

What to Watch: A Big Ten Ranked Clash And Two SEC Top-12 Tilts In Week 8



We've reached the halfway point of the 2024 college football season. After a slew of historic upsets and instant classics, the climb towards securing a bid in the newly expanded 12-team playoff continues to heat up for teams around the country.

Last week, then-No. 2 Ohio State fell to now-No. 2 Oregon in Eugene in a 32-31 thriller. College football fans also witnessed an overtime upset, as LSU took down Ole Miss 29-26 in Baton Rouge.

This week, we'll once again see ranked matchups between the sport's bluebloods as Ohio State fans will have Saturday off for the first time since Week 2.

No. 24 Michigan at No. 22 Illinois (3:30 p.m., CBS)

In one of the more aggressive national championship hangovers that has been seen in recent memory, the No. 24 Michigan Wolverines will aim to reverse their hurt following a 27-17 loss to Washington on Oct. 5 against the No. 22 Fighting Illini.

The carousel of quarterbacks for the Wolverines this season has been a massive hindrance for the group offensively, as nobody under center has been able to solidify themselves as a true top option for first-year head coach Sherrone Moore. Freshly-named starting graduate quarterback Jack Tuttle came in against Washington and went 10-for-18 for 98 yards with a touchdown and interception. Tuttle likely possesses the best arm on the Michigan roster, so expect to see a healthy dose of him while the Wolverines get their gunslinger situation figured out.

Illinois, much like Indiana, has been the darling of the Big Ten this season, jumping out to a 5-1 start. The Fighting Illini have relied on the stellar play of junior quarterback Luke Almyer, who has thrown for 14 touchdowns to just one interception this season. Illinois boasts ranked wins over then-No. 19 Kansas and then-No.22 Nebraska and outlasted Purdue 50-49 in overtime on Oct. 12.

If Michigan's quarterback woes continue and Almyer is able to get on schedule early, the folks in Ann Arbor may have a tougher start to their season than they had anticipated in January. **BSB prediction: Illinois 34, Michigan 17**

No. 7 Alabama at No. 11 Tennessee (3:30 p.m., ABC)

The Third Saturday in October has arrived.

A rivalry that has begun to heat up following Tennessee's 52-49 last-second victory over Alabama in 2022, both teams are looking to stay on track after suffering losses in the same week earlier this month on Oct. 5. While the Crimson Tide's loss likely looks worse on paper, a 40-35 defeat to Vanderbilt in Nashville as the top-ranked team, Tennessee falling to Arkansas 19-14 deterred its playoff shot quite a bit, as well.

Under first-year head coach Kalen DeBoer, Alabama has been a bit of a rollercoaster this season. The Crimson Tide found themselves in a dog fight with USF for the second year in a row before ultimately pulling away for a 42-16 victory on Sept. 7. After leading 28-0 over Georgia on Sept. 28, Alabama allowed for the Bulldogs to claw all the way back to a 34-33 lead with 2:30 left to play. Freshman receiver Ryan Williams saved the day for the Tide, hauling in a 75-yard touchdown catch to carry Alabama to a 41-34 victory

Tennessee, while losing to Arkansas, has looked much more dominant in its wins. The Volunteers hold point margins in wins of 66, 41 and 71 all in a three-game stretch. Highly-touted redshirt freshman quarterback Nico Iamaleava has totaled seven touchdowns to three interceptions this season while throwing for a 66 percent completion clip.

This game could be a tossup early, but Alabama's inevitability will take over in the second half. **BSB prediction: Alabama 38, Tennessee 21**

No. 5 Georgia at No. 1 Texas (7:30 p.m., ABC)

When Texas moved over from the Big 12 into the SEC, many fans in Austin, Texas, knew that the schedule was going to become much, much harder in the South.

Many likely didn't expect the Longhorns to hold the top-ranking once the meat of the schedule rolled around.

The Longhorns have not skipped a beat throughout their first six games, even with losing redshirt junior quarterback Quinn Ewers for a two-game stretch early in the season. Ewers returned against Oklahoma and led the team to a 34-3 victory over the Sooners in the Red River Rivalry.

Even if Ewers were to go down again, redshirt freshman gunslinger Arch Manning played exceptionally in the absence of Ewers, throwing for 806 yards and eight touchdowns in his two and a half games of action.

Georgia, like its classic SEC counterparts Alabama and Tennessee, can likely not afford to drop another game if it wants a shot at a bye in the 12-team playoff. The Bulldogs only blemish is to the aforementioned Crimson Tide, but this week's test could prove to be harder against a talented Texas team.

A convincing win over then-No. 10 Clemson in the season opener is the biggest win so far for Georgia, but taking down a top-ranked team could firmly put the Bulldogs back into the conversation of America's best team. However, Texas' stars on both sides of the ball could spell disaster for the folks from Athens. **BSB prediction: Texas 30, Georgia 22**

Other games to watch:

- Auburn at No. 19 Missouri (noon, ESPN)
- No. 6 Miami at Louisville (noon, ABC)
- Nebraska at No. 16 Indiana (noon, FOX)
- Baylor at Texas Tech (3:30 p.m., ESPN 2)
- No. 8 LSU at Arkansas (7 p.m., ESPN)
- Iowa at Michigan State (7:30 p.m., NBC)
- UCF at No. 9 Iowa State (7:30 p.m., FS1)