

GRIDIRON GOLD

ILLUSTRATED



SUPERMAN
LIVES

From the Editor's Desk



What a week!

Week One didn't just arrive—it kicked the door down. All across the league, every matchup reminded us why Gridiron Gold is branded The Greatest Show.

The opening slate was supposed to be predictable. Draft grades told us who was destined to dominate and who was doomed to suffer. But the moment the whistle blew, those labels crumbled. Powerhouses found themselves clawing to survive, underdogs nearly rewrote expectations, and stars we anointed as unstoppable sometimes looked surprisingly human. That's the magic of this league—certainty lasts only until kickoff.

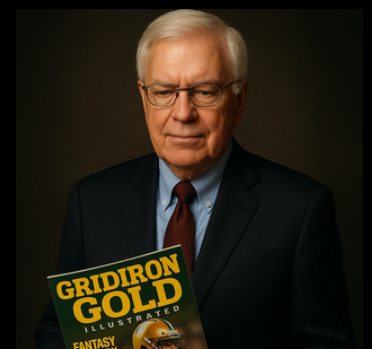
And oh, the storylines. A team crowned as the preseason juggernaut found itself tested in ways no one expected. A controversial keeper choice drew louder whispers after a shaky debut. A rookie injury cast early shadows over a contender's season. A franchise once mocked for "resetting" flashed signs that maybe, just maybe, the doubters spoke too soon.

Elsewhere, we saw the kind of heroics that turn games into legends. One quarterback delivered a performance that can only be described as a flamethrower in cleats, flipping the outcome and igniting a rivalry that suddenly feels like must-see TV. A veteran running back roared like he was five years younger, proving that sometimes, experience is the sharpest weapon of all. And a bold draft gamble—one that nearly everyone called reckless—looked a lot smarter when the player at the center of it carried his team with pride.

But more than the plays, it was the voices. The confidence in a locker room that believes destiny is theirs. The frustration of stars who know they have more to give. The snappy one-liners that only add fuel to future clashes. If Week One is any indication, no storyline is safe, no rivalry is quiet, and no projection is bulletproof.

This is Gridiron Gold 2025. Unpredictable. Explosive. The kind of theater you can't script and can't ignore. And if this first week is the tone-setter, then buckle in—we're in for The Greatest Show.

Don Carson
Editor-in-Chief
Gridiron Gold Illustrated





Wrecking Crew Survive Opening Thriller Against DBarber

In a Week 1 clash that embodied the hype of the Shula Division rivalry, The Wrecking Crew narrowly held off DBarber, 89.92–89.82, in a game that will be remembered less for fireworks and more for fingernail-biting tension. The two franchises entered the season on opposite ends of preseason forecasts—Wrecking Crew anointed as a projected 14–0 powerhouse with an A+ draft grade, while DBarber was saddled with the league's only "F," no keeper, and a gloomy 0–14 prediction. In Week 1, those labels meant nothing as both teams went toe-to-toe.

Jayden Daniels delivered the performance The Wrecking Crew envisioned when they staked their season on him, accounting for 233 passing yards, 68 on the ground, and a touchdown, good for 20.12 fantasy points. **Drake London** chipped in 13.50, while **Kyren Williams** added 13.90 to keep the Crew afloat. Yet stars didn't always shine: **Ja'Marr Chase** managed just 4.60 points on a quiet afternoon, leaving the heavy lifting to role players. "I know I didn't show out today," Chase admitted after the game. "But sometimes it's about the team finding a way when one of us has an off week."

The drama nearly swung the other way. DBarber, derided for skipping a keeper and "resetting," saw flashes of vindication. **Hollywood Brown** caught 10 balls for 99 yards, exploding for 19.90 points, nearly carrying his team to an upset. "Guess an F draft grade stands for 'fun,'" Brown joked in the locker room. But he was one of the few bright spots. **Tyreek Hill** stumbled with 8.00 points, **A.J. Brown** scraped together just 1.80, and third year quarterback **C.J. Stroud** looked like a rookie, posting 9.72 points with an interception.

