

## Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007: Louisiana Tech @ California Game Notes

Some thoughts on the Louisiana Tech game, in no particular order:

- To put the broken record back on the turntable, it's a sign of how far Cal has come after Tedford that fans are unexcited and even disappointed by a 42-12 win.
- One of the reasons for that disappointment is that Cal had so many opportunities to make huge plays against a game but overmatched opponent, and misfired the majority of the time. To my eyes, the problems lay primarily in execution - I thought Tedford had a conservative but good gameplan against the Bulldogs, focusing on runs and short passes, with the occasional deep post pattern or fly route, not revealing too much before the Pac-10 season starts.
- So the problem with execution: Nate Longshore has been inconsistent with his accuracy, particularly on longer throws, often infuriatingly when targeting wide open receivers. Longshore had decent stats, 22-33 for 230 yards, 2 TDs, and a pick. However, there were several frustrating instances of missing opportunities for long gains.
- Longshore had an underthrow to wide open Morrah down left sideline (would have been TD). He then overthrew Jordan wide open on post to end zone on next play (the ref also got in Jordan's path, forcing him to break stride). Nate seemed to get untracked late with consecutive crossing patterns to Sean Young and Hawkins. But then after quarter break, start of 4th, forced it to Cameron Morrah in back of end zone after holding it and checking off multiple receivers (he should have thrown it away). Longshore was also lucky twice, once early when he fumbled but OT Mike Gibson recovered, and again in the second half when he underthrew Desean Jackson who was behind the defense on a deep post. The ball went straight to the deep safety for what should have been an interception but through his upraised hands. Ironically, DJax then had a chance, coming back to the ball, but was shielded enough that it went off his hands as well. Nate also threw behind Morrah once and the ball was tipped an intercepted this time, but the Bears were saved by a (correct) defensive PI call. Shortly afterwards, he threw high to Jordan on another possible big gainer. If Longshore hits these throws, as he did in the early part of last season and also in the Holiday Bowl against Texas A&M, Cal might have scored in the 60s instead of the 40s.
- Penalties were also a huge part of the seeming malaise afflicting the Cal offense. I think blueshirt Junior right guard Norris Malele is on his way to becoming a very solid player, but he suffered from the yellow flag with 3 false start penalties on Saturday.
- On the other hand, Cal's running game was solid, with Forsett gaining 152 yards and scoring 3 times on 23 carries, and the Bears overall putting up 217 yards with a 6.0 per carry average. So good job by the Cal OL on that front. Forsett's 39 yard touchdown run off tackle to the left sideline and breaking back to the center

behind blocks by Lavelle Hawkins and Robert Jordan was a thing of beauty broke the game open.

- The game also started with a bang. Hawkins took the opening kickoff, faked a reverse to Hampton and kept the ball, cutting from the left to the right sideline and outrunning the last defender to the end zone untouched. Hawkins kidded the fans in interviews that they chanted Desean Jackson and even Robert Jordan's name on Saturday, but no one is joining him in doing "The Hawk" with their arms after he makes a big play (watch him next time).
- The defensive line had another up-and-down day. Rulon Davis had huge stop on Bulldog's productive RB Patrick Jackson to start the game on first defensive play before getting injured. Davis is listed as day-to-day for the Arizona game. DT/DE Cody Jones got his first career sack on the third down of the same series, but it resulted from missed assignment by LaTech OL. DE/DT Alualu had another pretty good game (half sack shared with Marcus Ezeff, blocked a FG attempt rushing up the middle) but roughed the passer on an incomplete early. DE Tad Smith had good QB hurry, hitting champion hard as he threw it out of bounds. Unfortunately, starting blueshirt Senior DT Matt Malele suffered a possible stress fracture in his foot and will probably miss a few games.
- The Pac-10 referees were even worse than their normal inconsistent selves. There was a truly inexplicable call on a completion from Champion to tight end Beck who snugged the ball tight with both hands, took 3 steps, got hit low by Hampton and high by Decoud, after which the ball came loose and was recovered by Ezeff. Inexplicably the play was ruled incomplete, and the replay booth alleged that the replay "confirmed" it. Really bad call. Almost as bad was a \*reversal\* of a low completion on an out pattern to Jordan later, which the replay booth viewed as incomplete. At the end of the half, with the Bears driving for a potential last second field goal attempt, the ref failed to rule Jordan out of bounds and kept the clock running, forcing the Bears to burn their last time out, and ultimately a failed Hail Mary.
- It was also a game in which several Cal players tripped and fell on the turf without being touched - Forsett on a sweep, Jordan after a deep out, even Jahvid Best on a potential big gain, resulting in much grinding teeth on the Cal sideline and in the stands.
- Desean Jackson is playing hurt (sprained thumb), appeared frustrated, and never got untracked. He nearly caught a long corner pattern TD but the ball was knocked away from his grasp as he fell to the ground. He was open on a deep post (mentioned earlier) but Longshore underthrew. LaTech did a good job containing him otherwise, and Jackson's frustration manifested itself in trying to do too much with short punts that he should have left alone. Late in the game, Jordan took over punt return duties, after which the student section began chanting his name in the same way the usually chant "Desean Jackson". LaTech cornerback Weldon Brown in particular should be commended for playing a great game, at different times, covering all of Cal's speedy wide-outs fairly well,

