The second half of the conference season starts Saturday with key matchups in both divisions, one local team taking on a ranked opponent, and another looking for its first conference win in a "winnable" game. The Game of the Week pits 24th ranked Ohio visiting Miami.

This week's Game of the Week features **Ohio** (7-0, 3-0, ranked 24th) against **Miami** (2-1) in a key matchup in the East Division race. Both teams come in fresh from their bye weeks, and Miami needed it losing big to Cincinnati and Bowling Green before the break. Miami was expected to compete for the East Division title and a trip to Detroit in November. But some tough losses have them with a 3-4 record (2-1 in the MAC). Ohio comes in at 7-0 and nationally ranked for the first time in school history. Ohio's Beau Blankenship is 8th in the country with 951 yards. Miami's Jordan Lynch trumps that with 1049 yards rushing, good for second in the FBS. He's also a pretty good quarterback. Miami's weakness is their defense, which gives up almost 38 points per game. Which Ohio, with their 28th ranked offense, should be able to exploit all day. This matchup is on ESPN3 at 3:30.

Kent State is another player in the East, going 4-0 in the conference thus far. This week they take on undefeated 15th ranked Rutgers. The Scarlet Knights have won all seven games they've played this year by a collective 185-79. Kent's one loss came to Kentucky in week two. RB Dri Archer has been pulling off the big play whenever needed, but this week faces a Scarlet Knights defense that is one of the best in the land, giving up only 11.3 ppg. The D gets them back into games by forcing turnovers, and Rutger's QB Gary Nova has thrown 15 pics. But if you can't score, you can't win. Kent loses a tough one. This game is also on ESPN3

at 3:30.

Akron (0-4) travels to **Central Michigan** to take on the 0-3 Chippewas. Akron has one of the best QB's in the league, but the rest of the team is banged up. And this is a team that had no depth to start with. Meanwhile the Chippewas give up almost 40 points per game. Well, one of these teams has to win their first conference game, it's in the rules. I'm taking Akron in an upset.

Northern Illinois (4-0) continues their march through the conference in **Western Michigan** (1-3). The Huskies are a machine this season, led by the second leading rusher in the FBS, quarterback Jordan Lynch. Jordan is my "Tim Tebow with a strong arm". 1759 combined yards and 26 combined touchdowns, and he has the teammates in place to get the job done, to the tune of receiving votes for a national ranking. WMU has been a disappointment, with bad losses and bad injuries. I have NIU winning this one. This is a "nooner" on ESPN3.

Ball State (3-2) travels to the pseudo-MAC team, Army. Army is 0-3 in the MAC this year, despite having the best running game in college football. But they also give up 38 points per game. Ball State is just too tough; this game will be on CBS Sports Network at noon.

Toledo (4-0) visits **Buffalo** (0-3) and this one isn't going to be close.

Bowling Green (3-1) hosts **Eastern Michigan** (0-3) and this one looks even uglier.

And last but probably least, **UMass** (0-4) plays a non-conference game in Vanderbilt. What were they thinking? This one is on ESPN3, apparently Vandy has a lot of fans on ESPN3 because I don't know who else is going to watch this blowout.

There it is, the good, the bad, and the Bulls/Eagles/Minutemen playing strong opponents.