

What To Watch: Week 7



Ohio State is off this week, but there will be no shortage of entertaining games to keep you occupied on Saturday. Six games will take place between ranked teams, including a pair of top-10 matchups.

Here's a look at the Saturday slate of college football.

No. 10 Penn State at No. 5 Michigan (12 p.m., FOX): This is one of the three biggest games in the Big Ten this season, along with Ohio State at Penn State on Oct. 29 and Michigan at Ohio State on Nov. 26.

Penn State already has early season victories over Purdue and Auburn, but the Wolverines are still looking for that marquee win to solidify their status as a top-five team this season. It should be the first significant test for both teams, with Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy looking for a statement performance after winning the starting job and the Nittany Lions looking to make some noise in the Big Ten East Division race.

Michigan is one of just two teams (along with Alabama) to have a top-10 scoring offense and defense, while the Nittany Lions - just 37th in scoring offense - boast a top-15 scoring defense. Michigan is viewed as the favorite, especially as the host, but this game will go a long way in determining the rest of the conference race.

No. 8 Oklahoma State at No. 13 TCU (3:30 p.m., ABC):

While Michigan and Penn State being a ranked matchup at this point in the season is a surprise to few, seeing Texas Christian move up this far in the rankings is something that few foresaw. Quarterback Max Duggan has been one of the most efficient signal-callers in college football this season, completing 73.2 percent of his passes for 2,048 yards and 16 touchdowns.

While this game last season would have been viewed as more of a defensive battle with Oklahoma State boasting a top-five defense under defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, the fruits of his labor are now being enjoyed at Ohio State. Since he left, the Cowboys have fallen to 58th in scoring defense (24.8 points per game) and 105th in total defense (422.8 yards per game), but Oklahoma State's saving grace has been the offense.

Led by quarterback Spencer Sanders, the Cowboys are averaging 46.4 points per game - third in the country behind Tennessee and Ohio State - and it should make for a high-scoring affair in Fort Worth.

No. 3 Alabama at No. 6 Tennessee (3:30 p.m., CBS):

Perhaps the biggest game on Saturday's slate, Tennessee will host Alabama in a rivalry game that hasn't felt like all that much of a rivalry as of late. The Volunteers haven't defeated the Crimson Tide since 2007, a 16-13 win in Knoxville, but this could be Tennessee's best chance to knock off Alabama in several years.

The offense for Tennessee has been among the nation's best, scoring 47.0 points per game behind quarterback Hendon Hooker (98 of 140, 1,432 yards, 10 TD), but Alabama is sixth in both scoring defense (12.5 points) and total defense (250.8).

The biggest question, though, will be Alabama's offense matching up with Tennessee's defense. Quarterback Bryce Young is expected to play, and even with him missing time this season, the Crimson Tide offense is scoring 44.3 points and accounting for over 500 yards of offense per game. Contrast that to the Volunteers' defense, which is allowing over 300 passing yards per game to opposing quarterbacks, and Tennessee could be forced to turn this into a shootout.

No. 7 USC at No. 20 Utah (8 p.m., FOX):

This is another game that could have conference title - as well as College Football Playoff - implications. A win for USC further solidifies them as one of the top teams in the country, as well as gives them a fast track to the Pac-12 Championship Game, while likely eliminating Utah from the conversation.

A win by the Utes, though? The Pac-12 becomes wide open, Oregon, UCLA, USC and Utah all competing for spots in the conference title game. The Trojans have been tested this season and have looked vulnerable at times in wins over Oregon State, Arizona State and Washington State, but this will be the first ranked matchup of the season for USC.

Utah, meanwhile, is coming off a 43-32 loss to UCLA. That's nothing to feel bad about, though, as the Bruins are undefeated at 6-0 and up to No. 11 in the country. The Utes already have two losses on the season but have been competitive in every game, and their offense - which averages 40.3 points and 457.8 yards per game - could cause problems for USC's defense that allows over 350 yards per game.

Other matchups on Saturday include:

- Auburn at No. 9 Ole Miss (12 p.m., ESPN)
- Iowa State at No. 22 Texas (12 p.m., ABC)
- No. 19 Kansas at Oklahoma (12 p.m., ESPN2)
- Minnesota at No. 24 Illinois (12 p.m., BTN)
- No. 15 NC State at No. 18 Syracuse (3:30 p.m., ACCN)
- Wisconsin at Michigan State (4 p.m., FOX)
- No. 16 Mississippi State at No. 22 Kentucky (7:30 p.m., SECN)
- No. 4 Clemson at Florida State (7:30 p.m., ABC)
- Stanford at Notre Dame (7:30 p.m., NBC)