomer -- WR Phazione McClurge, Indiana State  
Offensive Lineman -- LT Alex Jensen, South Dakota

*\*denotes National Player of the Week*

## Up Next .. the Bison

Following a bye week Saturday, the University of North Dakota will open Missouri Valley Football Conference play when it hosts in-state rival North Dakota State on Saturday, Oct. 2.

## Bison Top Towson



North Dakota State closed its non-conference schedule with a 35-7 road win over Towson last week. It was the same final score as the last meeting between the two teams in the 2013 national championship game. NDSU scored touchdowns on its first three possessions including a 67-yard passing play from Quincy Patterson to Christian Watson to open the scoring. The Bison held Towson to 103 yards through the first three quarters, extending a streak of nine scoreless quarters on defense. Jackson Hankey made a team-high seven tackles and Will Mostaert had two of NDSU's five sacks as the Bison limited Towson to 35 yards on the ground and held a 493-200 advantage in total yards.

## Getting Off the Field

NDSU leads the conference and ranks fourth in the FCS this week in third-down conversion defense. The Bison have limited opponents to a combined 7 of 40 on third down for 18 percent, including an 0-for-11 effort against Albany in the season-opener. Opponents have gone three plays and out on 32 percent of their drives (11 of 34). NDSU is third nationally in total defense allowing a league-low 196.7 yards per game, and the Bison also lead the league with the nation's No. 6 in rushing defense allowing 44.0 yards per game.

## Up Next .. Penguins



After beating visiting St. Thomas last Saturday, UNI is idle this weekend. UNI hosts Youngstown State for Homecoming in its next game on Oct. 2. The Panthers are 24-9 against the Penguins. UNI shut out Youngstown 21-0 in the teams last meeting in Ohio on Feb. 27, 2021.

## Stopping The Ground Game

UNI dominated St. Thomas in its home season opener, 44-3, last Saturday. UNI scored off the opening drive, and six Panthers found a way to score. UNI kept St. Thomas to just 26 rushing yards. The Panthers allowed only 105 total offensive yards, the lowest by any MVFC opponent this season.

## Day Gets the Start

QB Theo Day got his start at quarterback for UNI in a 44-3 rout of St. Thomas. Day ran a balanced offense, with 193 yards of rushing and completed 18 passes for 193 yards. He kept the ball himself to add 11 yards to the team total for rushing. He connected with Isaiah Weston for a 60-yard touchdown.

## Run The Ball



With South Dakota's top-two running backs limited Saturday, it was freshmen Mike Mansaray (21 carries, career-high 141 yards, 2 TDs) and Nate Thomas (15 carries, career-high 92 yards, 1 TD) who starred in a 48-14 win against Cal Poly. The Coyotes ran for 353 yards, the most in five-plus seasons under Bob Nielson. The Coyotes now have four running backs averaging better than five yards per carry.

## Stopping the Run

Opposing running backs during South Dakota's three non-conference battles ran 58 times for 100 yards with no touchdowns. The Coyotes enter Valley play with the 12th-best scoring defense (12.7 ppg) and 18th-best run defense (94.7 ypg). All-Valley linebackers Jack Cochrane (24 tackles) and Brock Mogensen (22 tackles) have combined for nine tackles for loss.

## USD in Valley Openers

South Dakota has won its last four MVFC openers, three of which came on the road. The Coyotes beat then-No. 7 Illinois State to start the spring season. Missouri State is ranked No. 18 in both FCS polls.

## SDSU Kicks Off No. 14



The 2021 season marks South Dakota State's 14th as a member of the Missouri Valley Football Conference. Since joining the league in 2008, SDSU is the only program in that span to not have a losing season in conference play. The Jackrabbits hold a 71-31 record in MVFC games and have won six or more league games six times. SDSU earned a share of league titles in 2016 and during the 2020-21 spring season.

## Big-Play Jacks

Through its first two games this season, the South Dakota State offense has averaged 8.4 yards per play. The Jackrabbits averaged 7.5 yards per play (62 plays, 464 yards) in the Sept. 3 season opener at Colorado State, followed by averaging 9.3 yards per play (60 plays, 460 yards) in their home opener against Lindenwood. The Jackrabbits have 14 plays of 20 or more yards in their first two games, the longest of which was a 68-yard run by Pierre Strong, Jr. versus Lindenwood. Strong holds an average of 12.4 yards per rushing attempt, gaining 248 yards on only 20 carries so far this season with three touchdowns. Conversely, SDSU is limiting the opposition to 4.8 yards per play, including 2.9 yards per rushing attempt.

