

GRIDIRON GOLD

ILLUSTRATED

DOWN GOES BURROW

ONE INJURY, COUNTLESS CONSEQUENCES

JOE BURROW INJURY CREATES CHAOS

WITH JOE BURROW OUT FOR THE SEASON, THE RIPPLE EFFECT IS FELT ACROSS THE LEAGUE BY MORE THAN JUST AVENGERS TEAM

BY JENNIFER RAE



Injuries define seasons. They alter standings, shake confidence, and force managers into uncomfortable choices they never thought they'd face in September. In Week 2 of Gridiron Gold, no moment was bigger, or more devastating, than the news out of Cincinnati: Joe Burrow is done for the season.

The loss doesn't just hurt the Avengers Team, who spent their second-round keeper slot on him. It reverberates through the league like an aftershock, reshaping the outlook for three other franchises who tethered their hopes to Burrow's weapons: the Wrecking Crew, Hobbton, and Fins In Low Places.

The math isn't complicated. When an elite quarterback goes down, his receivers take a hit. How much of a hit depends on the backup, the system, and the team's willingness to adapt. But the uncertainty is the problem. In fantasy football, uncertainty is the enemy of stability.

For the Wrecking Crew, Ja'Marr Chase has always been the crown jewel. In Week 2, he reminded everyone why: 14 catches, 165 yards, and a touchdown, good for 39.50 points. But can that level of production continue without Burrow pulling the strings? History says wideouts tied to backup quarterbacks usually suffer. Targets may remain, but accuracy and big-play opportunities dwindle. Chase might still be a WR1 on talent alone, but the odds of him producing like he did in Week 2 just dropped.

GM Tony McGriff, who watched Burrow's injury unfold while celebrating a blowout win over the Avengers, struck a measured tone.

"It's never ideal when the guy throwing to your best player goes down," McGriff admitted. "But this is fantasy football. You can't sit around panicking. I've built a deep roster, and I'm confident I can make the right moves on the waiver wire if it comes to that. I'll adjust."

It's the kind of answer that acknowledges the challenge without conceding an inch. For a team built around firepower, the Crew can afford confidence.

Hobbton faces a different scenario. Their stake in the Bengals' offense runs through running back Chase Brown, who had been projected as a breakout candidate in the right game scripts. But with Burrow sidelined and the Bengals defense looking like a sieve, game scripts may not favor the ground game. A team trailing early doesn't run the ball—it throws. And for Brown, that could mean fewer touches and less upside.

Sam King, Hobbton's Media Relations Director and the league's most reliably unhinged voice, brushed off the concern.

"Burrow, no Burrow, who cares? Chase Brown's a baller. This team is winning the league. You guys in the media will spin it how you want, but come December, none of this matters."

It's bravado that sounds good on camera but ignores the reality: the Bengals may be playing from behind a lot, and that's a recipe for diminished rushing volume.

Whether Hobbton admits it or not, Brown's fantasy outlook just took a hit.

The Fins In Low Places, fresh off a record-setting 170.26 points in Week 2, also find themselves caught in the Burrow fallout. Tee Higgins was a central piece of their draft strategy, a big-bodied red zone target expected to feast with defenses focused on Chase. Without Burrow, Higgins' value is cloudier. Backup quarterbacks often lean on short throws and safety blankets, not precision fades to the boundary. That could push Higgins into volatile territory—boom-or-bust when stability is what contenders crave.

Jasmine Nesmith, the team's Media Relations Director, took the opposite approach of Sam King. Where Hobbton dismissed the issue, the Fins acknowledged it with calm pragmatism.

"We know Tee's production could be affected. That's part of the game," Nesmith said. "But Mike [Lisle, GM] has shown he knows how to manage a roster. If we need to adjust, we'll adjust. We feel really good about where we are."

It was the kind of balanced response that reflected the team's broader outlook: optimism rooted in trust.

For the Avengers, though, there's no spin. Losing Burrow is catastrophic. Their draft strategy, built around a core of Christian McCaffrey, Burrow, and Jaylen Warren, now hinges on Dak Prescott carrying more than his share of the load. The injury also retroactively frames their keeper decision in harsher light: choosing loyalty over flexibility backfired in the most brutal way possible.

But this story isn't about the Avengers' uphill struggle. It's about the collateral damage. In fantasy football, ripple effects matter just as much as direct hits. Burrow's injury isn't just the loss of one player—it's a recalibration of expectations for four franchises.

