THE GOLD SHEET

FRIDAY UPDATE!

Published Weekly by:
Nation-Wide Sports Publications
4717 Van Nuys Blvd. 3rd Floor
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
800-798-GOLD(4653) Fax: 818-817-9861
website: www.goldsheet.com

VOLUME 15 DECEMBER 4 - 7, 2009 ISSUE 14

THE *UPDATE* ADVANTAGE—The Gold Sheet *UPDATE* is designed and intended to provide the reader with the most important pregame information that comes into our office from Tuesday through Friday. It is, literally, an update of The Gold Sheet, designed to be used in tandem with it. We feel all of the information is pertinent not only to each week's games, but also cumulatively, as the season progresses. Information that is especially new or vital, and should be reviewed immediately, is underlined for your convenience. This is THE *UPDATE* ADVANTAGE.

WEATHER NOTES: Despite this week's southern snowfall, mostly dry football weather is forecast for much of the nation this week, with the possible exceptions near the Great Lakes and in the Northeast on Saturday. Cooler temperatures are expected to prevail in many areas.

FOR AND AND DETAILED FORECAST FOR A SPECIFIC LOCATION, TRY THE WEATHER CHANNEL AT www.weather.com AND ENTER THE CITY OF YOUR INTEREST. YOU CAN GET AN HOUR-BY-HOUR FORECAST THAT INCLUDES WIND, TEMPERATURE, CHANCE OF PRECIPITATION IN THE AREA—AND EVEN DOPPLER RADAR.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

MAC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Ohio vs. Central Michigan (-13½; 53½) [at Ford Field in Detroit, Home of the NFL Lions; Dome, FieldTurf]—Ohio sr. starting QB Theo Scott (ankle injury last week) and sr. safety Patrick Tafua (shoulder last week) are both expected to play. Leading Bobcat rusher Chris Garrett (leg) and dynamic WR/PR LaVon Brazill (leg; 6 TDC, 3 PR TDs) both remain questionable with leg injuries. There is concern that the injured Ohio players might not be 100% if they are able to participate. Central Michigan coach Butch Jones is reportedly among those being considered for the open head coaching job at Louisville.

COLLEGE FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

South Florida at CONNECTICUT (-7½; 50½)—South Florida's starting MLB and top tackler Kion Wilson (ankle) is not expected to play, and sr. starting C Sampson Genus (ankle) is doubtful. UConn has also lost its starting MLB, second-leading tackler Greg Lloyd, with a torn ACL. The early forecast is for temps in the 30s, with a 40% chance of evening rain or snow showers.

UConn coach Randy Edsall's name has been among those mentioned for the openings at Notre Dame and at Kansas.

West Virginia at RUTGERS (-1½; 44½)—Early Saturday forecast is for temps near 40, with the possibility of a rain or show shower later in the day.

Fresno State at ILLINOIS (-3; 59½)—Fresno star RB Ryan Matthews (1491 YR, 7.0 ypc, 14 TDR) has been cleared to return and has practiced all week after missing the last game and most of the previous game with a concussion.

San Jose State at LOUISIANA TECH (-23½; 49)—Last game for 71-year-old San Jose coach Dick Tomey, who is retiring after this season. It might not mean much for the hapless Spartans (2-9 SU, 1-9 vs. the spread), but jr. Jordan La Secla is expected to be back as the starting QB, as sr. and better runner Kyle Reed (questionable) suffered a fractured little finger on his passing hand in last week's 13-10 San Jose victory over visiting New Mexico State.

New Mexico State at BOISE STATE (-47½; 58)—Boise (12-0; No. 6 in the BCS rankings) is banged up as it tries to complete an undefeated regular season and remain in contention for a BCS bowl. WR Austin Pettis (62 recs., 14 TDC) is out with an ankle injury, and WR Tyler Shoemaker (21 recs.) is not expected to play due to a hernia. The Broncos are also hurting at LB, with starter Daron Mackey out and rotational LB Derrell Acrey questionable. New Mexico State is 3-9 TY, with victories over Prairie View, New Mexico, and Utah State. The early forecast is for temps in the 30s; possibly breezy.

