



Sept. 22nd, 2007: Arizona @ California Game Notes

Some thoughts on the Arizona game, in no particular order:

- This was one of those games where Cal was clearly the superior team, but allowed Arizona to creep back into the game by playing a contain/read defense against the Wildcats' possession-passing spread offense. In the fourth quarter, after Arizona got within 11, Forsett came in, the Bear offensive line got serious, and stepped on the Wildcats' throats. After the next UA drive failed, Forsett put in dagger with 12 yard 3rd down run for first down to wind down the clock
- Cal also had a weak start - UA getting defensive penetration, pressing up on short passes on first series. Forsett for loss of 1, incomplete in flat to well covered Morrah, Forsett for short gain, punt. There was tremendous protection by OLine thereafter. First play of next series - Hawkins does good job flattening out post due to deep safety coverage, 27 yard gain longest at that point to a WR for Cal this season.
- The game also started with several missed tackles by the Bears. LB Justin Moye was in great position on multiple occasions, missed tackles (Moye did have good TFL on RB Grigsby). CB Brandon Hampton seemed to alternate between good tackle and missed tackle. Decoud was even more than his usual excellent self (10 tackles, an interception, a sack, a forced fumble, and a fumble recovered), and Rover Marcus Ezeff was everywhere (14 tackles).
- MLB Worrell Williams was inconsistent with several great and terrible plays. Williams was bad in coverage or when chasing a single carrier in open field. Just has a hard time picking angle among blockers. Huge hit on Thomas on third down to force first UA field goal attempt. Did have good coverage sack in second half. Great tackle after catch on final UA drive short of first down.
- On a lot of tackles, Bear D allowed ball-carrier to fall forward a few extra yards. Not a good pattern for a read-style defense against short-passing offense because those extra yards add up with all the short catches that result. QB Willie Tuitama played lots of pitch and catch, especially effective to Arizona's sole playmaker on the outside - WR Mike Thomas.
- Mike Thomas started off his great day with a deep catch down the right sideline on an out and up, which might have been a touchdown had Tuitama not underthrown it. Thomas got short TD catch on fade with good fake slant on Syd'Quan Thompson (1-on-1 due to run-blitz) and burned him outside. See also below for Thomas' good game. SQT did get some redemption, ending the final UA drive on a 4th down knock away on a corner pattern to Delashaun Dean in the end zone.
- Forsett had great runs early from shotgun, second one was direct snap 9 yards, bouncing off first contact into end zone. In the end, it was another Forsett day: 23 carries, 117 yards, 2 touchdowns.

- Promising young TE Cameron Morrah had his first big play of the season. Nice Longshore on a rollout, short/long option to 2 TEs, Stevens short, chose Morrah long for big gain (49 yards). Cal's starting TE Stevens, though a great blocker, did not have a good day as a receiver with some key dropped passes.
- The following play mimicked a play from the last game against La. Tech, set up same play as inside screen TD to Best from the flanker position (formation flipped). Instead, this time it was a pump fake to Best by Longshore, followed by an easy post pattern to Hawkins for a TD.
- On the next drive, near the goal-line, Cal run a Tedford bread-and-butter misdirection running play: a beautiful fake inside to Will Ta'ufu'ou, followed by a pitch outside to Best who easily outflanked the UA defense to the left for a touchdown.
- Cal made it 28-3 on a defensive touchdown. Decoud on a safety blitz blasted Tuitama who fumbled. Defensive lineman Alualu lunged for the ball, recovered and stumbled into end zone for six.
- LB Mike Mohamed, playing for an injured Follett, had a decent game but should have had a key interception to stifle the Arizona second-half comeback. Mohamed took good zone drop but let a pass intended for Mike Thomas (behind him) slip right through his fingers for an incomplection instead of an easy pick. Zona got short TD shortly thereafter. Both Mohamed and Eddie Young are showing some quickness and grit at outside LB however. Mohamed did get a good hit on Tuitama just as he threw during a 4th quarter drive.
- Another young player that showed a flash of promise this game: DT Derrick Hill had a great sack near end of UA final drive, just bullrushing OL into Tuitama.
- Desean Jackson was again primarily used as a decoy. He lost big yardage on one punt he had a shot to return - running backwards and laterally. His only big play was a seam pattern in the zone. Longshore's pass was tipped by Arizona LB Palmer (who ended Cal's last second hopes in Tucson last year with a pick) but went right to Jackson. Later on the drive, Longshore threw a nice curl in pattern to Hawkins, leading eventually to a field goal. On the last play before FG try - deep corner pattern to end zone by Longshore, over thrown to Jordan - a waterpolo player on sideline (after being introduced with the team at halftime during a celebration of Cal's championships) went for ball colliding with Jordan outside the end zone.
- Forsett was hurt on a screen play. Montgomery came in with his typical (I'm learning Monty's style) off tackle move right. Monty had a touchdown but also a key fumble during Arizona's comeback that caused Tedford to bench him for the rest of the game.
- There was a ticky-tack hands to face call on Arizona's left tackle that wiped out a long catch and run by WR Mike Thomas where 5 Cal defenders all took bad angles and allowed Thomas to escape with a clear path to the end zone. After that, refs seemed to make every call against the Bears as if to make it up.

Personal fouls etc. galore. Ludicrous facemask call in SQT (refs said #5) on QB dive that WW stopped. SQT was out wide and never got within 3 yards of any player. Possibly it was on Felder #15 who was in there? Pretty much BS. Later there was an "offsides" on #10 - i.e. on LB Devin Bishop who is blueshirting ?!?. Probably meant to be on Worrell Williams #1 in that case. Hawkins on kickoff return, refs call hold on Cal and begin to ignore the rest of the play, as a UA cover man misses Hawkins, grabs his facemask, and drags him down with it. It clearly should have been a personal foul on Arizona but no call. This was followed on an Arizona drive by a completely ridiculous late hit personal foul apparently on true Frosh DE Cameron Jordan who barely touched Tuitama as he fell back near the sideline. Tedford was actually congratulating Jordan, as he said later, on avoiding the foul right after he made the play. You can see ref hesitate and not call the guilty Cal player's number on PF call as they usually do on penalties, probably to hide the fact that it was total crap. Couple plays later there was another "late hit" call on a tackle that occurred while ball carrier still up and moving forward in bounds, against safety Robert Peele - total total BS.

- Longshore once again had an up and down game, making some bad throws, missing open receivers, once to Morrah down middle into triple coverage instead of to open receivers outside. Another missed opportunity: Longshore completed an 8 yard out to Hawkins left while rolling left, but Nate had Desean wide open on deep post if he could have stopped and thrown it (he had time but apparently was focused on Hawkins). Overall it was a decent but not spectacular day for Nate.
- All-American Arizona CB Antoine Cason had another great game in coverage, including nice pick and overall blanket of Desean. Cal punter Andrew Larson did have his usual strong performance, punting high and allowing coverage team to get to Cason and prevent returns. Larson averaged 45.3 yards on his 3 punts.
- Cal FB Will Ta'ufo'ou is becoming my favorite Cal player. He had a huge, inspiring, Bavaro-like run carrying tacklers on the final scoring drive, apparently hurt his PCL in his knee (he already has an MCL injury), then came back in for one play to lay a crushing block on a linebacker for Forsett's direct snap TD. Unfortunately, the injury looks serious enough to keep Will out of the Oregon game. The backups at fullback are Duke transfer Zack Smith and walk-on Brian Holley.
- An absolutely huge game coming up in Eugene against the high-flying Ducks of Oregon, who are talented, hungry, and favored to win in front of their loud home crowd. It should be a barn-burner!

Go Bears!!!