intercepting Longshore late, and even adding 182 return yards on 5 kickoff returns.

- Nate Longshore did have two touchdown passes which were both great plays. The first was a slant to Craig Stevens after Longshore had led the big tight end too far and Stevens had dropped it just a couple plays earlier. The second touchdown pass was even better, though Longshore's part in it was secondary. Jahvid best lined up in the slot and after take a step forward, stepped back to catch an inside screen. Forsett darted forward and completely took out the defensive back covering Best just after the catch, and Jahvid had more than enough daylight to take it inside for the score, with center Alex Mack alongside looking for someone to block.
- Louisiana Tech's no-huddle offense gave Cal problems just as Tennessee's did. First LaTech drive of second half, Porter (backup RB) had long run to 1 yard line as Bears were attempting to substitute, Felder and another player were running in and ended up out of position. In general, Bulldog quarterback Zac Champion emulated what Volunteer QB Ainge did all game, throwing for short gains between the onrushing D-line and the LBs who had taken deep drops. Since both of Cal's next two opponents (Arizona, Oregon) feature a spread attack, Bob Gregory's crew must apply more pressure on the QB or cover effectively without dropping the linebackers and safeties as far as they have been.
- CB Brandon Hampton got his first interception of the season and had a nice runback with the help of a big block by fellow corner Syd'quan Thompson. Thomas Decoud continued to be a rock in the secondary - the free safety, along with rover Marcus Ezeff, appears to be the most consistent tackler on the Bears' defense.
- Backup Jordan Kay continued with the place-kicking duties for the injured Tom Schneider and missed his first field goal, a 40-yarder just wide left, but did convert all six PATs.
- With OLB Zack Follett out with a stinger (day-to-day for the Arizona game), young backup outside linebackers Mike Mohamed and Eddie Young both got lots of play. Mohamed had 4 tackles and a pass broken up, and Young had 2 tackles and an 11 yard sack with a forced fumble.
- Another backup, the heralded blueshirt Frosh quarterback Kevin Riley got on the field in place of Longshore for the first time during garbage time but looked out of synch. Riley's one good throw was on a post-pattern to another blueshirt Frosh, receiver Jeremy Ross, who mis-timed his jump on what could have been a long gain.
- To give some pub to a Cal blog with all kinds of content, some of it very interesting, some of it not so much. Scroll down the the section entitled "Cal vs. Tennessee Film Study" for a great analysis of how Tedford does a masterful job disguising a variety of plays from similar formations. A must read for the Cal fans who are serious fans of football: <http://goldenblogs.blogspot.com>



- So we have another trap game this Saturday. With a huge matchup at Oregon looming the following week, this Saturday's contest against a wounded Arizona Wildcat squad is dangerous, as anyone who can recall the Cal-UA home game during Tedford's first season (2002, a surprising 52-41 Cal loss) can attest. Zona has a very tough defense and is ironing out the kinks in their new spread offense. They should have beat New Mexico at home last week but dropped a 29-27 decision to go to 1-2. The Bears need to keep payback in mind, as the Cal's 2006 season was jarred permanently off-course by an incredibly unlucky and badly-officiated game in Tucson last November.
- So get out there on Saturday. 3pm sharp! The Pac-10 season is upon us, Cal is 3-0, and we NEED this one.
- GO BEARS!!!

Go Bears!!!