

Ohio State Is No. 5 In First College Football Playoff Rankings Of 2021



The first College Football Playoff rankings of the season were released on Tuesday night, with Ohio State claiming the No. 5 spot. The Buckeyes sit behind Georgia, Alabama, Michigan State and Oregon.

Cincinnati sits immediately behind Ohio State at No. 6 despite holding an 8-0 record and wins over Indiana and No. 10 Notre Dame.

College Football Playoff Top 25

1. Georgia (8-0)

The Bulldogs are the nation's top team in the College Football Playoff, the Associated Press and the USA Today Coaches polls. Last week, Georgia rode on the shoulders of their ferocious defense, as three turnovers led to 21 points in the final 2 ½ minutes of the second quarter against Florida. Stetson Bennett continues to lead the team at quarterback. He completed 10-of-19 passes for 161 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions to win over the Gators. Former starter J.T. Daniels is still on the mend with a lat injury.

2. Alabama (7-1)

The Crimson Tide was on a "bye" during Week 9. It came at the right time in more ways than one. Not only did Nick Saban get a rare weekend off for his 70th birthday, but his team also received much-needed rest and a chance to hit reset heading into the home stretch of the season.

In the last two games, Alabama lost to then-unranked Texas A&M 41-38 by a last-second field goal from the Aggies. Then, the Crimson Tide hosted Tennessee in Tuscaloosa and won an all-too-close game with the Volunteers. Saban's squad looked flat in the first three quarters, allowing Tennessee to keep the game within one score until Alabama broke free for a 52-24 win.

3. Michigan State (8-0)

The Spartans came back from a 16-point deficit against in-state rival Michigan to win 37-33 in East Lansing. Kenneth Walker III single-handedly won Michigan State the game by rushing for 197 yards and five touchdowns in the victory, with three of those scores coming in the third or fourth quarter.

Michigan State was losing by three late in the fourth quarter, but an untimely fumble from Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy in plus territory led to an MSU recovery and Walker's final touchdown of the game

The Spartans are now 8-0 for the first time since 2015 — the year the program last made the College Football Playoff.

4. Oregon (7-1)

Oregon leaped over Ohio State, Oklahoma and Cincinnati in the first College Football Playoff rankings. It would seem the committee values the Ducks road win in Columbus in Week 2 more than the team's overall performance over the last six weeks.

On Oct. 30, Oregon defeated a 2-5 Colorado squad with little to play for, but after winning tight contests against Cal and UCLA on back-to-back weeks, the Ducks needed to make a statement. It did just that by blowing out the Buffaloes 52-29 as if the entire playoff committee itself was in attendance in Eugene.

The good news for the Ducks? It worked.

5. **Ohio State (7-1)**

Here's the one Buckeye Sports Bulletin's readers care about the most. Deservedly so, most of you pay money to read about Ohio State athletics — primarily, the football team.

After a month of stress-free wins and an unstoppable offense, Ohio State had to grind out a victory against Penn State. The Buckeye relied heavily on its rejuvenated defense for a 33-24 win and even got a touchdown from defensive tackle Jerron Cage.

"Defense won this game," coach Ryan Day said.

Quarterback C.J. Stroud overcame early shakiness and jitters to throw for 305 yards and a touchdown. Running back TreVeyon Henderson faced some clogged rushing lanes before finally breaking free in the second half.

In a way, Ohio State controls its destiny to get into the playoff — well, sort of. Some things outside of the Buckeyes' control need to happen to feel genuinely confident about their chances. Day repeatedly states that his team is in "March Madness" mode, which essentially means "win and advance." If Ohio State keeps winning, they will remain in the conversation for the final CFP rankings.

6. Cincinnati (8-0)

The Bearcats won their second-straight road game to stay undefeated, but it was more challenging than the final score indicated against a now 1-7 Tulane team that started its third-string quarterback.

Cincinnati carried a 14-12 halftime lead before scoring 17 unanswered points in the second half. Tulane quarterback Kai Horton, a freshman who started in place of two injured signal-callers, threw two

interceptions and was sacked four times.

The Bearcats' strength and identity is its defense. Cincinnati will need to put together almost perfect performances on offense and defense against Tulsa, South Florida, SMU and East Carolina to have even a fighter's chance of making the CFP.

The necessity to play perfect football is an unfortunate reality for Cincinnati and all Group of Five teams, but it is the reality.

7. Michigan
8. Oklahoma
9. Wake Forest
10. Notre Dame
11. Oklahoma State
12. Baylor
13. Auburn
14. Texas A&M
15. BYU
16. Ole Miss
17. Mississippi State
18. Kentucky
19. NC State
20. Minnesota
21. Wisconsin
22. Iowa
23. Fresno State
24. San Diego State
25. Pittsburgh

AP Poll 25

1. Georgia
2. Cincinnati
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4. Alabama
5. Michigan State
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15. Ole Miss
16. UTSA
17. BYU

18. Kentucky
19. Iowa
20. Houston
21. Coastal Carolina
22. Penn State
23. SMU
24. Louisiana
25. Fresno State