Arizona at SOUTHERN CAL (-7; 50)—USC starting RB Joe McKnight (979 YR) is likely to be a game-day decision after leaving the game with a bruised thigh in last week's 28-7 victory over UCLA. Arizona QB Nick Foles says he has a "busted" non-throwing hand (played with a splint and wrap last week vs. Arizona State), but that it didn't hinder him in U of A's 20-17 late victory.

California (-7; 58) at WASHINGTON—Star RB Jahvid Best of Cal will miss his third straight game following a concussion and bruised back a month ago. Backup RB Shane Vereen has rushed for 352 yards the last two games! Cool and sunny is the early forecast.

Cincinnati (-2; 58) at PITTSBURGH—Winner captures the Big East's automatic bid in the BCS bowls. Cincinnati (11-0; No. 5 in the BCS rankings) can win the outright Big East title and finish with a perfect regular season. Pittsburgh (only one loss in Big East play) will gain a tie for the conference title and earn the bowl bid.

Cincy coach Brian Kelly, reportedly under consideration for the job at Notre Dame, says he will neither address the subject nor talk with anyone from another school until after this week's game. When asked about the continuing Notre Dame rumors, Kelly termed them "absolutely irrelevant" and says he is in "lockdown mode." When asked about the potential distraction of the rumors on his players, Kelly said, "They'll be alright. I'll have them ready. We've done it 17 times in a row." Cincy has won 17 straight regular-season games (but lost 20-7 to Virginia Tech in the Orange Bowl last season). Kelly's teams are 33-6 the last four years.

Cool and cloudy is the early forecast.

Wisconsin (-12; 57) at HAWAII—Hawaii (6-6) can become bowl eligible with a victory and would then be invited to the Hawaii Bowl, where the Warriors would face SMU and former UH head coach June Jones!!!

Scouts report that the usual "red sea" of Badger fans escaping the midwest cold for a mini-vacation to Hawaii is expected to be smaller this year, due primarily to the economy. In previous trips to the Islands, about 6,000 members of the Badger Nation have made the trek to cheer their team vs. Hawaii. This year, that number is expected to be more like 4,000.

Florida Atlantic at FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL (-1½; 62½)—First time in this series that the game will be played at Florida International's recently-expanded FIU Stadium in Miami. Scattered thundershowers in the early forecast.

CONFERENCE USA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Houston (-2½; 69½) at EAST CAROLINA—ECU is expected to be down a wideout, with 6-2, 219 sr. possession receiver Jamar Bryant (21 recs., only 9.5 ypr; no receptions the last month) doubtful with a shoulder injury. Houston WR James Cleveland (82 recs., 11 TDs) is questionable after missing the last two games with a leg injury.

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Florida (-5½; 41½) vs. Alabama [at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta; Home of the NFL Falcons; FieldTurf]—Alabama star RB Mark Ingram (1429 YR, 6.5 ypc), who suffered a bruised hip last week at Auburn, says he feels okay and "most definitely" will be ready to play. He has reportedly looked just fine in practices this week.

Florida's top DE Carlos Dunlap has been suspended following a DUI arrest. Dunlap is tied for the team lead with 7 sacks and has 8½ tackles for loss. The Gators have some quality depth in their defensive line, but the 6-6, 290-pound Dunlap is a highly-regarded NFL prospect and was named the defensive MVP of last season's Florida BCS title game victory over Oklahoma.

Florida (No. 1) and Alabama (No. 2) are the top two teams in the BCS rankings, with the winner advancing to the BCS title game. In SEC title meetings, Florida is 4-2 SU vs. Alabama, including LY's 31-20 Gator victory.

Florida defensive coordinator Charlie Strong is reportedly a leading candidate for the vacant head coaching job at Louisville.

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Georgia Tech (-1; 56½) vs. Clemson [at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Home of the NFL Buccaneers; Grass]—Quick starting DT Ben Anderson is out for GT.

