

The DII Report™: NPI, the Power 10, and my latest DII football bracket projections

Yay, NPI is out! And no, not everything makes sense.

By Wayne Cavadi, October 18

The DII football NPI dropped Sunday, Oct. 18. And while it helps us see who the best of the best are according to [the new-to-DII mathematical selection metric](#), it still doesn't provide a complete answer of what selection Sunday will look like on Nov. 15.

Why is that? In short, NPI makes the bracket a math equation; the NPI is formula-driven, giving more weight to road wins and quality opponents as opposed to the old way of filing the bracket which, admittedly, left too many holes for mistakes. Friend of The DII Report [Cory Hogue does a nice breakdown here](#) (and by the way, why are you not subscribed to Cory Hogue Sports yet?).

That means, as we head down the stretch of conference play, there are more quality matchups, and that could change the NPI on a week-by-week basis. There is also that little matter of conference championship games, which give the winner an automatic bid, regardless of what the NPI may say about them.

Being in the top 32 today does not mean you are tournament bound. Heck, it doesn't even mean you'll be top 32 next week.

But what it does do is serve as a gage for you, the fans, to watch your teams and your super region unfold. It helps show the magnitude of heated rivalries and how much an upset this late in the season can truly effect the rankings. And it will fill the bracket in four weeks.

Week 7 Power 10 rankings - So, if we have NPI to tell us the best teams by a mathematical equation, why do I still need to do the Power 10? Well, it isn't that the NPI is flawed, it is simple a portrait of the DII landscape at that moment. Here, look. These are the top 10 NPI teams across all super regions:

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Slippery Rock, 66.2 | 6. Emporia State, 62.7 |
| 2. Harding, 65.6 | 7. Minnesota State, 61.8 |
| 3. Northwood, 63.76 | 8. Kutztown, 61.7 |
| 4. CSU Pueblo, 63.75 | 9. Northwest Missouri State, 60.1 |
| 5. Ferris State, 63.5 | 10. Davenport, 59.7 |

Now, with all due respect to this very good Slippery Rock team, there is no universe in which Ferris State is not the best team in DII and arguably the world. There is also no way in which Harding, a verified DII football powerhouse, is ranked above Ferris State after the Bulldogs eliminated Harding from the tournament in each of the past two seasons by 34 points and 21 points, respectively.

Ferris State has now won 37 games in a row and four of the last five national championships. This year, the Bulldogs are 7-0 while outscoring their opponents 46.3-6.2 points per game. They just defeated a top 25 Grand Valley State team after falling behind 17-0 early in the second quarter. So, yes, Ferris State is still No. 1, and I don't care what kind of metric you look at, it is not even debatable.

The top 10 has been pretty much locked in all season with a revolving door at the 10 spot; however, spots 11-25 have been utter chaos. Six D2 Football top 25 teams lost this week, and that is magnified when you consider three top 25 teams were on a bye. So, 29% of the top 25 lost this week, and that's been the trend we've seen for most of the season.

The rest of my top 25 shifted as well. The first five out are the Davenport, Northwest Missouri State, Valdosta State, Michigan Tech, and Grand Valley State. Rounding out the top 25 are Carson-Newman, Findlay, Minnesota-Duluth, North Greenville, Johnson C. Smith, Benedict, Wayne State (Neb), East Stroudsburg, Henderson State, and West Alabama/Augustana (SD). Now, on to the bracket.

Your weekly reminder:

- The DII football bracket is 32 teams, eight teams per super region.
- Each conference's champion, minus the Gulf South, gets an automatic bid to the tournament. The Gulf South has only three teams, thus no AQ is allowed, and that means Super Region Two will have more at-large bids (five) than AQs (three). The rest of the super regions have an even split.
- REMEMBER (before you email me complaining), these projections are **NOT** what the bracket would look like RIGHT NOW if the season ended today. [Inkblot Sports](#) has always done a great job with that. However, there are simply a few teams that have played a few nice games on the road, inflating their NPI. That won't last in the home stretch of conference play.

Super Region One



In the conversation: Assumption, Shepherd, Virginia State
What changed: Due to the depth of the PSAC and CIAA, the MEC and NE10 are, without a single doubt to yours truly, one-bid conferences. So, while it is important to track NPI in this region, whoever wins those conferences will be in, no matter where the NPI ranks. That could potentially throw some of this super region into a tizzy come Nov. 15.

