

Hurricane forcing colleges to move games

By **MARK LONG**
AP Sports Writer

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Three Sunshine State universities took steps Tuesday to salvage home football games as Hurricane Ian approached.

Florida moved its game against Eastern Washington from Saturday to Sunday. Central Florida did the same with its game against SMU. South Florida relocated its Saturday game against East Carolina from Tampa, Florida, to Boca Raton.

Although South Carolina is a safer distance from the major storm, the Gamecocks didn't want to wait to make a decision regarding their game against South Carolina State. Those schools will now play Thursday night, two days earlier than previously scheduled and at least a day before Ian reaches the area.

Stetson canceled its home game against San Diego scheduled for Saturday in the Pioneer Football League.

No. 23 Florida State and 22nd-ranked Wake Forest, meanwhile, are "closely monitoring" the storm while expecting to play as planned in Tallahassee.

"We remain confident that we will be able to safely host Saturday's football game against Wake Forest at its scheduled kickoff time," FSU athletic director Michael Alford said Wednesday.

Wake Forest coach Dave Clawson was cautiously optimistic.

"It's one of those deals that you certainly hope that the ACC office makes the right decision," Clawson said. "And if they don't, we will. We're not going to travel down there and put anybody at risk. ... Obviously, this is in the league's hands and Florida State's hands. We would hope that they make the right decision. But if we feel there's any danger to our players going down there, we're not going to go."

The storm is expected to hit the state's southwest coast Wednesday. It tore into western Cuba on Tuesday as a major hurricane, with nothing to stop it from intensifying into a catastrophic Category 4 storm before it hits Florida, where officials ordered 2.5 million people to evacuate before it crashes ashore Wednesday.

Universities across the state closed campuses for the week. But football is big business and a much-needed revenue source for many. Playing the cross-country game at Florida guarantees Eastern Washington \$750,000, a significant payday for a school with an athletic budget around \$17.5 million.

South Carolina State also relies on its "pay-check game" from South Carolina.

"There's no perfect plan, but we're trying to put together the best thing for our team at this moment," South Carolina coach Shane Beamer said. The Gamecocks last moved a game due to weather in 2016, playing a scheduled Saturday game on Sunday.

The NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers relocated their football operations to the Miami area Tuesday in preparation for Sunday night's game against the Kansas City Chiefs.

The Buccaneers are expected to practice at the Dolphins' training complex in Miami Gardens starting Wednesday. So far, there has been no change for the game, which is scheduled for Sunday night at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

"We are not discussing any potential (relocation) sites," the NFL said Wednesday in a statement. "We continue to monitor the storm and are in constant communication with the clubs and local authorities. Decision could be made as late as Friday."

The Dolphins play at Cincinnati on Thursday night. They changed their travel plans for Wednesday and are leaving a few hours earlier than originally scheduled, in anticipation of severe weather.

Also in Tampa, the Rays have other concerns besides clinching an AL wild card. As they opened a three-game series in Cleveland, players and coaches were keeping an eye on the impending hurricane. The Tampa Bay-St. Petersburg area was last directly hit by a hurricane in 1921.

"Watching the news, watching the computer," Rays manager Kevin Cash said. "I know the Bay area has been pretty fortunate over many, many years now, but just thinking about everybody there and hopefully people have done right to prepare and wherever it goes, it doesn't hit as hard as the speculation."

Meanwhile, the NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning postponed preseason games scheduled to be played at home Wednesday against Carolina and Thursday against Nashville.

The NBA's Orlando Magic called off practice on what would have been their second day of training camp Wednesday, and said their plans for Thursday were uncertain. Forecasters say Orlando — in the central part of the state — could see flooding and, at minimum, tropical storm conditions as Ian nears the coast.

LADY ROCKETS EDGE CASCADE



The Forrest Lady Rockets claimed a key road victory on Tuesday night, beating Cascade in a 1-0 thriller on the road. Jadeyn Stalneckner's 26th minute goal was the only score of the match as the Lady Rockets held on to claim the district win.

Tribune Photo by Will Carter

Alabama faces 3-game stretch of ranked foes

By **JOHN ZENOR**
AP Sports Writer

Alabama has mostly breezed through the first month of the season, with one big scare and three games that were frightfully but predictably easy.

How good is 'Bama, really? Check back in a few weeks.

The second-ranked Crimson Tide (4-0, 1-0 Southeastern Conference) start a three-game stretch against ranked teams with Saturday's visit to No. 20 Arkansas (3-1, 1-1). Then comes No. 17 Texas A&M and a visit to red-hot eighth-ranked Tennessee.

"It's the SEC, that's why you come to Alabama to play in the SEC and in games like this," Alabama linebacker Will Anderson Jr. said. "It's not going to be our first time going on a stretch like this. We play good teams all the time out here in the (SEC) West."

But there's seldom such a stacked lineup of games in the division. Assuming the rankings hold up, it will be the first time since 2016 that Alabama has played three straight Top 25 opponents in the regular season.