BIG XII CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Texas (-14½; 46½) vs. Nebraska [at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, TX; Home of the Dallas Cowboys; Retractable Roof; Artificial Turf]—WR John Chiles (34 recs., 3 TDs) and jr. CB Deon Beasley (concussion) are both expected to be ready for the Longhorns.

REMINDER: Colleges are not required to reveal nor confirm injury information. Players can decline to authorize the release of any information about their medical situation to the media. Also, many coaches choose to obscure injury situations for a competitive reasons (particularly so prior to big games) or to protect their injured players.

NFL FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

AFC DIVISION LEADERS going into this weekend's games: INDIANAPOLIS (11-0), CINCINNATI (8-3), SAN DIEGO (8-3), NEW ENGLAND (7-4). (Indy is the only team to have clinched a division title so far.)

Current leaders in AFC wildcard race: Jacksonville (6-5), Pittsburgh (6-5), Baltimore (6-5).

Contenders to climb into AFC wildcard position: New York Jets (6-6), Miami (5-6), Tennessee (5-6), Houston (5-6).

NFC DIVISION LEADERS: NEW ORLEANS (11-0), MINNESOTA (10-1), DALLAS (8-3), ARIZONA (7-4).

Current leaders in NFC wildcard race: Philadelphia (7-4) and Green Bay (7-4).

Contenders to climb into NFC wildcard position: New York Giants (6-5), Atlanta (6-5), San Francisco (5-6), Carolina (4-7), Chicago (4-7), Seattle (4-7).

Denver (-4½; 38½) at KANSAS CITY—Denver safety and defensive leader Brian Dawkins has missed most of practice and might take the opportunity this week to rest a sore ankle. Rookie backup S Darcel McBath of Texas Tech has been one of the several bright spots on the improved Denver defense TY. Sunday forecast is for cloudy skies with temperatures in the 30s.

Oakland at PITTSBURGH (-14½; 37)—Steeler QB Ben Roethlisberger is expected to start. Roethlisberger, who missed last week's 20-17 OT loss at Baltimore after suffering a concussion the week before, says he has had no headaches since last week and has been upgraded to probable. As for those who were critical of his absence vs. Baltimore, Roethlisberger pointed out, "You can't get a new brain." With his team now 6-5 and having lost three straight, coach Mike Tomlin says the Steelers need to go into attack mode, and he's promised to "unleash hell" in the month of December.

Oakland starting QB Bruce Gradkowski is a native of Pittsburgh who played collegiately at Toledo. Gradkowski faced the Steelers at Heinz Field in LY's season finale when starting as an emergency replacement with the Browns, losing 31-0 after being with Cleveland for only three weeks. Since taking over as the starter for the Raiders two games ago, Gradkowski is 35 of 69 passing with 3 TDs vs. only one interception.

Back in Oakland, Raiders' owner Al Davis is under fire from fans. A group has rented a billboard near the Oakland Coliseum that reads, "MR. DAVIS, DO THE RIGHT THING. PLEASE HIRE A GM." The group contends it has gathered 21,000 signatures on a petition asking Davis to step down as GM, to hire a Super Bowl-caliber head coach, and to refrain from intervention in personnel and football operational affairs.

Houston at JACKSONVILLE (Pick 'em; 46½)—Jaguars' top CB Rashean Mathis is expected to miss his third straight game with a groin injury. Mathis is also still recovering from a finger fracture. Quality play in the secondary is especially important for the Jaguars, who have the fewest sacks in the league (10). Star RB Maurice Jones-Drew (1001 YR, 13 TDR) skipped some early practices this week to rest a sore knee, but insists he is not injured.

For Houston, RB Steve Slaton is doubtful with a shoulder injury, and emerging rookie CB Glover Quin is out with concussion symptoms.

Tennessee at INDIANAPOLIS (–6½; 46)—Indy star pass rusher Dwight Freeney (9½ sacks), who DNP in last week's 35-27 victory at Houston due to a strained abdomen, returned to practice Thursday and appears set to play unless he suffers a setback. Freeney says the injury has nagged him for several weeks. In the secondary, starting CB Kelvin Hayden says he expects to return this week after missing the last four games with a knee injury.

