

Michigan magic moment

How one second changed college football

By **CAYDEN STEWART**
Copy Editor

College football is back, and with it, the level of “MAcTion” that comes with Mid-American Conference football. The full extent of which some got to see for the first time on national television during week one of the 2026-27 college football season.

With the Western Michigan Broncos taking on the Michigan Wolverines in primetime to help close week one’s Saturday slate Sept. 5, many college football fans arrived at their couch with snacks in hand, ready for a good night. If left unfinished, those snacks surely dropped to the floor following the fourth quarter’s dying second. Or, as some argue, it’s extra one.

To fully grasp the impact of the tick heard ‘round the world, one needs to take a look at the two parties involved.

The Western Michigan Broncos entered the first game of their 2026-27 regular season off their first 10-win season since 2016, and as the reigning MAC Champions. The Broncos have also qualified for a bowl game in five of the last eight seasons.

Western Michigan has only ever been ranked once in their program’s 65-year history, reaching as high as No. 12 in the week 15 poll of the 2016 season. A win over a ranked opponent would all but vault them into the national rankings for just the second time ever.

Enter the Maize and Blue.

The No. 16-ranked Michigan Wolverines are a football powerhouse. Only one season separated from a 15-0 perfect season, including a 34-13 national championship game victory in 2024, Michigan entered week one poised for a statement victory over their in-state opponents.

Subsequently, Western Michigan entered the game as up to 28.5-point underdogs on some sportsbooks, meaning an upset would

rank among the 30 largest by point spread in college football history.

Ironically, both Western Michigan and Michigan have been on the wrong end of all-time upsets. In 2000, the Broncos fell as 35.5-point favorites over the Central Michigan Chippewas in the second-largest upset by a home team in college football history. On the other side, then No. 5-ranked Michigan became the first, and still only, top five ranked team to ever lose to an FCS opponent by falling at home to Appalachian State in 2007.

Now to the controversial play itself.

With eight seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, Western Michigan was on the verge of history, holding a 12-7 lead. With the game hanging in the balance, Michigan sophomore quarterback Bryce Underwood unloaded a Hail Mary pass toward a crowd of bodies in the end zone. In the chaos, a Western Michigan defender knocked the ball out of reach of any Wolverine just after the clock hit 0:00.

Game over. Western Michigan shocks the football world. At least according to the TV screens of millions at home.

Before any could celebrate, the on-field officiating crew announced the play was under further review. No amount of looks for viewers at home would result in one saying, “Look, there was a second left!” The officials, however, disagreed.

One additional second was added to the game clock as the replay review provided enough evidence to overturn the call on the field, deeming that the Western Michigan defender touched the ball while out of bounds with one second remaining.

With that, Underwood and the Wolverines reset themselves. Underwood fired one last heave toward the end zone, this time aimed at sophomore wide receiver JJ Buchanan, who

corralled the pass through loads of traffic and fell backward into the end zone.

Game over, Michigan survives at home, and jaws drop around the world.

Immediately, the controversy began, live on NBC’s broadcast.

As NBC rules expert and former NFL referee Terry McAulay put it, “The ball isn’t even close to touching a player when it goes to zero.”

“Their system...apparently either had a different sync or whatever, and they came up with one second when it touched a player. I don’t see that happen. The ball is clearly still in the air when the clock goes to zero on our screen,” McAulay said.

All of this, being said on live TV, confirmed the beliefs of most, if not all, viewers.

The fallout of this game is still being felt across the college football world, as the NCAA has already changed its replay timing protocol less than a week after the game’s result.

“The official time for all college football games is the time displayed on the in-stadium game clock,,” NCAA national coordinator of officials Ron Snodgrass said in a memo released Sept. 8. “When a replay review requires time to be restored or otherwise adjusted, the replay official’s decision will be based on the embedded game clock contained within the program feed. If the broadcaster is unable to provide an embedded game clock, the replay official will use the game-clock graphic displayed as part of the broadcast feed.”

Had this been the procedure before last week, Western Michigan would have

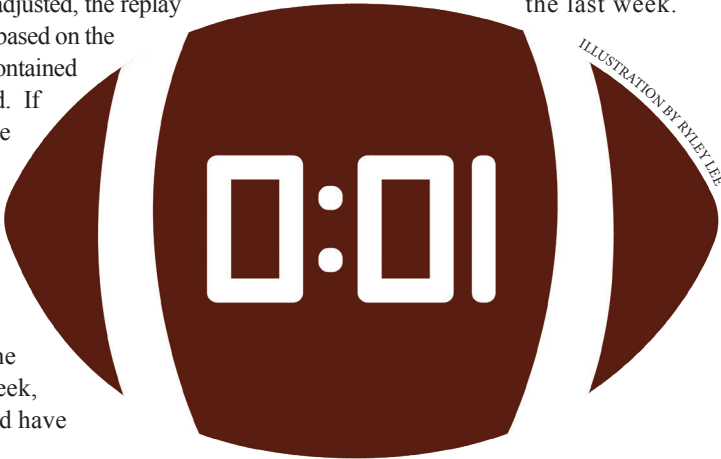
their biggest victory in program history.

