

# What To Watch: Two Potential Playoff Elimination Games And A Battle On The Coast



While No. 2 Ohio State tries to hit home-run style plays at Wrigley Field on Saturday against Northwestern, a myriad of teams continue to fight to maintain a spot in the 12-team College Football Playoff.

Last week, then-No. 18 Pittsburgh took a massive hit to its resume, falling to Virginia 24-19 at home. No. 22 LSU, sitting with three losses on the season now, needs a miracle after being trounced by No. 10 Alabama, 42-13, in Baton Rouge, La.

Flipping the calendar over to Week 12, here's what to look out for as college football's regular season begins to wrap up.

## **No. 20 Clemson at Pittsburgh (Noon, ESPN)**

The ACC feels like a flaming stock car trying to finish a race this season, with no teams remaining undefeated as the conference hopes to avoid eating itself alive before the final playoff bracket.

Clemson and Pittsburgh, both sitting with two losses, continue in the hunt to reach the playoffs but after this weekend, only one team will have a chance to make the postseason.

The Tigers, with losses to Georgia (34-3, Week 1) and Louisville (33-21, Week 10), have done a good job at "spacing out" their losses, if that is possible. With that, they have avoided a major slipping in the polls to remain in a position to contend for a potential at-large or automatic conference championship bid.

Dabo Swinney and company have not been to the playoffs since the 2020 season, a 49-28 loss to lower-seeded Ohio State. Clemson will need solid play from its defense (336.7 yards per game, 42nd) and quarterback Cade Klubnik (2,275 yards, 24 touchdowns) to stay in a spot for postseason play.

For Pittsburgh, it's all about getting back on track after falling in back-to-back games. New ACC darling SMU took down the Panthers 48-25 two weeks ago before Virginia added salt to the wound last week. Freshman gunslinger Eli Holstein has only two touchdowns through the air the past three games,

including back-to-back outings with no touchdowns.

While the Panthers hold onto a thread in their playoff hopes, Clemson holds the scissors that will snip their dreams in Week 12. **BSB prediction: Clemson 43, Pittsburgh 17**

### **No. 23 Missouri at No. 21 South Carolina (4:15 p.m., SEC Network)**

A preseason playoff hopeful against a usual SEC middle-of-the-pack squad in the late afternoon slot.

What could be better than that?

The 23rd-ranked Tigers have not expected their season to go this way so far, even more so considering they beat Ohio State in the Cotton Bowl last season to have high expectations heading into this year.

For the Gamecocks, after sitting at 3-3 midway through the season, hope has been restored after three straight wins, including a 44-20 trouncing of then-No. 14 Texas A&M on Nov. 2. Going from a down and out season to potentially being a contender for an at-large playoff bid, South Carolina has revamped their season, thanks in part to the phenomenal play of redshirt freshman signal caller LaNorris Sellers over the past three weeks (five touchdowns, zero interceptions, 61-percent completion rate).

The once-high flying Tigers may have their season of hopes turn into a wash this weekend while South Carolina may get one step closer to playing meaningful football in December. **BSB prediction: South Carolina 27, Missouri 16**

### **No. 7 Tennessee at No. 12 Georgia (7:30 p.m., ABC)**

It's do-or-die time for the Bulldogs.

After a 28-10 disappointing loss to Ole Miss last week, Georgia joined a slew of SEC teams fighting for a chance to play in the playoffs. After decades of dominance from the American south, 2024 could mark the first year that a team south of the Mason-Dixon line doesn't pose much of a threat to win the national title.

Tennessee has made the most of the schedule handed to it this season, beating then-No. 7 Alabama 24-17 on Oct. 19 and beating the teams it should, spare a 19-14 loss to Arkansas on Oct. 5.

First-year starter Nico Iamaleava has gotten the job done for the Volunteers this season, throwing for 11 touchdowns against four interceptions while sitting with a 65.2 completion percentage.

The Volunteers hold the nation's fifth-best scoring defense effort, holding teams to 12.6 points per game compared to Georgia's 18th scoring defense at 18.4 points per contest.

It'll be a game of inches between Georgia and Tennessee come Saturday and perhaps another year without hardware for Kirby Smart and company. **BSB prediction: Tennessee 21, Georgia 20**

Other games to watch:

- No. 3 Texas at Arkansas (Noon, ABC)
- No. 25 Tulane at Navy (Noon, ESPN2)

- Boston College at No. 14 SMU (3:30 p.m., ESPN)
- No. 22 LSU at Florida (3:30 p.m., ABC)
- Arizona State at No. 16 Kansas State (7 p.m., ESPN)
- No. 1 Oregon at Wisconsin (7:30 p.m., NBC)
- Kansas at No. 6 BYU (10:15 p.m., ESPN)