If there was a subplot, it was The Wrecking Crew's bench. **Jakobi Meyers racked up 17.70 points in exile**, a total that would've spared his team the late-game sweat. "Hard to help win from the bench," Meyers said, bitterness clear in his tone. "Maybe I get my shot next week."

In the end, The Wrecking Crew escaped with a 1–0 start, but the win felt less like dominance and more like survival. For a team branded the league's inevitable juggernaut, they played down to the level of a DBarber roster expected to struggle all year. And if Week 1 is any indication, the gap between hype and performance might be wider than the Crew would like to admit.



Bandits Blitz Dem Wallz in Cousins' Showdown

The Gibbs Division christened its newest rivalry with a rout. In the first meeting as division foes, the 1024 Bandits dismantled Dem Wallz, 140.12–70.66, in what became the largest blowout of Week 1 across Gridiron Gold. The cousins clashed with bragging rights on the line, but only one side showed up ready to stake a claim.

The Bandits, picked in preseason forecasts to win the division, played to form. **Justin Herbert** turned in a commanding 318-yard, three-touchdown performance worth 30.92 fantasy points. He was flanked by **Zay Flowers**, who erupted for 143 yards and a score on his way to 31.10 points, while **Josh Jacobs** (14.00) and **George Kittle** (12.50) added sturdy totals to round out the onslaught. When it was over, the Bandits had nearly doubled their rivals' score, the kind of statement victory that sets a tone for the long season ahead.

For Dem Wallz, predicted to finish last in the division, Sunday was a stark confirmation of the road ahead. **Lamar Jackson** did all he could, throwing for 209 yards, rushing for 70 more, and totaling three touchdowns for a game-high 29.36 fantasy points. But he had little help. **Justin Jefferson's** modest 14.80 was the only other double-digit contributor in the starting lineup. "I can't do it by myself," Jackson said, frustration evident. "One man isn't going to beat a team dropping 140. We need everyone."

Meanwhile, the Bandits were already looking forward. "We took care of business today, but the only thing on my mind is next week against The Bad Guys," Herbert said, his eyes fixed on the looming divisional clash. **Team representative DeAndre Bell** echoed the sentiment. "Herbert's right—Week 1 is in the books, but it's all about The Bad Guys now. That's the one we have circled. Going 2–0 and putting them behind us is all that matters."

The Gibbs Division table looks exactly as predicted after one week, but the message from the Bandits was clear: they're not just here to win the division—they're here to bury their rivals along the way.



Mud Dogs Muzzle Newcomer Fins in Lombardi Division Debut

The Appalachian Mud Dogs began 2025 with the kind of swagger that reminded everyone why they finished 12–1 and won the title in 2023. In a Lombardi Division matchup pairing old guard against new blood, the Mud Dogs rolled past Fins In Low Places, 133.44–112.90, showing the depth and balance that made them preseason favorites to reclaim the division crown.

It wasn't just one hero for the Mud Dogs. **Derrick Henry** looked rejuvenated, pounding his way to a statement performance that set the tone for the day. "This is what we do," Henry roared afterward, visibly energized. "The Dogs eat. And tonight, we feasted." The supporting cast backed him fully—receivers turned short gains into chunks, the defense created opportunities, and the team's overall cohesion reminded the league that championships are built on depth, not just star power.

Quarterback **Bo Nix**, however, was quick to temper the celebration, deflecting credit to his teammates. "I know I didn't have the outing I wanted," Nix admitted, disappointment in his tone. "But when you've got guys like Henry running wild and others like **Puka, Lamb, and Cook** stepping up, you don't need to play perfect. They carried me, and I couldn't be prouder of them."

For the Fins, the debut was less splash than sobering reminder. **Jared Goff** delivered steady numbers but knew his side was outclassed. "We came in trying to make a statement, but you have to tip your hat to them," Goff said, humbled by the Mud Dogs' effort. "That was a full-team performance. You see why they're top dogs, no pun intended."

