

What to Watch: Four SEC Teams Try To Stay Alive In Playoff Race, Another Ranked Big Ten Tilt



With Ohio State back on the field this week hosting Nebraska at noon on Fox for Big Noon Kickoff, Buckeye fans will look to fill their college football appetite with the remaining slate of games in Week 9.

With no game last week, fans were surely entertained by then-No.5 Georgia's throttling of formerly top-ranked Texas and then-No. 11 Tennessee giving now-No.15 Alabama its second loss of the season.

This week, there will be five ranked matchups, including three in the SEC and a lone Big Ten clash in what should set up to be another week of instant classics and thrilling contests.

No. 21 Missouri at No. 15 Alabama (3:30 p.m., ABC)

After falling last week to now-No.7 Tennessee, the Crimson Tide suffered their second loss before November for the first time since 2007, Nick Saban's first season in Tuscaloosa. Another loss could spell disaster for the historic program, and Alabama will need to pick up a win this week to stay alive in the hunt for a potential SEC championship game bid and playoff bid.

Missouri is coming off a whirlwind of a game, losing star senior quarterback Brady Cook for a portion of the team's 21-17 comeback win over Auburn in Columbia, Missouri. Cook inevitably returned to lead a game-winning, 95-yard drive to hand another heartbreaking loss to the Tigers.

Alabama will need to do what it's done all season long to have sustained success: feed freshman wide receiver Ryan Williams. The wideout poured in 73 yards and a score against the Volunteers and he'll need to have another big game to take down a Missouri team that is looking to knock the Crimson Tide out of a playoff spot for what would be the third time in the College Football Playoff era. **BSB prediction: Alabama 27, Missouri 23**

No. 8 LSU at No. 14 Texas A&M (7:30 p.m., ABC)

Following an opening game loss to Notre Dame, first-year head coach Mike Elko has led Texas A&M to

six straight wins, including a 41-10 boat racing of then-No. 9 Missouri on Oct. 5 - the only loss of the season for the Tigers so far.

Since that loss to the Fighting Irish, the Aggies have averaged 34.5 points per game and continue to climb in the rankings. LSU, like the Aggies, dropped its opening game, a head-scratching 27-20 loss to now-unranked USC.

With both teams rolling heading into this Week 9 tilt, it's hard to tell which team will be able to come out on top, but the edge could go to LSU's passing offense (8th in NCAA, 322.4 yards per game) against the Tigers' 52nd-ranked passing defense (209.0 yards per game). **BSB prediction: LSU 44, Texas A&M 35**

No. 20 Illinois at No. 1 Oregon (3:30 p.m., CBS)

Ohio State would be able to provide anecdotal evidence to Illinois that Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Ore., is a tough place to play, as the Buckeyes fell 32-31 to the Ducks on Oct. 12.

Now in Week 9, the Fighting Illini will look to avenge Ohio State in another installment of old Big Ten versus new Big Ten and the test is Illinois' largest to date.

The top-ranked Ducks, who had close calls against Idaho and No. 17 Boise State earlier in the year, have found their footing since and remain undefeated. A 35-0 drubbing of Purdue last week tied for the largest win of the season so far for Oregon, much of which can be credited to the incredibly efficient arm of graduate quarterback Dillon Gabriel. The gunslinger possesses the top-ranked completion percentage in the country, sitting at 77.0 percent through seven games.

Illinois will need to rely on its 22nd-ranked scoring defense which is giving up 18.1 points per game, and its efficient pass defense, a unit that surrendered just shy of 200 yards a contest. The Illini are coming off of a 21-7 win over Michigan that knocked the defending champions out of the AP top 25, giving up just 322 total yards in the game. **BSB prediction: Oregon 34, Illinois 24**

Other games to watch:

- No. 12 Notre Dame at No. 24 Navy (Noon, ABC)
- Oklahoma at No. 18 Ole Miss (Noon, ESPN)
- Washington at No. 13 Indiana (Noon, BTN)
- No. 11 BYU at UCF (3:30 p.m., ESPN)
- No. 5 Texas at No. 25 Vanderbilt (4:15 p.m., SEC Network)
- No. 3 Penn State at Wisconsin (7:30 p.m., NBC)
- No. 22 SMU at Duke (8 p.m., ACC Network)