For the Wrecking Crew, it means tempering Chase's ceiling while leaning into roster depth. For Hobbton, it threatens to reduce Chase Brown's already-fragile role. For the Fins, it introduces volatility into an otherwise smooth, balanced roster. And for the Avengers, it's the end of a season before it really began.

In the days ahead, managers will scour waiver wires, debate trades, and second-guess draft boards. But the underlying truth is simple: Burrow's absence removes one of the league's most consistent engines, and the fallout won't be contained to a single roster.

The Wrecking Crew may survive. The Fins may adapt. Hobbton may talk louder than the problem. But the Bengals' offense won't be the same, and in Gridiron Gold, that means three teams just got a lot more complicated.

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Lombardi									
CURRENT STANDINGS									
2		Appalachian Mud Dogs	2-0-0	2-0-0	244.86	212.04	W-2	10	3
4		Fins In Low Places	1-1-0	1-1-0	283.16	249.22	W-1	2	1
5		Puds' Playmakers	1-1-0	1-1-0	219.02	226.04	L-1	5	1
11		Travelers	0-2-0	0-2-0	230.40	290.14	L-2	3	1
Gibbs									
1		1024 Bandits	2-0-0	2-0-0	286.70	205.06	W-2	11	3
6		HOBBDON	1-1-0	1-1-0	216.68	265.42	L-1	4	-
7		DEM WALLZ	1-1-0	1-1-0	202.56	216.34	W-1	7	5
10		The Bad Guys	0-2-0	0-2-0	267.92	287.04	L-2	1	-
Shula									
3		The Wrecking Crew	2-0-0	2-0-0	237.32	190.46	W-2	12	5
8		Avengers Team	1-1-0	1-1-0	198.66	236.28	L-1	9	1
9		Dragon Lady	1-1-0	1-1-0	196.06	187.30	W-1	6	4
12		DBarber	0-2-0	0-2-0	179.10	197.10	L-2	8	2

Last standings update: Wed Sep 17 02:50am EDT



Wrecking Crew Crush Avengers as Burrow Goes Down

Week 2 of the Shula Division brought a showdown heavy with narrative weight. The Wrecking Crew, fresh off a shaky opening win, squared off against rival Avengers Team, who entered the season under fire for burning a second-round keeper pick on **Joe Burrow**. The matchup ended in decisive fashion: Wrecking Crew 147.40, Avengers 100.64. But the box score told only part of the story.

The Crew looked every bit the juggernaut they were hyped to be in preseason projections. **Ja'Marr Chase** erupted for 165 yards, 14 catches, and a touchdown, racking up a league-best 39.50 points. "This is why they trust me," Chase said afterward, triumphant. "When the lights are brightest, I deliver." He wasn't alone. **Jakobi Meyers**, who spent Week 1 bitter on the bench, made the most of his starting nod in place of **Drake London**, posting 12.80 points. "I told you so," Meyers smirked. "Give me the snaps, and I'll give you results." **Jayden Daniels** added 19.70 from the quarterback spot, while **Tucker Kraft** (27.40) turned in a shock performance that left little doubt the Crew were firing on all cylinders.

For the Avengers, it was disaster. Joe Burrow went down with a serious injury that will sideline him for at least three months, effectively ending his season. His stat line—a paltry 76 yards and one touchdown before leaving—left his team stranded. "I wanted this year to prove I was worth it," Burrow said, deflated and visibly angry. "Now I don't even get the chance." **Christian McCaffrey** (22.70) and **Jaylen Warren** (17.40) did what they could, but without Burrow, the Avengers' ceiling looked suddenly capped. The fallout extended to the front office. Asked point-blank if keeping Burrow was short-sighted loyalty, GM **Joaquin Renteria** didn't mince words: "I have Dak." It was as curt as it was revealing—the Avengers will now pin their hopes on **Dak Prescott**, who lit up his own matchup for 26.14 points.

On the other side, Crew GM **Tony McGriff** brushed off suggestions that Week 2's rout was more about the Avengers' misfortune than his team's might. "Neither," McGriff said. "It's the way it's supposed to be. Just like Week 1 though, Week 2 is in the past and it's on to Week 3."

The scoreboard said blowout, but the bigger story was Burrow's fall. For the Crew, it was confirmation of championship intent. For the Avengers, it was the kind of gut punch that can define, or derail, a season.