Indianapolis (20 straight wins in the regular season) can tie New England's NFL record of 21 straight set in 2006-08. Indy's Jim Caldwell is the only rookie NFL coach to win his first 11 games. Tennessee has now won its last its last nine games with Vince Young starting.

Philadelphia (-5½; 43½) at ATLANTA—Atlanta QB Matt Ryan is out with a toe injury, and RB Michael Turner (aggravated his high ankle sprain last week) is doubtful. Backup QB Chris Redman, who led the team on a 15-play, game-winning TD drive in last week's 20-17 victory over Tampa Bay, will be making his first start since 2007, when he started four times (1-3 SU) at the end of the season. All told, Redman has 10 career starts. WR Michael Jenkins (8 recs. last week) is bothered by an ankle injury, and often-injured possession WR Brian Finneran (knee) is likely to miss his fourth straight game.

The Eagles are also banged up at the skill positions, with speedy WR DeSean Jackson (44 recs., 6 TDs) out following a concussion last week and RB Brian Westbrook (concussion) out again. Jackson admits he blacked out for a while last week. With WR Kevin Curtis (knee) still out, the team has signed former Penn State WR Jordan Norwood. TE Brent Celek (54 recs.; sprained thumb last week) is not only expected to play this week, but also has agreed to a new six-year, $33 million contract extension!

This will be the first game for former Falcon QB Michael Vick in Atlanta since the 2006 season, after which he was convicted on dog-fighting charges.

Detroit at CINCINNATI (-13; 42)—Top RB Cedric Benson (859 YR) is expected to return after missing the last two games with a hip injury. His backup will be former Kansas City star Larry Johnson, who had 107 YR in last week's 16-7 victory over Cleveland. Speedy rookie RB Bernard Scott (301 YR) is doubtful with a toe/foot injury.

Detroit's banged-up young stars QB Matthew Stafford (left shoulder) and WR Calvin Johnson (knee) have both practiced despite their ailments and are expected to play. However, talented rookie TE Brandon Pettigrew, who caught the winning TDP with no time left two weeks ago against Cleveland, is out for the rest of the season with a knee injury.

Partly cloudy with temps near 40 is the early forecast.

New Orleans (-9½; 47) at WASHINGTON—No. 3 RB Rock Cartwright (105 YR last two games) starts again for the Redskins, with Clinton Portis (blurred vision due to a concussion) and Ladell Betts (knee; season) both out. DT Albert Haynesworth, out the last two games with an ankle injury, has been upgraded to questionable and appears to have a good chance to return. CB DeAngelo Hall (knee) is doubtful.

New Orleans RB Reggie Bush (swollen knee) and starting CB Jabari Greer (groin) have each been held out the last two games despite pronouncing themselves ready to contribute last week. Saints' GM Mickey Loomis has indicated that with the team playing so well, he will take it day to day with the pair. High-flying New Orleans (11-0) can clinch the NFC South with a victory. This the first return to Washington for New Orleans' highly-successful new defensive coordinator Gregg Williams, formerly with the Redskins, who passed over him in favor of Jim Zorn as the replacement for Joe Gibbs as head coach.

Tampa Bay at CAROLINA (-5½; 40)—Backup QB Matt Moore will start for Carolina. RB DeAngelo Williams (ankle; 1022 YR) is questionable. Jake Delhomme (8 TDs, 18 ints.) is doubtful with a fractured middle finger on his throwing hand. For Moore, it will be his fourth career start. He started the last three games of 2007, going 2-1 SU and 3-0 vs. the spread. Temmates describe the three-year veteran from UCLA/Oregon State as laid-back and confident. Panther WRs Muhsin Muhammad (knee) and Dwayne Jarrett (ankle) are questionable. On defense, nickel-back Captain Munnerlyn is out with a concussion.

