

September is when North American football fans can fill their plate from an all-you-can-view buffet

By Jim Stewart

COMMENT

For North American football fans, September offers an exquisite three-course meal.

The appetizer has been served all Summer with the CFL putting on its traditional brand of entertainment with numerous last-minute victories telecast on TSN. CFL fans were revved up throughout the Labor Day Weekend with three classic showdowns to enjoy.

The Roughriders hosted their much-hated Prairie adversaries?the Winnipeg Blue Bombers?in Regina at Mosaic in what turned out to be another Labour Day Classic. The latest installment resulted in a Riders' edge-of-your-seat 32-26 OT victory. It featured all that is great about the CFL including a last second game-tying TD and conversion by the Blue Bombers to push the game into overtime. The two squads renew their long history of hostilities at Princess Auto Stadium on Saturday for another rendition of The Banjo Bowl.

The Hamilton Tiger Cats' playoff hopes took a beating when they hosted their historical rival, the Toronto Argonauts, on Labor Day on Monday afternoon and dropped a 37-22 decision to the Boatmen.

The Battle of Alberta?matching the surprising, first-place Edmonton Elks visiting the last-place Stampeders in Calgary ? closed out TSN's Labor Day Monday doubleheader. The Elks eked out a 38-28 come-from-behind win. The Elks outscored Calgary 24-3 in the fourth quarter to steal the win on the road.

Those three games, plus the Alouettes' comeback 37-30 win over the Lions in Montreal on Friday night, gave fans of three-down football a full slate of Labour Day Weekend games to set up the path of their favorite team to the 113th Grey Cup on Sunday, November 15 at McMahon Stadium in Calgary.

For fans of four-down football who have been embracing the CFL as a placeholder until their favorite NFL teams take to the turf, this month serves as the entrée?a variety of dishes to choose from on the viewing menu.

Opening Day for the NFL is Wednesday, September 9, when the Seattle Seahawks host the New England Patriots at 8:20 p.m. and the LA Rams host the San Francisco 49ers in this season's first installment of Thursday Night Football. Sunday, September 13, features a buffet of Week 1 matchups with 13 games on the schedule.

Prominent among those opening games will be Game 1 for the star-crossed Buffalo Bills. The Western New York franchise is still looking for its first Super Bowl championship after so many close calls, but hope springs eternal in The Queen City and for local fans of the Bills. Buffalo's first game of the new season is in Houston at Reliant Stadium at 1 p.m. on September 13 on CBS. The Bills will roll into Game 2 of their schedule just four days later when they host the Detroit Lions at brand new Highmark Stadium on Thursday, September 17, commencing at 8:15 p.m. on Prime Video.

For the truly-obsessed football fan, a rich dessert of US College games kicked off on September 2 and will culminate in multiple Bowl games in December and January. Local universities began their OUA seasons last weekend with the York Lions edging the Carleton Ravens 35-34 in Toronto before getting decimated 78-7 by the perennially-powerful Western Mustangs on Labour Day Weekend. Ouch. The Lions' cross-town rivals, the University of Toronto Blues absorbed a couple of beatings at the hands of Queen's 28-12 on August 30 and Ottawa 44-3 on September 5.

There's plenty of pigskin action to go around and the energized atmosphere of secondary school sports serves as a nice espresso after

a three-course meal.

Caledon has an embarrassment of high school football riches for local fans to support. Two local schools in Caledon East and Bolton provide free afternoon entertainment in September and October. The powerhouse Robert F. Hall Wolfpack?coming off a magical season during which they won four Bowl games including the Metro Bowl at Varsity Stadium in Toronto followed by a pair of regional and provincial championships?will look to duplicate last year's historical success.

The Humberview Huskies take to their turf field this month to avenge a semifinal loss at regionals last Fall after committing three players to OUA football scholarships in the off-season.

Both schools feature coaching staffs of volunteer teachers who are committed to the numerous benefits of running a full football program and churning out next level athletes.

Case in point: Hall Wolfpack grad Jesulayomi Ojutalayo made his home debut at BMO in August as a wide receiver and special teams player the Calgary Stampeders and #82 was featured in many plays during the TSN national broadcast.

Bon appetit, football fans.