Bandits Keep Grip on Rivalry, Outlast The Bad Guys

Some rivalries tighten over time. Others only reinforce the same story. For the Bad Guys, Week 2 brought more of the latter. Despite another strong offensive showing, they fell to the 1024 Bandits, 138.12–130.64, dropping to 1–5 against their Gibbs Division nemesis over the past three seasons.

The loss was familiar in more ways than one. The Bad Guys once again put up over 130 points, just as they had in Week 1, yet left with nothing to show for it. Denver's defense, entrusted with a starting spot, delivered a paltry output that tilted the balance in the Bandits' favor. Media Relations Director **Arthur Robinson** didn't mince words. "Two weeks in a row we've put up 130-plus and we're 0–2. That's not sustainable. The defense gave us nothing tonight. And in this league, if every point doesn't count, you're walking out with a loss."

Second year wideout **Malik Nabers**, who chipped in a modest total, carried the disappointment of another rivalry defeat. "You put in the work, you put up points, but it still stings when it doesn't add up to a win," Nabers said. Quarterback Drake Maye, left on the bench despite a favorable projection, was measured in reflecting on how things could've unfolded differently. "If I had the start, maybe it's closer. But that's not my call. No bitterness—I'll be ready when my number's called."

On the other side, the Bandits did what strong franchises do: they absorbed adversity and kept moving. Losing keeper **Joe Mixon** could have derailed their plans, but **Josh Jacobs** filled the void with 16 steady points on the ground. **Justin Herbert** was his usual efficient self, **Zay Flowers** provided another spark, and **Amon-Ra St. Brown** sealed the win with 17.90 points. Still, even he admitted it wasn't a runaway. "We're relieved," St. Brown said. "It was closer than the score shows. They pushed us. We had to respond."

The win pushed the Bandits to 2–0, a start that has already begun fueling questions about whether they are destined to take the Gibbs Division crown as projected. Asked directly about that after the game—whether this production across the board was a guarantee of divisional supremacy—Bandits GM **Juliano Wild** struck a careful balance between pride and caution.

"I would like to congratulate my guys on the 2–0 start, but as we all know, nothing's guaranteed," Wild said. "If we look back at the history, we always have been a problem in this league and we will continue to be a threat as long as we don't beat ourselves and leave points on the bench consistently."

It was a telling response, equal parts confidence and restraint. Wild knows history favors his squad in this rivalry and in the division, but he also knows championships aren't won in Week 2.

For the Bad Guys, the pain of another rivalry loss lingers. For the Bandits, the message is clear: the Gibbs Division still runs through them—and if Juliano Wild has his way, it will stay that way as long as his team avoids self-inflicted wounds.



Mud Dogs Grind Past Playmakers, Stay Unbeaten

For two Lombardi Division rivals with championship aspirations, Week 2 felt more like a misstep than a statement. The Appalachian Mud Dogs got the win, 111.42–99.14, but neither they nor Pud's Playmakers came close to living up to projections. What was billed as a grudge match—the Playmakers cost the Mud Dogs their perfect season in 2023—ended instead in a sloppy affair both sides seemed eager to bury in the film room.

The spotlight fell on rookie quarterback **J.J. McCarthy**, who struggled mightily before leaving with an ankle injury. Two interceptions underscored an outing that raised questions about whether this was simply a bump in the road or something more concerning for the Mud Dogs' offense. When that question was put directly to GM **Jesse Glaspell**—whether this was a short-term detour or the start of a longer sequel featuring another quarterback—he offered a measured response.

"We're taking it week by week," Glaspell said. "Feeling good about the **Geno (Smith)** add and **Bo (Nix)** is still learning, so I feel like I have good QBs to lean on. As long as my wide receivers and running backs perform well, I think we will be good."

It wasn't a flashy answer, but it was a practical one that acknowledged the uncertainty at quarterback while shifting focus back to the strength of the roster. For a team with proven talent in the skill positions, the GM clearly sees a bad Week 2 outing as more pothole than cliff dive.

Across the field, the Playmakers limped to their first loss of the season despite **Saquon Barkley** living up to his billing as the No. 1 overall pick with 17.40 points. The trouble was everything around him. **Courtland Sutton** turned in just 6.60, and **Mike Evans** underwhelmed again with only 10.60. Even Sutton himself couldn't hide his disgust. "That was unacceptable. I'll be better. Period."