St. Louis at CHICAGO (-9; 41)—Chicago starting CB Charles Tillman is doubtful following a concussion, and OLB Lance Briggs is questionable with a knee injury. If Briggs (leads the team with 83 tackles) is unable to play, the entire Chicago starting LBing corps will be out, as MLB Brian Urlacher & OLB Pisa Tonoisamoa were both lost for the season weeks ago. On offense, LT Orlando Pace, the former No. 1 overall draft pick by the Rams 12 years ago, is doubtful with a groin strain. If Pace is able to play, this would be the first game for him vs. his old team. Pace hasn't had a major impact in Chicago, where the Bears are currently last in rushing in the NFL. That fact upsets idled MLB Urlacher, who says he "hates" the way the Chicago's identity has changed from a team that used to establish the run, wear teams down, try to avoid mistakes, and rely on the defense to keep the team in the game and make big plays. Said Urlacher, "Kyle Orton might not be the flashiest quarterback, but the guy is a winner, and that formula worked for us. I hate to say it, but that's the truth." Current QB Jay Cutler, who leads the NFL in interceptions with 20, says he understands Urlacher's frustration and that there's no need for Urlacher to apologize.

San Diego (-13; 43) at CLEVELAND—The negative injury news just keeps on coming for the Browns. Top RB Jamal Lewis (500 YR) is through for the season after being placed on injured reserve with post-concussion symptoms. Lewis did not report the symptoms until Monday. The situation is even worse on defense, where 350-pound, run-stuffing NT Shaun Rogers (ankle fracture) is through for the rest of the season, and starting FS Brodney Pool (concussion) is out indefinitely. Pool is considering retirement after suffering what he believes is either the fourth or fifth concussion of his career. The Browns have previously lost starting ILBs D'Qwell Jackson & Eric Barton for the season, so Cleveland will be using backups up the middle of their defense at NT, both ILB spots, and FS!

On the San Diego defense, starting S Eric Weddle is out 2-3 weeks with a sprained knee. And OLB Shawne Merriman (four sacks, all in November) is doubtful with a foot injury.

San Diego asst. HC and TEs coach Rob Chudzinski is well familiar with Cleveland starting QB Brady Quinn. Chudzinski served as Cleveland's offensive coordinator the last two seasons under HC Romeo Crennel and was usually Quinn's primary tutor..

The early forecast calls for cloudy skies with temperatures in the 30s.

San Francisco at SEATTLE (Pick 'em; 41½)—Seattle starting RB Julius Jones (392 YR, 3.7 ypc), who has missed virtually all of the last three games with a chest/lung injury, is expected to return this week. Jones, a 6-year veteran, is feeling the pressure from emerging 5-8 backup Justin Forsett (385 YR, 5.7 ypc), who will continue to see action. With rookie S.F. WR Michael Crabtree (26 recs. in six games) now integrated into their lineup, and with TE Vernon Davis (57 recs., 9 TDs) emerging as a premier threat, the 49ers often utilized a spread formation in last week's 20-3 victory over Jacksonville, rushing only 20 times, while attempting 41 passes.

GM Tim Ruskell of the 4-7 Seahawks has resigned just weeks before his five-year contract with the team was set to conclude. Seattle was 4-12 amid injuries last season, and the Seahawks appear on their way to their second straight year out of the playoffs. Ruskell has been taking heat for numerous disappointing high draft choices, for expensive free-agent busts, and for the awkward ouster of popular coach Mike Holmgren last season. Now, Holmgren is being mentioned as a possibility to take over the football operations of the team in an overseer role similar to that of Bill Parcells in Miami. This is the first home game for Seattle after an NFL-rare three straight games as a visitor! Cool, but partly cloudy is the early forecast.

