

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF 2026

DEC. 19, 8 P.M.
OKLAHOMA
MEMORIAL STADIUM
**OKLAHOMA
SOONERS**

Seed: 8
Record: 10-2
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: 1-1 (Beat Alabama; lost to Ole Miss).
Playoff history: Fourth appearance, first since 2019.
Top Players: WR Isaiah Sategna III (65 catches, 948 yards, 7 TDs); DL R Mason Thomas (6.5 sacks, 9 TFL).
Notable: In three previous appearances, the Sooners have lost in the first round, the past two to the eventual CFP champion.

**ALABAMA
CRIMSON TIDE**
Seed: 9
Record: 10-3
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: 1-2 (Split with Georgia, lost to Oklahoma).
Playoff history: Ninth appearance, first since 2023 (won titles in 2015, 2017 and 2020).
Top Players: QB Ty Simpson (3,268 yards passing, 26 TDs); S Bray Hubbard (SEC-best 4 interceptions).
Notable: Ninth appearance is most by any program in CFP era.

DEC. 20, NOON
AT KYLE FIELD
**TEXAS A&M
AGGIES**
Seed: 7
Record: 11-1
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: 0-0.
Playoff history: First appearance.
Top Players: QB Marcel Reed (2,932 yards passing, 25 TDs); DE Cashius Howell (11.5 sacks, 14 TFL).
Notable: First CFP appearance for Aggies and coach Mike Elko, who lost final game of regular season after 11-0 start.

**MIAMI
HURRICANES**
Seed: 10
Record: 10-2
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: 0-0
Playoff history: First appearance.
Top Players: QB Carson Beck (3,052 yards, 27 TDs); DE Rueben Bane Jr. (4.5 sacks, 1 INT).
Notable: Looking for first national title since 2001, the Hurricanes could play the title game on their home field.



DEC. 20, 3:30 P.M.
VAUGHT HEMINGWAY
STADIUM
**OLE MISS
REBELS**

Seed: 6
Record: 11-1
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: 2-1 (beat Tulane and Oklahoma, lost to Georgia)
Playoff history: First appearance.
Top Players: RB Kewan Lacy (1,279 yards rushing, 20 TDs); LB Princewell Umanmielen (6.5 sacks).
Notable: Rebels will be in state of flux heading into their first playoff appearance with coach Lane Kiffin leaving for LSU.

**TULANE
GREEN WAVE**
Seed: 11
Record: 11-2
How qualified: American Conference champion.
Against playoff field: 0-1 (lost at Ole Miss)
Playoff history: First appearance.
Top Players: QB Jake Retzlaff (2,862 yards passing, 14 TDs; 610 yards rushing, 16 TDs); LB Harvey Dyson (7 sacks, 10.5 TFL)
Notable: Like Ole Miss, Tulane coach John Sumrall will be coaching elsewhere next year (Florida), but he will coach in the playoff.

DEC. 20, 7:30 P.M.
AT AUTZEN STADIUM
**OREGON
DUCKS**
Seed: 5
Record: 11-1
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: 0-1 (Lost to Indiana).
Playoff history: Third appearance; Lost in quarterfinals in 2024.
Top Players: QB Dante Moore (2,733 yards passing, 24 TDs); LB Teitum Tuioti (7 sacks, 13.5 TFL).
Notable: Ducks' only losses since the start of the 2024 season have been to this year's top two seeds (Ohio State in 2024) and (Indiana in 2025).

**JAMES MADISON
DUKES**
Seed: 12
Record: 12-1
How qualified: Sunbelt Conference champion.
Against CFP field: 0-0.
Playoff history: First appearance.