## 50-Plus Club

Cole Frahm made his second career field goal of more than 50 yards in the Sept. 11 game against Lindenwood, connecting on a career-long 54-yarder in the second quarter. His previous career best was a 52-yarder this past March against Youngstown State. Frahm's 54-yarder is tied for the fourth-longest field goal in program history and is the 14th field goal of 50-plus yards by a Jackrabbit. Parker Douglass (2007) and Chase Vinatieri (2018) hold the school record with 57-yard field goals and Douglass connected on five field goals of 50-plus yards in his All-America career.

## Salukis Rout Dayton



In the 55-3 romp over Dayton last week, SIU averaged 9.3 yards per play en-route to 658 yards of total offense, 8 touchdowns and 2 field goals. SIU had 9 plays of 20 yards or more. Six of those nine plays were rushing plays. SIU rushed for 406 yards versus the Flyers. All of SIU's points came on offense as there were no turnovers in the game.

## Scoring Machine

Saluki RB Javon Williams scored his 31st career TD and his 29th career rushing TD vs. Dayton. He is in sixth place in career TDs at SIU, is tied for 5th in career rushing TDs and is 11th in career points scored with 186. Williams has averaged 6.6 points per game in his 28-game career.

## Climbing The Ladder

WR Landon Lenoir raised his career receptions total to 160 and his career yards receiving total to 1,979 with 7 receptions for 98 yards vs. Dayton. He is third all-time at SIU in career receptions and fourth in career receiving yards. Meanwhile, DE Anthony Knighton moved into sole possession of second place in career sacks at SIU with 0.5 sacks vs. Dayton. Knighton has 23.0 sacks in his career and is 0.5 sacks shy of first place James Phillips (1977-80).

## ISU Series Renewed

SIU leads the Illinois State series 41-38-3, with ISU winning 5 of the last 6 meetings. It is SIU's second longest football series (Southeast Missouri, 89 meetings). The pandemic riddled 2020-21 season marked the first time since 1969 SIU and ISU did not meet in football.

## Valiant Comeback Falls Short



In an admirable comeback attempt, Western ultimately dropped a 62-56 decision to Eastern Washington on Saturday (Sept. 18). It was the first-ever meeting between the two programs. A combined final score of 118 points was the most ever in a WIU game.

## Offensive Outburst

WIU's 56 points against Eastern was the most scored by the Leathernecks since plugging in 49 versus Missouri State in 2017. It was the first time that WIU had produced over 600 yards of total offense (ending with 643) since totaling 629 vs. Illinois State in 2010. Additionally, the evening marked the first time Western tacked 80 or more plays (ending with 80) since last spring vs. UNI.

## Defense Spreads Wealth



YSU has six players with at least eight-or-more tackles after two contests. Leading the defense is first-year starter Jordan White who has been credited with 16 tackles in two games. Defensive back D'Marco Augustin ranks second on the team with 15 tackles. Both players had career-best efforts at Michigan State. LB Grant Dixon, who led the Penguins in the spring, is third on the team with 13 total tackles. FS Zaire Jones is fourth with nine stops. Safety Gage Salyers and DE James Jackson each have eight stops so far this year. Dixon led the Penguins in the spring with 55 total tackles. In seven of nine games with the program, he has recorded at least six stops.

## McLaughlin Readies for MVFC

In his final five contests of the spring against MVFC opponents, TB Jaleel McLaughlin rushed for more than 100 yards in each game. He averaged 127.2 yards per contest in his last five games. McLaughlin rushed for 636 yards in the last five spring contests, highlighted by a 166-yard effort against South Dakota on March 20. He had a season-high 28 carries against Coyotes.

## Rushing Yards Per Game

A pair of league RBs are in the top five nationally heading into the final week of September in rushing yards per game. Youngstown State's Jaleel McLaughlin leads the MVFC and ranks fourth nationally with 138.0 yards per game. Pierre Strong Jr. of South Dakota State is 5th nationally with a 124.0 ypg average.