Adding salt to the wound was the fact that two of the Playmakers' most productive pieces—**DeAndre Hopkins** (14.40) and rookie **Cam Skattebo** (13.90)—were left wasting away on the bench. When asked whether "this was just one weird week, or if the lineup needs to be re-cast for new starring roles going forward," Media Relations Director **Will Powers** bristled. "Saquon did what Saquon does. We've got guys who can step up, whether their names are Hopkins or Skattebo. So no, we're not re-casting. This isn't Hollywood. It's football. Weird weeks happen."

In the end, the Mud Dogs escaped with their 2–0 record intact. Glaspell's words reflected confidence in his depth chart and reinforced the idea that this team isn't defined by one off day at quarterback. For the Playmakers, meanwhile, the questions now extend beyond one sloppy game: are they leaving too much talent on the sidelines while their starters underperform?

The scoreboard says the Mud Dogs are still unbeaten. The film says neither side looked like a Lombardi Division favorite.



Dragon Lady Steadies, DBarber Sinks Deeper in Shula Division

In the Shula Division, the gap between contender and pretender grew clearer in Week 2. Dragon Lady, projected to be a playoff threat, steadied themselves with a 107.18–89.28 win over DBarber, who slipped to 0–2 and just 2–8 against division rivals since the realignment three years ago.

For DBarber, the frustration was plain. Quarterback **Jordan Love** threw for 292 yards and two scores, putting up a respectable 20.88 points, but his postgame comments carried more edge than optimism. “Some of our big names need to step up,” Love said, pointedly avoiding names. Wideout **Tyreek Hill**, visibly agitated despite his own 19.90-point day, didn’t hesitate to underline the message, hinting that **A.J. Brown’s** 7.70-point outing was the target of Love’s comments. “He’s right,” Hill snapped. “It’s not enough just to suit up. If we’re going to climb out of this, the stars have to play like stars.”

GM **Daniel Hernandez** didn’t dodge the tough questions. When pressed about leaving **Rhamondre Stevenson’s** 21 points and the **Patriots defense’s** 13 on the bench—moves that would have flipped the result—he cut straight to the point. “Plain mismanagement on my part,” Hernandez admitted.

It was an unusually blunt concession in a league where egos often outweigh accountability, but it underscored just how costly lineup decisions can be.

On the other side, Dragon Lady showcased the kind of balance that keeps preseason playoff predictions intact. **Jahmyr Gibbs** ripped off 19.40 points, **Nico Collins** added 14.20 with a score, and **De’Von Achane** exploded for 26.20 points on 92 yards receiving and a touchdown. The young running back himself struck a confident note. “We’ll step up. This is the level of play people expected when they said we’d make the playoffs,” Achane said.

Not every decision went Dragon Lady’s way, however. GM **Rita Reo** was asked about starting **Hunter Henry**, who produced only 2.10 points, while **Jake Ferguson** lit up her bench for nearly 20. Reo didn’t sugarcoat it. “Definitely a missed opportunity,” she admitted. “He had three targets—we wanted him in the game plan more, but he was covered pretty good all day.”

It was a candid acknowledgment that even in victory, lineup choices can sting. Dragon Lady Media Relations Director **Sterling Jones** added his own brand of sarcasm to cap the night. “It’s not how you start, it’s how you finish,” Jones said, smirking at the cameras. “But hey, if DBarber wants to treat September like preseason, that’s their business.”

With the win, Dragon Lady calmed the waters after a shaky Week 1. For DBarber, though, the storm is only growing darker, and the division is leaving them behind.



From Humiliation to Domination

One week after suffering the league's worst loss, Dem Wallz delivered its biggest blowout—at the expense of Hobbton, who tumbled from Week 1's highest scorer to Week 2's lowest.

By the time the dust settled on Sunday night, it was hard to believe these were the same two teams that walked off the field just a week earlier. Dem Wallz, embarrassed in Week 1's biggest rout, roared back with a vengeance, dismantling Hobbton 131.90–76.22 in what became the most lopsided scoreline of Week 2.

For Hobbton, the defeat was nothing short of spectacular irony. Just last week, the squad strutted with swagger, delivering the league's highest score and declaring, in no uncertain terms, that an undefeated season was underway. Seven days later, that declaration crumbled under the weight of a flat performance, punctuated by **Garrett Wilson's** quiet 8.70 points on four catches for 50 yards. Instead of the offensive fireworks they promised, Hobbton's stars fizzled when it mattered.