CFP CHAMPIONS
2015: ALABAMA (SEC)
2016: CLEMSON (ACC)
2017: ALABAMA (SEC)
2018: CLEMSON (ACC)
2019: LSU (SEC)
2020: ALABAMA (SEC)
2021: GEORGIA (SEC)
2022: GEORGIA (SEC)
2023: MICHIGAN (BIG 10)
2024: OHIO ST. (BIG 10)

THE FIELD IS SET

Indiana, Ohio State, Georgia, Texas Tech earn byes

BY WILLIAM BOWMAN, CNHI SPORTS

When the College Football Playoff expanded to a dozen teams, it was assumed that the powers-that-be would dominate the field; the same teams that have filled the playoff over the past decade would just get more opportunities. And while this year's field features eight combined teams from the SEC and Big Ten, there are also two Group of Five entries.

Not only that, the second iteration of the 12-team playoff — which kicks off Friday with Alabama visiting Oklahoma — has only four programs in the field who were in it last year. Three of those teams — unbeaten and No. 1 Indiana, No. 2 Ohio State and No. 5 Oregon — come from the Big Ten. Georgia, the SEC champ, is also back.

There are eight newcomers to this year's field, including six — Texas Tech, Ole Miss, Texas A&M, Miami, Tulane and James Madison — making their

first-ever CFP appearance.

Ohio State won the first 12-team bracket a year ago, coming through the field as the No. 8 seed. This year, the Buckeyes — along with Georgia and Big 12 champ Texas Tech — have a first-round bye and will meet the winner of the first-round games. The Buckeyes await the winner of a Miami-Texas A&M opener for a Cotton Bowl matchup on New Year's Eve.

Two of the first-round games are rematches. Ole Miss hosts Tulane in the first CFP game for each, while James Madison heads across the country to visit Autzen Stadium and Oregon's first home CFP game.

The playoff features some serious firepower on both sides of the ball. The 13-0 Hoosiers are led by Heisman Trophy winner Fernando Mendoza. Ohio State features three players who finished in the top 10 of Heisman voting — quarterback Julian Sayin, receiver Jeremiah Smith and safety Caleb Downs — and Texas Tech linebacker Jacob Rodriguez was fifth in Heisman voting, tops among defensive players.

SEC quarterbacks Gunner Stockton (Georgia) and Trinidad Chambliss (Ole Miss) also finished in the top 10 in the Heisman race in their first season as starting quarterbacks.

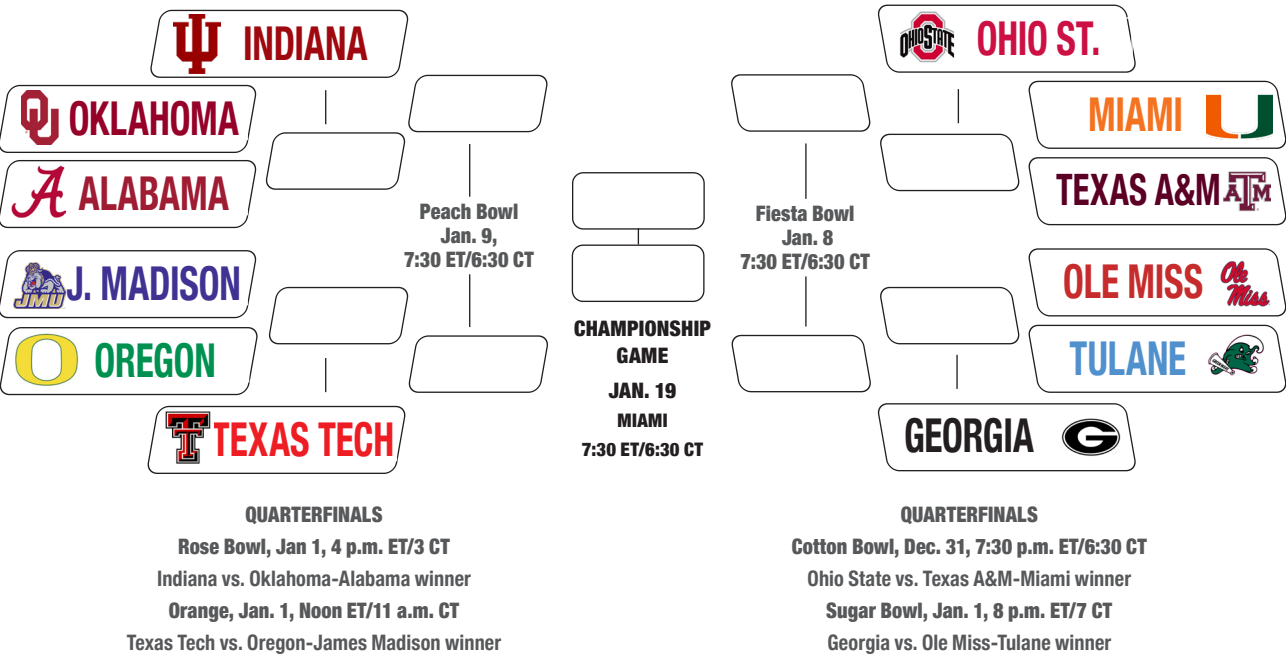
Added intrigue comes from the coaching carousel impacting teams across the playoff field. Ole Miss, making its inaugural CFP appearance, does so without Lane Kiffin, who left the program after taking the LSU job earlier this month. Tulane's John Sumrall and James Madison's Bob Chesney have both accepted new jobs — Sumrall at Florida; Chesney at UCLA — but will lead their Group of Five entries into the postseason before bolting for “greener” pastures.

