

biggest upset in college football history

biggest upset in college football history is a topic that captivates fans, historians, and analysts alike. College football has witnessed numerous surprising and dramatic games where underdogs defied expectations and toppled favored teams, creating unforgettable moments in sports history. This article delves into the most significant and shocking upset games, exploring the context, key players, and lasting impact each had on college football. By examining these historic clashes, one can better understand the unpredictability and excitement that defines college football. Additionally, the article will highlight the criteria that contribute to labeling a game as the biggest upset in college football history. The following sections provide a detailed overview of the most memorable upsets, their background stories, and why they continue to resonate with fans and experts today.

- Defining the Biggest Upset in College Football History
- The 2007 Appalachian State vs. Michigan Game
- Other Notable College Football Upsets
- Factors Contributing to Historic College Football Upsets
- Impact and Legacy of College Football's Biggest Upsets

Defining the Biggest Upset in College Football History

Determining the biggest upset in college football history involves analyzing several critical factors. These include the relative rankings and expectations of the teams involved, the point spread before the game, the historical prestige of each program, and the stakes of the contest. Upsets are more significant when a lower-division team defeats a highly ranked opponent or when an unranked team beats a top-ranked team in a high-profile game. The magnitude of the upset also depends on the game's context, such as whether it altered championship prospects or broke long-standing winning streaks. Understanding these elements helps frame why certain games are remembered as the biggest surprises in college football history.

Criteria for the Biggest Upset

Several key criteria are used to evaluate and rank the biggest upsets in college football:

- **Point Spread:** A large betting line favoring one team over another indicates expectations and magnifies the surprise of an upset.

- **Rankings and Program Prestige:** When a low-ranked or unranked team defeats a top-10 or historically dominant program, it elevates the upset's significance.
- **Underdog Status:** The perceived strength difference, such as division or conference disparities, adds to the upset's impact.
- **Game Stakes:** Upsets that influence conference titles, bowl games, or national championships carry more weight.
- **Historical Context:** Breaking records, ending long winning streaks, or winning at a historically difficult venue enhances the legacy of the upset.

The 2007 Appalachian State vs. Michigan Game

The 2007 matchup between Appalachian State and Michigan is widely regarded as the biggest upset in college football history due to the extraordinary circumstances and the shockwaves it sent through the sport. Appalachian State, a Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) team, defeated the fifth-ranked Michigan Wolverines, a Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) powerhouse, in a stunning 34-32 victory. This game marked the first time an FCS team beat a ranked FBS opponent, making it a watershed moment in college football.

Background and Pre-Game Expectations

Michigan entered the game as a heavy favorite, with a point spread of approximately 30 points. The Wolverines were ranked fifth nationally and were considered a top contender for the BCS National Championship that season. Appalachian State, despite being a dominant force in the FCS with three consecutive national championships, was seen as a massive underdog and had never beaten a ranked FBS team.

Game Highlights and Key Moments

The game was played at Michigan Stadium, one of college football's most intimidating venues, adding to the improbability of Appalachian State's victory. The Mountaineers executed a disciplined and strategic game plan, with quarterback Armanti Edwards leading multiple scoring drives. Appalachian State's defense made crucial stops, including a goal-line stand in the final moments. The game-winning field goal sealed the upset and stunned the Michigan faithful.

Significance and Aftermath

This upset had a profound effect on college football, demonstrating that FCS teams could compete with FBS programs at the highest level. It also led to

increased respect for smaller programs and changed the perception of early-season non-conference games. The victory remains a benchmark against which other upsets are measured.

Other Notable College Football Upsets

While the Appalachian State vs. Michigan game stands out, college football history is rich with other major upsets that have captured national attention. These games often involve dramatic finishes, underdog triumphs, and shifts in program trajectories.