The same day Snodgrass released the memo, the Mid-American Conference walked back their initial lax stance on the issue, filing a formal appeal with the NCAA and asking the association to overturn the result of the game.

“The established replay protocol requires that the game lock displayed on the rotary feed be used in determining whether time remained,” the MAC said in a statement. “Instead, the Big Ten Conference replay crew relied upon the clock feed embedded within its replay system. As a result, one second was placed back on the game clock and an additional play was awarded.”

While the NCAA has since rejected the MAC’s appeal, Michigan has still taken damage. The Wolverines fell completely out of the rankings in the week two AP top-25 poll from their No. 16 spot the week prior. This fall makes them the highest-ranked team to ever fall out of the rankings directly following a win.

On the other hand, Western Michigan lost the game and a noteworthy chunk of their hopes for a miracle College Football Playoff run. Though they have won the title of “America’s Team,” if only for just the last week.



Candidates for the Ballon d’Or award

By **REX NAYLOR**
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Every year, 30 of the world’s best footballers are put on the Ballon d’Or shortlist, and one is crowned the best player in the world.

Although the 2026 Men’s Ballon d’Or is not the only award being presented Oct. 26 in London, it is the award with the most commentary. Of the 30 names, only a small handful have a real chance at winning the award—no more than four or five.

Those names are Bayern Munich’s striker Harry Kane, Real Madrid’s striker Kylian Mbappe, Bayern Munich forward Michael Olise, Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal and PSG forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia. There are a few outside shots such as Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr. and Barcelona midfielder Rodri, but the winner will likely be one of the first five names.

Interestingly enough, none of these players have won before. Just three of the 30 names on the shortlist have won, including Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi, PSG forward Ousmane Dembele and Rodri. No matter what, someone new will win, and it’s likely the trend will continue for the next handful of years.

The favorite among fans, pundits and journalists is Harry Kane. He scored 61 goals and seven assists in 51 club appearances, playing 4,050 minutes

altogether. His historic campaign helped Bayern win the German Bundesliga. Additionally, Kane scored six goals and assisted one at the World Cup, where England finished third, its best finish since winning it in 1966.

Next is Mbappé, who scored 42 goals and assisted seven in 44 matches for Real

Madrid in all competitions, playing 3,621 minutes. Real Madrid went trophyless, with Mbappé’s only silverware being the Golden Boot. At the World Cup, Mbappé scored 10 goals and assisted four, winning the tournament’s Golden Boot.

Next is Mbappe’s fellow countryman and Kane’s partner in crime: Olise. Olise scored 22 goals for Bayern and assisted 31 in 52 matches, playing 4,015 minutes. He broke Santos’ forward Pele’s single World Cup assist record with seven assists, a record which stood since 1970.

Yamal is the youngest player on this list and the youngest ever player to be nominated at just 17 years old. Last season for Barcelona, he scored 24 goals and assisted 18 in 45 matches, playing 3,702 minutes. He scored an additional goal in the World Cup en route to winning the tournament.

Lastly, there’s Kvaratskhelia. The Georgian winger won the UEFA Champions League, scoring 19 goals and assisting 11 from the left wing while playing 2,908 minutes for PSG.

Although statistics tell the overall story of someone’s season, what they don’t tell is equally as compelling. Watching these players all year, it’s clear one of them is better at the game, and it’s Yamal.

Despite individual brilliance, golden boots, trophies and audacious performances week in and week out, Kane has everything rolled in one. Watching his games, even though he doesn’t look the most athletic, composed or technical,

his output is of another caliber.

When someone argues goals, Kane is the answer. When someone argues impact, Kane is the answer. When someone argues consistency, Kane is the answer. He scored in every UEFA Champions League match he played in before getting knocked out to the eventual champions.

He saved England against the DR Congo at the world cup—which isn’t the first time he’s done so.

Since Kane moved to Bayern Munich in August, 2023, he has changed the way he plays. Is the Bundesliga easier than the Premier League? Yes, but it’s not like he was struggling playing for Tottenham.

Despite playing as a striker, he drops deep into the midfield and pings a pass 40 yards downfield to Olise or Bayern Munich’s Luis Diaz. He’s all over the pitch at all times, and technically looks to be the most complete player on the planet.

He’s scored far more goals than anyone in Europe and put in an admirable effort in the World Cup for the Three Lions. Throughout all competitions this season for club and country, he scored 73 goals.

That is the most anyone has scored since Messi in 2012. He shattered the Bayern Munich forward Robert Lewandowski’s Goal record of 55 and became England’s all-time leading goalscorer in the World Cup.

He’s the odds-on favorite, and fans worldwide seem to agree the award should go to him. Of course, it’s not a guarantee, so it’s anyone’s award.