Dem Wallz, meanwhile, had been licking their wounds all week after opening with the league's ugliest loss. Quarterback **Lamar Jackson** refused to let it happen again. His 26.30–point explosion set the tone, and with **Jameson Williams**, **Trey Benson**, and **Wan'Dale Robinson** all outpacing expectations, Wallz were the aggressors from kickoff to final whistle. "They crowned themselves after one win," Jackson said with a wide grin. "We weren't about to let that stand. Not on us, not this week."

When pressed about the wild swing between Week 1 and Week 2—going from being stomped to doing the stomping—GM **Chanel Wall** delivered one of the more memorable soundbites of the young season.

"What's life without a little chaos?" Wall said. "Of course, as a manager, I believe my team is going to do the stomping. I don't wanna sound cocky—well, not yet. Let me get some more wins under my belt. But I want everyone to continue to doubt me and my team, and then I'll show them who they're dealing with."

Then, with a smile, she leaned on George R.R. Martin to make her point: "Chaos isn't a pit. Chaos is a ladder. Only the ladder is real. The climb is all there is. But they'll never know this. Not until it's too late."

It was part literary flourish, part competitive warning shot—exactly the kind of quote that turns a Week 2 bounce-back into a defining statement.

Hobbton's side of the press room told a different story. No players came forward to face questions. Instead, Media Relations Director **Sam King** stood in front of the cameras, combative as ever. "We'll be more prepared in Week 8," King barked. "You can write whatever headline you want now, but check back when we see them again."

In the end, the win didn't just level Wallz's record at 1–1—it restored pride, momentum, and perhaps even fear. For Hobbton, the self-proclaimed undefeated run now feels like a cautionary tale in premature celebration. For Dem Wallz, chaos isn't a setback. It's the climb.



Fins Ride High, Travelers Left Searching in Blowout Loss

Two new squads entered the Lombardi Division this year, both full of optimism, swagger, and fresh blood to shake up the standings. But only one looked like they belonged in Week 2.

Fins In Low Places didn't just win, they detonated the scoreboard. Their 170.26 points set the early-season benchmark for offensive dominance, powered by a masterclass from **Jared Goff** (36.96 points, 334 yards, 5 TDs) and bruising ground control from **Jonathan Taylor** (32.50 points, 165 total yards, 1 TD). Add in steady contributions from **Tee Higgins**, **Chuba Hubbard**, and breakout performances by **Marvin Harrison Jr.** and **Tetairoa McMillan**, and the Fins rolled past the Travelers in a blowout, 170.26–115.78.

Across the sideline, The Travelers were left scratching their heads. Once the preseason #1 Power Ranked team thanks to their savvy keeper pick of **Brock Bowers**, the hype fizzled when Bowers was inexplicably left on the bench. Instead, starter **Colston Loveland** delivered a big fat zero. Bowers, perplexed, said what everyone was thinking: "Not sure why I wasn't a starter."

He wasn't alone. **Keenan Allen**, also benched despite a double-digit day, shook his head with sarcastic amusement: "Guess I wasn't needed either. Not that it would've mattered—nobody was catching Fins this week."

When asked how he processed the loss, GM **Rudy Fabian** summed it up in blunt, almost defiant fashion: "Every dog has its day!"

It was the kind of answer that suggested Fabian saw the blowout less as an indictment of his roster and more as the cruel lottery of fantasy scheduling. Timing, not talent, was the takeaway.

On the winning sideline, the tone was a mix of satisfaction and discipline. GM **Mike Lisle** was asked whether he planned to bask in the moment or treat 170 points as the new weekly standard. His reply struck a balance.

"Great question! To be honest, we were a little disappointed in our Week 1 effort, so this feels like the course correction we were looking for. We'll savor this for 24 hours, but then it's on to Week 3 and the expectations will continue to be high for this talented lineup."

For the Travelers, the problem wasn't just losing—it was being the wrong team at the wrong time. For the Fins, the message was loud and clear: Week 1 was a false start. Week 2 was the real introduction.

The Travelers may have entered the year with lofty projections, but after a blowout loss and some head-scratching roster management, their credibility is already shaky. Meanwhile, the Fins just sent the league a message: low places, high scores.