And what to make of Oregon? The Ducks stormed through the first season in the Big Ten last year, only to fall to Ohio State in the Rose Bowl in the quarterfinals. The 11-1 Ducks have only lost to Indiana this year and have a favorable draw.

It all starts Friday, Dec. 19, with Alabama heading to Norman, Oklahoma, for a rematch of a game the Sooners won, 23-21, a little more than a month ago.

On Saturday, Dec. 20, Texas A&M hosts Miami, Tulane heads to Ole Miss and James Madison travels to Oregon. Quarterfinals are scheduled for Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 with the semifinals at the Fiesta Bowl (Jan. 8) and the Peach Bowl (Jan. 9).

The two survivors will meet for the national title on Jan. 19 in Miami.



**INDIANA
HOOSIERS**

Seed: 1
Record: 13-0
How qualified: Big Ten champion.
Against CFP field: 2-0 (beat Oregon and Ohio State).
Playoff history: Second appearance (lost in first round in 2024).
Top Players: QB Fernando Mendoza (2,980 yards, 33 TDs); LB Rolijah Hardy (86 tackles, 8 sacks).
Notable: Mendoza became IU's first Heisman Trophy winner after transferring from Cal.

**OHIO STATE
BUCKEYES**

Seed: 2
Record: 12-1
How qualified: At-large bid.
Against CFP field: (0-1, Lost to Indiana).
Playoff history: Seventh appearance, second in a row (2014 and 2024 champions).
Top Players: QB Julian Sayin (3,323 yards passing, 31 TDs); WR Jeremiah Smith (80 catches, 1,086 yards, 11 TDs).
Notable: Buckeyes won the first four-team CFP in 2014 and then first 12-team playoff last year.

**GEORGIA
BULLDOGS**

Seed: 3
Record: 12-1
How qualified: SEC champion.
Against CFP field: 2-1 (Split with Alabama; beat Ole Miss).
Playoff history: Fifth appearance (2021 and 2022 champions); lost in quarterfinals in 2024 to Notre Dame.
Top Players: QB Gunner Stockton (3,207 total yards, 31 TDs); LB CJ Allen (85 tackles).
Notable: Making fourth appearance in five seasons and have appeared in three title games since 2017.

**TEXAS TECH
RED RAIDERS**

Seed: 4
Record: 12-1
How qualified: Big 12 champion
Against CFP field: 0-0.
Playoff history: First appearance.
Top Players: RB Cameron Dickey (1,095 yards rushing TD; 24 receptions); LB Jacob Rodriguez (117 tackles, 7 FF).
Notable: Sixth team since 1925 to win 11 games by at least 20 points, including Nebraska (1971), Florida (2008), Florida State (2013), Alabama (2018) and Ohio State (2019).