This weekend provides the final full slate of non-conference action before Mid-American Conference play begins in earnest. There are quite a few games that should be very entertaining, led by Temple's trip to Beaver Stadium to take on Penn State.

Temple is legit. When this writer was growing up one of his favorite features in the local newspaper was the "Bottom Ten" feature that made fun of the 10 worst football programs in the country. The hapless Owls were usually one of those teams. But Temple head coach Al Golden has the program on the rise. Even Golden has a different perception of the program.

"It's a big win because we are 3-0, and because it was against a real physical opponent," Al Golden said to the media following the game. "An opponent that had gone into South Bend and won, gone to play South Carolina and won. That's the significance of it.

"I think we are a Division I team now. I don't know the final count, but I bet we played 56 people in the game. We lost a lot of tough games as we were growing up, (and that was) because of a lot of things. But also (because) we were tired."

Temple is 3-0 to open the season for the first time since 1979 and has won its last eight games at Lincoln Financial Stadium. The Owls' 30-16 win over the Huskies was their first win over a BCS school since they knocked off Syracuse, 34-24, in the 2004 season.

Sophomore tailback Bernard Pierce went over 100 yards for the first time this season against Connecticut, rushing for 169 yards and a pair of touchdowns to move to second in the MAC in rushing with 301 yards and three touchdowns this season.

Pierce and the Owls will be testing a Penn State defense that ranks 35th in the nation in rushing defense (104.3 yards per game) and 34th in team defense (300.3 yards per game). When the Nittany Lions have the ball the Owls will look to pressure freshman quarterback Rob Bolden into mistakes. Bolden has looked jittery at times this season, throwing five interceptions in three games and is ranked 59th in the nation in passing. His numbers, 50-for-85 for 600 yards and three touchdowns, have been good enough to lead Penn State to a 2-1 record, including a 24-0 victory over Kent State this past weekend.

Senior All-America candidate Evan Royster has been a disappointment thus far for Penn State. The All-Big Ten tailback has mustered just 110 yards and a touchdown in Penn State's three games this season.

If the Owls can move the ball on the ground with any consistency and force Bolden into frequent throwing situations there is no reason Temple can't move to 4-0 with a big win in Happy Valley.

My pick: Temple wins, 27-24.

Bowling Green at Michigan

Bowling Green's defense came up huge in the Falcons' 44-28 win over Temple at Doyt Perry Stadium, returning a pair of interceptions for touchdowns and having a third pick-six called back

because of a penalty. Dwayne Woods picked off a Brian Anderson pass and went 78 yards to the endzone, the fourth-longest interception return in school history. Later in the game Jerry Gates grabbed a wayward Anderson pass and went 29 yards to paydirt.

But against Michigan in “The Big House” the Falcons will have a whole different problem with Wolverines sophomore quarterback sensation Denard Robinson. Robinson leads the nation in rushing with 559 yards and four touchdowns (186.3 rushing yards per game). Robinson has been effective through the air as well, completing 53 of 76 passes for 671 yards and four touchdowns against just one interception. Robinson also leads the nation in all-purpose yards with 1,230…an astounding 133 yards ahead of Nevada’s Colin Kaepernick, who sits second.

The Wolverines struggled against UMass, however, and despite cracking back into the top 20 in the nation Michigan still has a lot to prove. The Falcons have a chance, but will fall short.

My pick: Michigan wins, 38-27.

Ball State at Iowa

Iowa’s special teams were brutal against Arizona last weekend, allowing a blocked punt and a 100-yard kickoff return for a touchdown in its road loss to the Wildcats. Ball State (1-2) was competitive, but fell to Purdue, 24-13, in West Lafayette.

The Cardinals’ biggest weapon is kick returner Eric Williams, a sophomore, who has averaged 36.1 yards in seven returns to lead the MAC, and he should get plenty of chances to show what he can do because Ball State has no combination for the combo of Ricky Stanzi to Marvin McNutt, one of the top duos in the nation.

Sean Baker pulled down his 13th career interception against Purdue Saturday, but he will need a lot of secondary help. Stanzi, a versatile quarterback that can run the football, will look to exploit Ball State’s inexperienced defense…a unit that ranks seventh in the MAC in team defense. Look for McNutt to find the endzone more than once as the Hawkeyes roll.

My pick: Iowa wins, 45-14.

Central Michigan at Northwestern

The Chippewas will have their hands full with an underrated Northwestern team that loves to put the football in the air. The Wildcats junior quarterback Dan Persa is having a phenomenal season, completing an astounding 81.6 percent of his passes (52-of-76) for 769 yards, has thrown six touchdown passes and no interceptions to lead Northwestern to a 3-0 record. On the defensive side of the ball Northwestern gives up plenty of yards, allowing 357.3 per game, but it is difficult to put the ball in the endzone against the Wildcats. Northwestern ranks 70th in the country in team defense, but sits eighth in scoring defense allowing just 12.3 points per game.

Central Michigan's Paris Cotton leads the MAC in rushing with 343 yards and five touchdowns. He gained 209 yards and scored three times Saturday at Eastern Michigan. Sophomore quarterback Ryan Radcliffe is second in the conference in passing yards (785) and first in passing efficiency. The Chips will move the ball, but will they find the end zone? That is the big question. The Wildcats have been able to handle Vanderbilt, Illinois State and Rice, but what will they do against one of the top teams in the MAC?

My pick: CMU wins, 21-20.

Toledo at Purdue

In Week Three Purdue struggled to get past Ball State while Toledo was easily handling Western Michigan. The young Boilermakers (2-1) are looking to get better week-to-week before Big Ten play begins while Toledo, also a young team, has exceeded expectations thus far.

After a 41-2 blowout loss at home to Arizona, the Rockets (2-1, 2-0) have won two consecutive conference games on the road to put themselves in good shape in the MAC East conference standings. In their 37-24 road win over Western Michigan Toledo forced six turnovers and have

won back-to-back road wins for the first time since the 2005 season.

Purdue has suffered numerous injuries in its offensive backfield and, last week, was forced to move two receivers to running back in practice. But with junior quarterback Robert Marve running the show offensively, the Boilermakers do not have to run the ball all that much. Marve, a transfer from USC, is very athletic and is a threat to run the ball at any time. When he has thrown he has connected on 66-of-96 passes for 502 yards and three touchdowns.

Boilermakers head coach Danny Hope is pleased with his offense's discipline.

"Our offensive system is excellent right now as long as we stay within the system," Hope said. "If we get out of the system, that's when we get a little disjointed."

Hope wants his offense to continue to stretch the field. Against Ball State the Boilermakers took numerous shots down the field and completed a pair of long ones for touchdowns. Marve found O.J. Ross for a 36-yard touchdown in the first quarter and Rob Henry, who stepped in when Marve left the game with a mild injury, threw a 76-yard touchdown pass to Cortez Smith.

"We're going to keep taking our shots downfield," Hope said. "We got a guy that can throw it and we got enough skill guys that have the speed to get open outside and catch it."

The Rockets are off to a strong start, but the Boilers have too much talent.

My pick: Purdue wins, 37-20.

In other MAC non-conference games this weekend: **Ohio state beats Eastern Michigan, 48-0; Indiana tops Akron, 23-16; Northern Illinois downs Minnesota, 44-28; Ohio nips Marshall, 24-21; Missouri romps Miami, 36-4 and UConn tops Buffalo, 23-17.**