1	Aaron Shampklin, Harvard (Ivy League)	183.0
2	Ramon Jefferson, Sam Houston (WAC)	148.0
3	Jalen Leary, Stetson (Pioneer)	146.5
4	<b>Jaleel McLaughlin, YSU (MVFC)</b>	<b>138.0</b>
5	<b>Pierre Strong, SDSU (MVFC)</b>	<b>124.0</b>

## Total Receiving Yards

Western Illinois WR Dennis Houston leads the FCS with 455 total receiving yards through WIU's first three games. Avante Cox of Southern Illinois is fifth nationally as he's amassed 325 total yards in SIU's first three contests.

1	<b>Dennis Houston, Western Ill. (MVFC)</b>	<b>455</b>
2	Beau Kelly, Portland St. (Big Sky)	344
3	Xavier Gipson, SFA (WAC)	337
4	Matthew Rivera, Presbyterian (Pioneer)	329
5	<b>Avante Cox, Southern Ill. (MVFC)</b>	<b>325</b>

## Net Punting

Grant Burkett of Missouri State is averaging 50.8 yards per boot so far this season. That figure leads the league and ranks second nationally. No MVFC punter has averaged better than 50 yards per punt for a full season, as Mike Scifres of Western Illinois holds the league single-season mark with his 48.0 average in 2002. Missouri State, meanwhile, leads the FCS in net punting with its 48.30 average.

1	Kevin Ryan, Idaho St. (Big Sky)	52.2
2	<b>Grant Burkett, Missouri St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>50.8</b>
3	Jake Gerardi, Southern Utah (Big Sky)	50.3
4	Max Quick, SFA (WAC)	48.3
5	Brian Buschini, Montana (Big Sky)	48.0

1	<b>Missouri St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>48.30</b>
2	Idaho St. (Big Sky)	47.38
3	Montana (Big Sky)	46.88
4	Sacramento St. (Big Sky)	44.73
5	Davidson (Pioneer)	44.25

## Scoring Defense

North Dakota State is yielding just 4.3 points per game (through three games this year). That leads the league and ranks 2nd nationally. Four MVFC schools rank in the Top 15 nationally.

1	Princeton (Ivy League)	0.0
2	<b>North Dakota St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>4.3</b>
3	Penn (Ivy League)	6.0
4	Montana (Big Sky)	7.0
5	ETSU (SoCon)	7.7
6	Sacred Heart (NEC)	8.0
7	Harvard (Ivy League)	9.0
8	Villanova (CAA)	11.0
9	Jackson St. (SWAC)	11.3
10	<b>UNI (MVFC)</b>	<b>11.7</b>
11	Montana St. (Big Sky)	12.0
12	<b>South Dakota (MVFC)</b>	<b>12.7</b>
13	James Madison (CAA)	13.7
14	Columbia (Ivy League)	14.0
15	<b>South Dakota St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>15.0</b>
15	Sam Houston (WAC)	15.0

## Scoring Offense

South Dakota State is averaging 47.0 points per game to lead the league in scoring. That figure ranks 6th-best nationally. SDSU and NDSU join James Madison, Villanova and Harvard as the only FCS schools to rank in the Top 15 in scoring offense and in scoring defense.

1	Presbyterian (Pioneer)	77.3
2	Eastern Wash. (Big Sky)	53.3
2	James Madison (CAA)	53.3
4	Stetson (Pioneer)	51.5
5	Southeastern La. (Southland)	49.0
6	<b>South Dakota St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>47.0</b>
6	Sam Houston (WAC)	47.0
8	Villanova (CAA)	45.3
9	Butler (Pioneer)	44.3
10	Harvard (Ivy League)	44.0
10	UC Davis (Big Sky)	44.0
12	<b>North Dakota St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>42.3</b>
13	<b>Southern Ill. (MVFC)</b>	<b>41.7</b>

## Turnover Margin

UNI leads the Conference and ranks fourth in the FCS with a +2.33 per game turnover differential. Five league schools are in the Top 14.

1	Campbell (Big South)	2.67
1	SFA (WAC)	2.67
1	Villanova (CAA)	2.67
4	<b>UNI (MVFC)</b>	<b>2.33</b>
4	James Madison (CAA)	2.33
4	UC Davis (Big Sky)	2.33
7	<b>Missouri St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>2.00</b>
7	Delaware (CAA)	2.00
7	Stetson (Pioneer)	2.00
10	<b>Indiana St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>1.67</b>
10	<b>North Dakota St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>1.67</b>
10	Alcorn (SWAC)	1.67
10	Holy Cross (Patriot)	1.67
14	<b>South Dakota St. (MVFC)</b>	<b>1.50</b>