Examples of Historic Upsets

1. **Stanford vs. USC (2007)**: Stanford, a 41-point underdog, defeated the top-ranked USC Trojans 24-23 in a nail-biting finish.
2. **Notre Dame vs. Michigan State (1966)**: Unranked Notre Dame upset undefeated and top-ranked Michigan State in a 10-10 tie that effectively prevented a perfect season for Michigan State.
3. **Harvard vs. Yale (1906)**: Harvard defeated Yale 6-0, ending Yale's 37-game winning streak in one of the earliest celebrated upsets.
4. **UMass vs. Michigan (2007)**: Similar to Appalachian State, UMass shocked Michigan with a strong performance, though not as widely recognized.
5. **Texas Tech vs. Texas (2008)**: Texas Tech's upset of the top-ranked Texas Longhorns was a significant moment in Big 12 football history.

Characteristics Shared by These Upsets

These games share common traits that contribute to their status as historic upsets:

- Large disparities in rankings or expectations.
- Underdogs demonstrating exceptional preparation and execution.
- Influential moments that shift the momentum of entire seasons.
- Impact on coaching legacies and program reputations.

Factors Contributing to Historic College Football Upsets

Several factors combine to create the conditions for the biggest upset in college football history. Understanding these helps explain why some games defy predictions and become legendary.

Psychological and Motivational Elements

Underdogs often play with heightened motivation, seeking to prove doubters wrong. The pressure on favorites can lead to overconfidence or complacency, opening the door for surprises. Emotional intensity and team cohesion also play significant roles in performance during upsets.

Strategic and Tactical Advantages

Effective game planning and exploiting opponent weaknesses are critical. Underdogs sometimes introduce unexpected plays or formations that disrupt favored teams. Turnovers, special teams plays, and clock management can also tip the scales in upset victories.

Environmental and Situational Factors

Venue conditions, weather, and crowd dynamics influence game outcomes. Playing in hostile environments or adverse weather can level the playing field. Timing within the season and player injuries also affect team performance and susceptibility to upsets.

Impact and Legacy of College Football's Biggest Upsets

The biggest upset in college football history leaves a lasting impact on teams, fans, and the sport as a whole. These games become part of college football folklore and influence future scheduling, rankings, and perceptions of program strength.

Changes in Scheduling and Perception

Upsets like Appalachian State's victory over Michigan have led to increased scrutiny of early-season matchups between FBS and FCS teams. The perceived risk has influenced how top programs schedule non-conference games and how analysts evaluate the strength of schedules.

Effects on Programs and Coaches

For underdog programs, historic upsets bring national attention, recruiting advantages, and enhanced funding opportunities. Conversely, for favored teams, such losses can lead to coaching changes, shifts in strategy, and reassessment of program direction.

Legacy Among Fans and Media

These upsets are celebrated in media retrospectives, documentaries, and fan discussions. They embody the unpredictability and drama that make college football uniquely compelling and serve as inspiration for future generations of players and fans.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is considered the biggest upset in college football history?

The biggest upset in college football history is widely considered to be the 2007 game when Appalachian State, a Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) team, defeated the fifth-ranked Michigan Wolverines, a powerhouse Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) team.

Why was Appalachian State's victory over Michigan in 2007 such a huge upset?

Appalachian State was an FCS team with little national recognition, while Michigan was a top-five ranked FBS team with a storied football program. The loss marked the first time an FCS team defeated a ranked FBS opponent, shocking the college football world.

Are there other notable upsets considered among the biggest in college football history?

Yes, other notable upsets include Stanford's victory over USC in 2007, Boise State's win over Oklahoma in the 2007 Fiesta Bowl, and UMBC defeating Virginia in basketball, but in football, the Appalachian State over Michigan game remains iconic.

What was the final score of the Appalachian State vs. Michigan 2007 upset?

Appalachian State defeated Michigan with a final score of 34-32.

How did the 2007 Appalachian State upset impact

college football?

The upset highlighted the competitiveness of FCS teams, led to increased respect for smaller programs, and changed perceptions about the strength of non-automatic qualifying conferences.

Has any team ever upset a No. 1 ranked college football team?

Yes, there have been several instances, including the 2007 Appalachian State upset over Michigan when Michigan was ranked No. 5, and in 2018, Purdue defeated No. 2 Ohio State, but the biggest upsets involving No. 1 ranked teams include Stanford's victory over USC in 2007.

What factors contribute to a college football upset being labeled the 'biggest'?