Let's talk about the CIAA. Currently, Virginia State is undefeated in DII and has the best NPI in the conference. However, the Trojans head to Johnson C. Smith's CIAA-best defense on Halloween and host Virginia Union's CIAA-best offense the following week. Virginia State is very good, and quarterback Rashaan Matthews Jr. deserves Harlon Hill consideration. However, that is a tall order to beat both those playoff-experienced teams in consecutive weeks, so right now, I have Virginia State falling out and finishing at No. 9.

I don't think there is much debate on the four PSAC teams, it will just be about where they get seeded. Can anyone even slow down that Slippery Rock offense? Maybe we will find out in the PSAC championship game, which should pit the conference's top defense in Kutztown against Slippery Rock's DII-best offense.

Super Region Two

In the conversation: Mars Hill, UNC Pembroke

What changed: Everything, per usual. No one wants to win here. The SIAC keeps beating up on each other. The SAC has good teams that have been very inconsistent, and whatever is left of the Gulf South hasn't played tough enough schedules to be considered a "lock" for the tournament. With how deep the SIAC is, it would be a miracle for Conference Carolinas to get two bids, which is why North Greenville HAS to win the CC championship game or will be at risk of not making it. What Valdosta State does against West Alabama and North Greenville will decide A LOT in this portion of the bracket.

I'd love to get four teams right here as of today, but I think there is a lot of movement still to come.



Super Region Three



In the conversation: Augustana (SD), Grand Valley State, MSU Moorhead, Wayne State (Neb)

What changed: The big change is Grand Valley State is out. And I know I am not making people happy, so at least allow me to explain.

The Lakers play in the GLIAC, which in my opinion, is the hardest conference in DII football. They needed to beat two of Michigan Tech, Ferris State, and Davenport to be a lock, and while they do have Davenport left, they have lost to both Michigan Tech and Ferris State. Super Region Three is very deep, which means it is very unforgiving. Add in that the Lakers are No. 14 in NPI in Super Region Three, and the road is even tougher, even if they beat Davenport. But there's the catch. Davenport still has Ferris State, Michigan Tech, and GVSU remaining. A LOT can change if the Panthers lose to all three, which is not entirely out of the realm of possibility. But there is a problem that is two-fold here.

First and foremost, the GLVC gets an automatic bid to the tournament, and if I may be frank, they don't deserve one based on NPI. William Jewell is the highest NPI in SR3... and the Cardinals are at No. 19. That means there are going to be some serious snubs. Why? Because secondly, the NSIC has three teams that are currently deserving for a spot as well. So, that means there are four or five teams battling for one last spot.

Buckle up. There is a lot that can happen here, so it is best to pay attention.

- Davenport: at Ferris State, Oct. 31, at Michigan Tech, Nov. 7, Grand Valley State, Nov. 14
- The Anchor-Bone Classic: *Ferris State wins over GVSU*
- Michigan Tech: *Grand Valley State (Wildcats WIN)*, at Ferris State, Oct. 24, Davenport, Nov. 7
- Wayne State (Neb): at Minnesota State, Oct. 24, at Augustana (SD), Nov. 14
- Minnesota Duluth: *Northern State (Bulldogs won)*
- Northern State: *at Duluth (Wolves lost)*, at MSU Moorhead, Oct. 24, Augustana (SD), Oct. 31
- MSU Moorhead: Northern State, Oct. 24, Minnesota State, Nov. 14

Super Region Four



In the conversation: Central Missouri, Ouachita Baptist

What changed: The only real change here is that UT Permian Basin is out and East Central is in. I think the top seven are locked in, so let's look at Central Missouri, Ouachita, and East Central.

East Central has defeated Ouachita Baptist, so that is a huge leg up. The Tigers will need to beat Henderson State on Nov. 7, and if they do, that could knock the Reddies from the bracket. Why? Because of Central Missouri.

I have the Mules out this week, and here's why. They have played two ranked teams and lost one by 19 to CSU Pueblo and the other by 22 to Northwest Missouri State. The Mules start a horrific stretch against Emporia State, Fort Hays State, and the Pittsburg State in The Jungle this week. If they can come out of there with two wins, they will take the eight spot, making that Nov. 7 Henderson State/East Central game a matchup for the final spot.