Minnesota (-3; 47½) at ARIZONA—Kurt Warner (concussion symptoms) appears closer to starting this week and has been upgraded to probable, but HC Ken Whisenhunt says he might withhold a final decision on his QB until Sunday. Warner and backup Matt Leinart have been splitting snaps with the starters in practice, and Warner says his symptoms have diminished. But Whisenhunt says he wants to make sure Warner is okay and that he would "err on the side of caution." Warner, who has suffered four concussions in the past, says he considered lying to team doctors last week prior to the Tennessee game, but didn't do so because of what he called "lingering fogginess." [Warner has seven children.] The Cardinals also have some injury concerns elsewhere, with LT Mike Gandy (questionable) bothered by a lingering sore pelvis, LB Karlos Dansby bothered by a shoulder injury, CB Bryant McFadden nursing a sore knee, RB Tim Hightower bothered by a sore thumb, and PK Neil Rackers a sore groin. If Gandy doesn't start, it would break a string of 31 games in which the Cardinals have started the same five up front. If Gandy is out, it is expected that sixth-year G/T Jeremy Bridges (Carolina the last three years) will get the start opposite Viking pass rusher Jared Allen (12½ sacks).

As for Minnesota, TE Visanthe Shiancoe is questionable with bruised ribs suffered last week. Top CB Antoine Winfield, out the last five games with a foot injury, is questionable but might test the injury this week against Arizona's excellent receiving corps.

It has been revealed that star RB Adrian Peterson was cited last week for driving 109 mph on a suburban highway outside Minneapolis. The incident occurred about 8:30 PM Saturday, with Peterson nearly doubling the 55 mph speed limit and facing possible license revocation. The episode took place the day before the Vikings defeated Chicago 36-10, with Peterson rushing for 85 yards but fumbling twice.

Dallas (-2; 45½) at NEW YORK GIANTS—New York is hoping it will be able to provide some support and relief to RB Brandon Jacobs (683 YR, 3.9 ypc), as Ahmad Bradshaw (549 YR, 4.8 ypc) DNP last week at Denver due to foot and ankle injuries, and veteran Danny Ware is doubtful after suffering a concussion last week. N.Y. offensive coordinator Kevin Gilbride says he believes Bradshaw (questionable) will be able play on Sunday. The Giants also have rookie Gartrell Johnson of Colorado State. Meanwhile, QB Eli Manning, previously dealing with an inflamed arch, says the stress reaction in his right foot is not affecting him. Manning says he's not overly concerned with it. Promising second-year MLB Jonathan Goff (Vanderbilt) is expected to get his first start this week, making the calls on defense. Five-year veteran Chase Blackburn has filled in the last two games at MLB for Antonio Pierce (sidelined by a bulging disc).

Sunny but cool is the early forecast.

New England (-4; 43½) at MIAMI—N.E. is 0-4 SU as a visitor TY, with its only road win in London against Tampa Bay.

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL, DECEMBER 7

Baltimore at GREEN BAY (-3½; 43½)—The early forecast for Monday calls for temperatures in the upper 20s; chance of a snow shower earlier in the day.

NOTES FOR COLLEGE TEAMS IN UPCOMING BOWLS

FLORIDA STATE—Bobby Bowden, ousted as HC after 34 years in Tallahassee (and 44 years overall), will coach the Seminoles in their upcoming bowl game, with bowl officials seeking a contest against West Virginia, where Bowden coached for six years before moving to Florida State.

IOWA—Kirk Ferentz, pointing out that he's been at Iowa for 11 years and saying he is not a "vagabond coach," has indicated he is not a candidate for the opening in South Bend.

NOTRE DAME—Recruiting coordinator Rob Ianello has taken over on an interim basis following the dismissal of Charlie Weis after five years. Insiders report the Irish players and administration are very unlikely to seek or accept a bowl bid. The landscape at South Bend has changed radically from last season when Notre Dame accepted a bid to the Hawaii Bowl with a 6-6 record (the same mark as this year). Many players are reportedly upset with the ouster of Weis and not eager to resume practice for a lower-tier bowl appearance.

TCU—HC Gary Patterson, sometimes mentioned as a candidate for the Notre Dame job, has signed new extension to stay with the Horned Frogs through 2016. Patterson has produced five 11-win seasons in the last seven years, and his team is currently No. 4 in the BCS rankings. TCU has a chance to advance to the BCS title game if Nebraska upsets Texas in the Big XII title game and if idle TCU stays ahead of No. 5 Cincy (at Pittsburgh this week) in the rankings. Patterson, mentioned for other jobs in the past, says he considers TCU, and Fort Worth, his home.