The Mud Dogs left Week 1 with a victory that was more than a win in the standings—it was a notice. The message to the Lombardi Division was clear: if you want the crown, you'll have to knock off a team that doesn't look ready to let anyone else have it.



Avengers Edge Dragon Lady in Lackluster Shula Division Opener

In a rivalry known for fireworks, Week 1 offered little more than sparks. The Avengers Team scraped past Dragon Lady, 98.02–88.88, in a matchup that fell well short of its projected totals. Both franchises, respected Shula Division combatants, left the field knowing they had won or lost on paper but not in pride.

For the Avengers, all eyes were on **Joe Burrow**. Widely criticized for being kept in the offseason, Burrow's chance to silence doubters fizzled. He managed just 113 passing yards, a lone touchdown, and a handful of rushing yards for 8.82 fantasy points—well below expectations. The victory came not from the arm of their keeper but the legs of **Christian McCaffrey**, who rumbled for 142 total yards and 23.20 points, and **Jaylen Warren**, who chipped in 13.90. Still, Burrow bristled at postgame questions. "I don't need to hear about the keeper stuff every week," he snapped. "I know I didn't play to my standard, but one game doesn't define a season."

Dragon Lady, meanwhile, had moments of life. **Baker Mayfield** turned in 22.58 points on three touchdown tosses, and **Jahmyr Gibbs** added 15.50. Yet the supporting cast wilted: **Nico Collins** managed just 5.50, **Jaylen Waddle** posted 7.00, and promising wideout Xavier Worthy was knocked out early with an injury, finishing with zero points. The blow was felt immediately, forcing Dragon Lady to operate without the explosive spark Worthy was drafted to provide. Still, Mayfield carried an air of confidence after the loss. "Disappointing, no doubt," he said. "But both these teams are better than what we put on tape today. This isn't who we are, and it won't be who we are in the weeks ahead."

The Avengers sit at 1–0, but the whispers about their keeper choice won't fade until Burrow delivers. Dragon Lady, now 0–1, leaves with the sting of defeat and the shadow of Worthy's injury, a setback that could loom large as the season unfolds. One thing remains clear: the Shula Division is still wide open, and neither side can afford many more missteps.



Pud's Playmakers Silence Doubters, Edge Travelers

All offseason, one storyline hovered over Pud's Playmakers: what they would do with the coveted first overall pick. The league consensus was ironclad—**Ja'Marr Chase** was the obvious choice, the foregone conclusion. Everyone assumed the pick had been decided the moment **Tyler Pudleiner** secured the draft slot. Instead, Pudleiner zagged where others zipped, shocking the league by passing on Chase and selecting **Saquon Barkley**.

Critics called it reckless, a decision destined to define the season in all the wrong ways. But in Week 1, Barkley turned skepticism into silence. The future Hall of Famer carried the Playmakers to a narrow 119.88–114.62 victory over Lombardi Division rival Travelers, racking up 21.99 points in a workhorse performance that set the tone for the upset of expectations.

The win wasn't just Barkley's. **Jalen Hurts** shouldered the spotlight, accounting for 214 total yards and two rushing touchdowns to post 24.28 fantasy points. **Courtland Sutton** added 18.10, while **Travis Kelce** chipped in 12.70 despite limited touches. For a team questioned at every turn since draft day, the combination was enough. "I'll be honest, it feels like a weight lifted," Barkley admitted afterward, relief in his tone. "When your team invests in you as a bold move, you want to prove it was worth it. This week I did."

The Travelers, riding high after being crowned No. 1 in the Keeper Power Rankings, still showed flashes of their potential. Patrick Mahomes delivered 26.02 points with his trademark dual-threat efficiency, and rookie tight end **Brock Bowers** impressed with 18.30. But the supporting cast couldn't match the Playmakers' balance. "I expect more from myself and from this roster," Mahomes said, visibly disappointed. "We were in position to take this one, and we didn't finish."

For now, Pudleiner's gamble stands tall. The pick that was supposed to be Chase will be remembered, fairly or unfairly, every week of this season. And if Barkley keeps delivering, it might be remembered as the move that redefined the Lombardi Division race.