Factors include the disparity in team rankings, program prestige, historical performance, point spreads, and the significance of the game.

What was the reaction of Michigan fans and media after the 2007 upset by Appalachian State?

The Michigan fan base and media were stunned and embarrassed, as the loss was unexpected and led to significant criticism of the coaching and team performance.

Have there been any upsets bigger than Appalachian State over Michigan in terms of point spread?

While Appalachian State's upset is iconic due to the FCS vs. FBS context, other games have had larger point-spread upsets, but none combined the factors of ranking, division difference, and national attention as this game did.

Where can I watch highlights of the biggest college football upset in history?

Highlights of the Appalachian State vs. Michigan 2007 game are widely available on platforms like YouTube, ESPN archives, and college football highlight reels online.

Additional Resources

1. Miracle on the Gridiron: The Biggest Upset in College Football History

This book dives deep into the most stunning upset in college football, exploring the underdog team's journey to victory. Through detailed game analysis, player interviews, and behind-the-scenes stories, readers get a front-row seat to the making of a historic win. It captures the emotion and drama that defined the game and changed sports forever.

2. David vs. Goliath: When Underdogs Shocked College Football

Highlighting several unforgettable upsets, this book focuses on the moments

when lesser-known teams toppled giants on the field. It offers a comprehensive look at the strategies, key plays, and personalities that contributed to these remarkable victories. Readers will be inspired by tales of perseverance and determination.

3. *Underdog Glory: The Story of College Football's Greatest Shocks*

This narrative chronicles the most surprising wins in college football history, emphasizing the human stories behind the scores. The author delves into the cultural and social impact of these games, showing how they resonated beyond the stadium. It's a tribute to the unpredictability and excitement of the sport.

4. *Against All Odds: The Biggest Upset Games in College Football*

Focusing on statistical improbabilities and game-day conditions, this book examines how underdog teams overcame the odds to win. It includes expert commentary and detailed breakdowns of pivotal moments that turned the tide. The book appeals to both casual fans and football historians alike.

5. *Shockwave: How One Game Changed College Football Forever*

This title centers on a single, groundbreaking upset that sent shockwaves through the college football world. It explores the game's legacy, including changes in coaching, recruitment, and media coverage. The book provides a compelling look at how one game can alter the course of sports history.

6. *Giant Killers: Legendary Upsets in College Football*

Celebrating the teams that defied expectations, this book profiles the players and coaches behind legendary upsets. It combines thrilling game recounts with personal anecdotes and team dynamics. Readers gain insight into what it takes to topple a powerhouse in college football.

7. *The Underdog Playbook: Strategies Behind College Football's Biggest Upsets*

This analytical work breaks down the tactics and game plans that underdog teams used to achieve historic victories. Featuring diagrams, expert analysis, and coach interviews, it serves as a guide for understanding how preparation can lead to shocking outcomes. It's perfect for readers interested in the strategic side of football.

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9. *Game Changers: The Biggest Upsets that Redefined College Football*

This collection examines multiple upset games that reshaped the landscape of college football, influencing rules, rankings, and rivalries. Each chapter provides context and analysis of how these games altered perceptions and expectations. The book is a must-read for fans interested in the evolution of the sport.

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Compete is both a revealing look at the tactics and personality of one of college football's best coaches, Pete Carroll, and a thrilling chronicle of the 2008 USC Trojans' quest for another championship, culminating in their victory over Penn State in the Rose Bowl. Just when USC football was in the midst of a horrific slump, when skeptics began to say the scholarship limits had conspired to make it impossible to recapture its old glory, Coach Pete Carroll arrived to transform and invigorate the program with his own bristling energy and style. He quickly reestablished the Trojans not only as the dominant college football team in the Pac-10 but as the preeminent program in the country, and the most entertaining team in the sport. During his tenure, Carroll captured two National Championships, made an NCAA-record seven BCS bowl appearances, and produced three Heisman Trophy winners as well as more than thirty NFL draft picks, including seven in round number one. For the first time ever, author Steve Bisheff has been given exclusive access to coaches and players, their meetings, practices, and locker room, as well as one-on-one interviews with Coach Carroll himself.

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