



The betting lines in Vegas, how they move and change as the money flows in on one side or the other, have always fascinated me. Vegas doesn't care who wins or loses a game, all they want is for an equal amount of money to be bet on both sides so they can cash in on the 10 percent vigorish they charge on each bet. The "vig" or the "juice" means Vegas will always make money, as long as they are not too heavy on one side.

Here is an example. Say, for instance, Ohio State is a seven point favorite over Michigan. Now imagine everyone thinks the Buckeyes will win by more than a touchdown. They will lay the points. So if they want to bet the Buckeyes for \$500 they will pay \$550 for their bet, the additional \$50 going to the bookmaker.

## For Entertainment Purposes Only

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Now imagine everyone is betting on Ohio State and the bookmaker has \$5,000 from various bets on Ohio State and just \$200 on Michigan. The bookie will then move the line a half-point or a point, meaning they are now posting Ohio State minus eight (Ohio State -8 at Michigan). They hope this will get people to start betting on the Wolverines because they are \$4,800 heavy on Ohio State.

If people continue to bet the Buckeyes they might move the line another half-point or point. They will continue to manipulate the betting line until their books even out. In a perfect world for the bookmaker there would be exactly the same amount bet on each team. If there is \$10,000 bet on Ohio State and \$10,000 bet on Michigan, no matter which team wins or covers the spread, the bookie is going to make \$2,000 on this game (10 percent of the \$20,000 wagered).

There are seven games on the Mid-American Conference schedule this weekend and some very interesting betting lines. Here is how I think things will go. Remember, this is for entertainment purposes only. Don't go betting your mortgage money on these games because I confirm what you have been thinking about a certain game. That, my friend, would be foolish.

***Miami +13 at Central Michigan:*** Central Michigan is desperate for a win as the defending MAC champions have dropped three straight. Miami, on the other hand, is surprisingly sitting on top of the MAC East standings at 2-0 in the conference, 3-3 overall. Don't let that overall record fool you. The RedHawks losses have come to Florida, Missouri and Cincinnati...all solid football programs from BCS automatic qualifier conferences.

The problem for Miami will be an inability to run the football. The RedHawks are currently 119<sup>th</sup> in the nation in rushing offense while Central Michigan is 41

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in the country in team defense. Miami sophomore quarterback Zac Dysert will have to have a huge passing game in what is expected to be chilly, windy conditions. Meanwhile, the Chippewas are 42

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in the country in total offense while Miami is towards the bottom of the national rankings in team defense. CMU sophomore quarterback Ryan Radcliff has been inconsistent this year. He currently stands sixth in the nation in passing yards with 1,818, and his 10 touchdown passes are good. His 8 interceptions are not.

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CMU junior tailback Paris Cotton broke out with 209 rushing yards in Week Three, but in the three games since has averaged just 49.3 yards per game.

Central Michigan will win, but not cover.

**Pick** – take Miami and the points.

***Eastern Michigan +14 ½ at Ball State:*** With a brutal schedule the rest of the way, Eastern Michigan will be fired up it what is probably it's best chance to end its long losing streak (now 18 games). Ball State is 1-1 in the MAC after being destroyed at home by Western Michigan, 45-16, last week. The Cardinals cannot afford to fall below .500 in the conference.

Ball State can run the football while Eastern Michigan cannot stop the run. The Cardinals three-headed running back monster is led by sophomore Eric Williams, who has rushed for 363 yards. Sophomore David Brown (249 rushing yards) and senior MiQuale Lewis (189 RY) have combined to rush for 801 yards this season. EMU, meanwhile, has just two teams below it in the nation when it comes to rushing defense.

EMU sophomore quarterback Alex Gillett is an exciting player who is a threat to pull the ball down and run with it, and with the Cardinals ranked 91<sup>st</sup> in the country in total defense, he should be able to have a good day running and throwing, but the Cardinals should be able to control the ball with its ground attack, keeping Gillett on the sidelines. Eastern Michigan is also dead last in the country in scoring defense, allowing 44.3 points per game.

Ron English will have to wait a little longer to get his first career win as a head coach.

**Pick** – Take Ball State to cover the 14 ½.

**Bowling Green +20 at Temple:** What is wrong with the Falcons? Though no one really expected Bowling Green to win the MAC title, no one thought the Falcons would struggle this badly. BG's lone win of the season game against Marshall. The rest of the season has been a nightmare...especially if you like defense. The Falcons are last in the nation in rushing defense, allowing 250.8 rushing yards per game. They are last in the country in total defense, allowing 489.8 yards per game. The Falcons have not been able to move the ball on the ground, either, sitting 118<sup>th</sup> in the nation in rushing.