That team brushed by No. 16 Arkansas (49-30), No. 9 Tennessee (49-10) and No. 6 Texas A&M (33-14) without breaking much of a sweat, and survived a stiffer test from No. 13 LSU (10-0).

Last season, the Tide went 6-1 in Top 25 games, including a national championship game loss to Georgia. Alabama did, however, lose to an unranked Texas A&M team.

The collective record of the Tide's seven remaining SEC opponents: 23-5, including unbeaten and 14th-ranked Mississippi on the road. But three of the toughest teams

come in the next three weeks.

By far Alabama's harder game to date this season was the 20-19 win over Texas on a late field goal by Will Reichard. The Longhorns just lost again, in overtime to Texas Tech.

The Tide's wins over Utah State, Louisiana-Monroe and Vanderbilt came by a combined score of 173-10.

Bryce Young and Alabama unleashed their best downfield passing performance of the season in a 55-3 win over the Commodores in the SEC opener. Tide coach Nick Saban said afterward his team has shown steady progress in the opening month.

"The challenges get greater as we go, so we have to continue to focus on moving forward, improving," Saban said. "I think the team played really well. I think the team sort of bought in to everybody trying to

play to a standard, and I think this is probably the closest we've come to it this year."

Alabama will likely have to continue that trend to navigate the next three games unscathed. The Tide are favored by 16.5 points over quarterback KJ Jefferson and the Razorbacks, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Arkansas is coming off a 23-21 loss to Texas A&M.

Tennessee is fresh from a 38-33 win over Florida.

"It's a big stretch," Young said of the next few games. "We understand that whenever we get into SEC play, anything can happen. So this is why we're all here, SEC ball. This was a good start and we have to carry that momentum. ... We know it's going to be a big challenge (this) week. We know it's going to take everything."

With top QBs struggling, scoring is down across NFL

By **JOSH DUBOW**
AP Pro Football Writer

With some of the most accomplished quarterbacks in the NFL struggling to produce points it was no surprise the league had one of its lowest scoring weeks.

The 20.3 points per game by teams was the lowest for a Week 3 since 2009 and the fourth lowest for any week in the past five seasons.

Teams led by Patrick Mahomes, Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers — the winners of four of the last five MVP awards — played a major role with their teams combining for 43 points Sunday. That's the fewest points scored in the 57 weeks all three of those stand-out QBs have started. The previous low was 55 in Week 15 of the 2018 season.

Brady and the banged-up Tampa Bay Buccaneers have had the biggest problems offensively early this season, failing to score more than 20 points in any of their three games. Tampa Bay is scoring 17 points per game, down from 30.1 last season.

That's just the fifth time that's ever happened in three straight games for a team quarterbacked by Brady and second in the past 11 seasons. It happened once in 2019 in New England.

The Bucs and the New York Giants are the only teams without a first-half touchdown as absences on the offensive line and receiver have taken a toll.

The beneficiaries of that poor production by Tampa Bay were Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers, who pulled out the 14-12 road win despite failing to score following the first two drives.

It marked just the fourth time in Rodgers' career that he ended up on the winning side in a game when Green Bay failed to score more than 14 points. The Packers are averaging 16 points per game, down from 26.5 last season.

Kansas City's offense was clicking to start the season with 44 points in the opener but has scored just 44 the last two weeks, including a 20-17 loss at India-

napolis in Week 3 that marked just the fifth time the Chiefs scored 17 points or fewer with Mahomes at quarterback.

Overall, the 21 point per game average for the NFL is the lowest through Week 3 since it was 20.2 points per game in 2010.

Rareties The Buffalo Bills somehow managed to lose a game to Miami despite outgaining the Dolphins by 285 yards.

In the Super Bowl era, teams that outgain the opposition by at least 285 yards had a 266-11-1 (.959) record in those games before Tua Tagovailoa and Miami's 21-19 win.

The last team to overcome that and win was also the Dolphins, in Tagovailoa's first career start on Nov. 1, 2020, when Miami was out-gained by 326 yards in a 28-17 win over the Rams.

The San Francisco-Denver game also was an outlier, with the Broncos win becoming just the second 11-10 game in NFL history. The Steelers beat the

Chargers by that score on Nov. 16, 2008.

It was also the second game in NFL history when the winning team had exactly one touchdown, one field goal and one safety. The other time it happened came Oct. 12, 2008, when Minnesota beat Detroit 12-10.

In an odd coincidence, the safety in that game came when Dan Orlovsky stepped over the end line in the end zone just like Jimmy Garoppolo did Sunday night.

Parity For the fifth time since the merger, only two teams remain winless after Week 3 with Las Vegas (0-3) and Houston (0-2-1) doing it.

That previously happened in 1988, '89, '90 and 2012. But this is just the first time since 1959 that only one team started a season 0-3, with the Lions doing it that year.

The Raiders managed to lose all three games despite their opponents failing to win any in their other games, joining the 2012 Saints and 1989 Cowboys as the only teams to do that since the merger.

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