JOSH ALLEN SAVES THE DAY FOR HOBBDON

ALLEN'S LATE NIGHT HEROICS SAVE HOBBDON, BUT THE BAD GUYS ARE ALREADY EYEING THE REMATCH IN WEEK 5

BY JENNIFER RAE



In Week 1 of the Gridiron Gold Fantasy Football League, the Gibbs Division gave us a reminder of why this league thrives on volatility. Hobbdon, led by ever expressive GM Charles Thomas, edged The Bad Guys 140.46 to 133.52, a margin close enough to spark immediate debate over what mattered most: skill, luck, or one transcendent quarterback performance.

At the heart of it all was Josh Allen. His 41.76 fantasy points weren't just a big number, they were the difference. Before Allen's outburst, Hobbdon looked finished. Thomas had even conceded defeat. Then Allen rewrote the script, turning a projected loss into a 1-0 start.

"I just try to execute," Allen said afterward, his tone calm and professional. "These games can swing fast, but my job is to put us in position to win."

It's an answer that undersells the impact. Allen didn't just put Hobbton in position, he carried them. Without his stellar performance, the team's C+ draft grade and middling preseason outlook would've been reaffirmed. With his performance however, they suddenly look like contenders, at least in the eyes of their GM and team rep.

Hobbton Media Rep Sam King, never one to temper expectations, declared the Week 1 victory proof that a championship is inevitable. "This is it. This is destiny. No one's stopping us now," he said. Thomas echoed the sentiment, leaning into the kind of bravado that has made him both the league's loudest voice and its most polarizing.

The Bad Guys took a different tone. Their draft grade (C-) suggested a long season ahead, yet their Week 1 performance nearly flipped that narrative. Bijan Robinson exploded for 27.40 points. Emeka Egbuka added 23.60. Together, they built a foundation strong enough to win most weeks. Just not this one.

"We did everything right," Bijan said. "But sometimes you run into a player who has that kind of game. I respect Josh, but the trash talk afterward? That's not for me."

Egbuka put it more bluntly. "They needed a once-in-a-lifetime performance to beat us," he said. "That's not sustainable."

The contrast between the teams' tones was striking. On one side, Hobbton celebrated like champions-in-waiting. On the other, The Bad Guys emphasized the broader picture: it's a 14-game season, not a sprint.

Arthur Robinson, the Bad Guys' media rep, summed it up succinctly: "It's Week 1. They can enjoy the moment. But we play them again in Week 5. Believe me, they will have our undivided attention."

That looming rematch highlights what makes this rivalry compelling. Both General Managers share a history as Methodist University alums. Both carry reputations—Thomas as the relentless talker, Bad Guys GM Anthony Radke as a proven winner, solidified by his status as the 2022 league champion. Now, they've

added another layer: a game that swung on one player's brilliance, setting the stage for Round Two.

From a league-wide perspective, this matchup also underscores how fragile early narratives can be. Draft grades suggested mediocrity. Projections leaned toward parity. Yet one player performance that manifested itself as an outlier, masterpiece, and miracle reshaped everything.

That's the tension at the heart of fantasy football. Analytics matter. Projections matter. But sometimes, it's just about whether your quarterback wakes up with a flamethrower in his right arm. Allen did, and Hobbton cashed in.

The question is what comes next. If Hobbton needs Allen to go nuclear every week, can they sustain this momentum? If The Bad Guys keep producing like they did, how soon will regression shift their record upward?

For now, the story is about the aftermath. Thomas and King see validation. The Bad Guys see fuel. The Gibbs Division sees its newest rivalry.

Jennifer Rae is the **Senior Writer for Gridiron Gold Illustrated**, bringing sharp insight and a seasoned voice to every story. Before joining the magazine, she produced the nightly newscast at **Las Vegas One**, anchored sports at **KENS 5 in San Antonio** and **WMBB in Panama City**, and contributed her pen to the pages of **Sports Illustrated** and **ESPN The Magazine**.