Temple, on the other hand, suffered a heart-breaking 31-17 loss to Northern Illinois last weekend in what was billed as a MAC Championship Game preview. Who would have thought, six games into the season, that sophomore tailback Bernard Pierce would not be leading the Owls in rushing? An injured ankle has limited Pierce over the last three weeks, allowing sophomore Matt Brown to show what he can do. Brown has 477 rushing yards and six touchdowns this season, while Pierce has rushed for 349 yards and five touchdowns.

Pierce is not yet 100 percent, but he should see increased playing time this week after carrying the ball only twice against Northern Illinois. Pierce and Brown together could make life miserable for the Bowling Green defense.

The interesting thing about this line is that Temple opened as just 15-point favorites, so a ton of money was bet on the Owls. If I were betting with real money I would not touch this game with a 10-foot pole. But here I have to make a pick.

**Pick** – Take the Owls to cover the 20 points.

**Akron +17 at Ohio University:** The Bobcats hammered Bowling Green 49-25 last weekend. Does anyone really think Akron, on the road, can play OU tighter than the Falcons? The Zips have a long way to go while the Bobcats will be looking to move to 3-1 in the MAC. No one really fears the Roo anymore.

Of all the games on the MAC slate this weekend, this is the pick I am most confident in.

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**Pick** – Take Ohio to cover the 17 points.

***Western Michigan +24 at Notre Dame:*** Western Michigan has absolutely nothing to lose while Notre Dame is in a no-win situation. WMU is supposed to be cannon fodder for a major program and this is one of those notorious “payday” games where a smaller program travels to one of the NCAA big boys, takes a beating and heads home almost \$1 million richer. But do not count the Broncos out of this one.

The Broncos lost by 24 at Michigan State earlier this season and lost by 20 at home to Idaho.

The Fighting Irish have three losses, one at home to Michigan (28-24) in a game where Denard Robinson had over 500 total yards, one at Michigan State on a fake field goal in overtime and one at Stanford in a game where their defense did a decent job on All-American quarterback candidate Andrew Luck, but could not stop the Cardinal running game or take care of the football.

One would not be surprised if Western Michigan is a bit overwhelmed at first. The history and pageantry of game day at Notre Dame is special...the Golden Dome, Touchdown Jesus, the player walk, the 1812 Overture, etc.

As former Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz once said: "Notre Dame is just special. People ask me to describe it. I say if you've been here, no explanation is necessary. If you haven't been, no explanation will suffice."

Well, WMU is going to be right in the middle of all the excitement and it will be unlike anything they have experienced in their football careers before. A lot will depend on how the Broncos handle this. I think Broncos' coach Bill Cubit will have his players ready to feed off the energy and to build off their surprising 45-16 demolition of Ball State last week. I actually think this game will be competitive well into the second half.

**Pick** – Take Western Michigan and the 24 points.

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**Buffalo +14 ½ at Northern Illinois:** Northern Illinois, after defeating Temple last week, has hit its stride. The Huskies have won their last three games, at Minnesota, at Akron and at home against Temple, by an average of 20.3 points while the Bulls' only win in their last four games was a two-point squeaker against lowly Bowling Green.

It should be interesting when the Huskies have the ball. NIU senior running back Chad Spann is 19<sup>th</sup> in the country in rushing with 656 yards. He has also found the end zone six times. NIU junior quarterback Chandler Harnish has been extremely careful with the football, throwing for eight touchdowns against just one interception. However, Buffalo boasts one of the nation's best defenses. The Bulls are 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation in total defense, 27<sup>th</sup> against the run and 11<sup>th</sup> against the pass. One of these teams will lost its first conference game of the season in this one, and my money is that it will be the Bulls.

**Pick** – Take NIU to cover the 14 ½.

**Kent State +3 ½ at Toledo:** Strangely, when this game first went up on the board the Golden Flashes were one-point favorites. After most of the money went down on Kent the line moved Toledo's way.

My problem with the Rockets? An amazing lack of consistency. We are talking about a team that beat Purdue on the road, then fell to Wyoming at home. Last week they were hammered on the blue turf at Boise State, falling 57-14.

Kent has the best rush defense in the country, but it struggles on offense. This should be a very low-scoring affair and 3 ½ points is a lot to give the team with the best rushing defense in the country. This one will go down to the wire and could be decided in the last minute of play. Toledo will probably win, but not cover.

**Pick** – Take Kent and the points.