The Kent State Golden Flashes and the Northern Illinois Huskies clinched the East and West Divisions respectively with tight wins over 2nd place.

First off thanks to Adam for backing me up last week. These guys have all been great to work with.

Thehe 25th ranked **Kent State** Golden Flashes won their first division championship, and their first 10 win season by edging second place **Bowling Green** 31-24 on the road. The first 18 minutes went scoreless, before Kent's Freddy Cortez booted a 32 yard field goal. On the next Kent drive, Dri Archer (referred to as the fastest man in college football) lit up the BGSU defense for a 79 yard run. Twenty seconds later BG's Matt Schilz hit Chris Galion for a 72 yard TD pass and it was game on. Before the half Tyler Tate kicked a 30 yard FG to tie the game.

In the third quarter Schilz hit Shaun Joplin for a 27 yarder to put the Falcons up for the first time 17-10. Kent's Spencer Keith countered with a 32 yard pass to Eric Adeyemi, and it was 17-17 going into the fourth.

As the fourth quarter started, Dri Archer again torched the D on a 74 yard rush. It was déjà vu as twenty seconds later BG's Matt Schilz again hit Chris Galion for an 81 yard TD pass. With eight minutes left in the game, Keith ran it in himself 7 yards to put the Flashes up 31-24. Kent then stalled Bowling Greens ensuing 58 yard drive at their own 17 on a failed fourth down conversion (incomplete pass). Kent went three-and-out and could only take 2:27 off the clock, but freshman Anthony Melchiori laid down a 54 yard punt that hung forever and was unreturnable. Schilz led another march down the field until again stalling on the Kent 17 (déjà vu all over again). This time on fourth down Schilz' pass was intercepted in the end zone by Luke Wollet to ice the game, and the East Division crown.

Kent State used the same formula they have all season, big time plays by Dri Archer on offense, and creating interceptions on defense. It sounds like a broken record, but Dri lit up the 9th ranked defense in the NCAA for 241 yards (14.2 per), and the Kent D pulled down three interceptions, including Wollet's to prevent a tying TD and finish off the second place Falcons. "My stomach was in my throat," head coach Darrell Hazell said. "I couldn't let the players see it." Hazell, a former Ohio State assistant, has revived a Kent State program that has been one of the worst in the conference the last four decades with more winless seasons (four) than winning ones (two) up until this year. His team travels to Ohio U next week with the East Division title everyone (including me) thought Ohio would win. Bowling Green remains in second place at 5-2 (7-4), and they finish the regular season Friday night against Buffalo.

Wednesday night we learned how the west was won. **Northern Illinois** hosted the **Toledo** Rockets with a chance to clinch the West Division. And Toledo came out swinging, taking the opening kickoff and driving 72 yards and scoring on a 2 yard run by David Fluellen. The teams traded stalled drives, then fumbles to close out the first quarter. Two more botched drives in the second went down before Jordan Lynch hit Martel Moore on a 5 yarder to tie the game. Toledo responded with an 83 yard drive capped off with a 1 yard Terrence Owens run. Toledo 14, NIU 7 at the half.

Toledo kicked off to start the second half and Jordan Lynch wasted no time to add to the Huskies score, hitting Moore on a 73 yard TD pass on the first play. Toledo's next drive ended in an INT on the NIT 1, but that didn't bother Jordan, who drove the Huskies 99 yards, hitting Perez Ashford on a 6 yarder to cap it. ON Toledo's first drive of the second half, Owens drove the team 42 yards before the drive stalled, and Toledo failed on a fourth down conversion attempt. The teams traded interceptions, before NIU made it a two possession game with a 6 yard TD run by Akeem Daniels. NIU 28 Toledo 14. Toledo's drive stalled.

Onto the fourth quarter. Lynch drove the Huskies to the Toledo 26 where Matthew Sims kicked a 43 yard FG to make it 31-14. Toledo responded with a TD drive capped with a 5 yard rush by Cassius McDowell. Toledo forced a fumble on the Huskies next drive, and drove to their 17 yard line, but had to settle for a 34 yard FG. Northern Illinois successfully ate the last six minutes off the clock to put the Rockets away.

Jordan Lynch was the star of the game (not the first time you heard that). He passed for 407 yards (25/36) with 3 TD's and 1 INT. Martel Moore rang up 153 yards through the air (21.9 ypc) with two touchdowns. If not for the end line, he might still be running. For Toledo Owens threw for 265 yards with 0 TD's and 3 INT's. Bernard Reedy was his favorite target with 10 catches for 131 yards. NIU (10-1 7-0) travels to Eastern Michigan Friday night, on their way to the MAC Championship Game in Detroit on the 30th. Toledo has a couple days off before hosting Akron Tuesday night.

In my season preview, I picked **Western Michigan** to win the West. Saturday they dropped to 2-6 in the MAC after handing **Eastern Michigan** their first MAC win of the year. 29-23. It wasn't even close, with the Eagles putting 14 on the expected champions in the first quarter. Alex Carder put up 328 yards and 2 TD's in the loss. The loss ended the Broncos season at 4-8, 2-6 in the MAC. EMU hosts Northern Illinois, hoping the Huskies aren't concerned about national ranking and will play it safe before the MAC Championship game. Good luck with that.

I predicted **Ohio** would win the East, well they got destroyed by **Ball State** 52-17. It was actually a four point game in the fourth, when the Cards scored three unanswered touchdowns. Tyler Tettleton threw for 236 yards, and Beau Blankenship ran up 161, but were unable to get a first down on the final three drives, capped off with a Quinton Cooper interception of backup Derrius Vick with 1:40 left. Let's just say I'm a lot better at picking games than I am at picking final standings. Which isn't too hard. Ohio (4-3 8-3) finishes up at Kent State, Ball State (5-2 8-3) climbs over Toledo in the standings and ends the regular season at Miami.

Eastern Michigan wasn't the only bottom feeder to pull off an upset. **Central Michigan** toasted **Miami** 30-16 to make them both 3-4 in the MAC. They are also a win away from being bowl eligible. Zac Dysert did his part, throwing for 343 yards. But CMU was too much for the RedHawks, putting the exclamation point on the win by sacking Zac in his own endzone. CMU heads for UMass this week with a .500 season still possible. Miami hosts Ball State Friday night.

Then there's **Buffalo**, narrowly escaping an upset of their own at the hands of **UMass** to wind up tied with Miami at 3-4. In the third UMess was up 19-7 before Buffalo scored three unanswered touchdowns. Buffalo's season grinds to a halt in Bowling Green, UMass closes out their first FBS season at home with the suddenly resurgent CMU.

I gotta be honest, I was hoping either Kent or Northern Illinois would lose, so we would have a division race to watch next week. But, that's done, but we still have teams fighting for pride, and fighting for bowl game berths. At least three teams are bowling, possibly five or more. It is not over yet!!!

East Division Standings Kent State 7-0 Bowling Green 5-2 Ohio 4-3 Buffalo 3-4 Miami 3-4 UM ass 1-6

Akron 0-7

West Division Standings Northern Illinois 7-0 Ball State 5-2 Toledo 5-2 Central Michigan 3-4 Western Michigan 2-6

Eastern Michigan 1-6