

## Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007: Tennessee vs. California Game Notes

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

- What a great game. It may not have been a grand slam for the Bears (would have to lose the tree-sitter coverage, get better DL play, and avoid the goal-line fumble to win by 21), but certainly an RBI triple to mix sports analogies. Maybe Cal can win “the big game,” and not just the Big Game, after all.
- Fullback Will Ta'ufo'ou and tight end Craig Stevens were two major differences in this years' game. Neither played at Neyland last season, but on Saturday, they just wore the Tennessee defense down. Forsett feasts on tired defenses due to his quickness.
- I loved Kirk Herbstreit's TV commentary on the re-cap of DJax's punt return TD. "I'm just getting a little too excited... This move, this move right here... HAH!"
- Cal OL vs. UT DL and blitzers ... Cal OL wins. 0 sacks, 230 yards rushing, 6.2 ypc rushing average.
- Follett's big hit that forced the Ainge fumble was sorta spearing in retrospect, but I'm glad they let them play. It's very hard in that situation, when hitting a taller player like the 6'6" Ainge, to avoid making some helmet contact, and Follett's shoulder/chest area also hit around the same time. Zack certainly didn't lower his head. Cal also got away with some pass interference a couple times in the 3Q, and both teams' OL were holding a bit throughout the game, but I think Cal was the better team overall.
- Jahvid Best has a very unorthodox running style, but he looks like a future star. He definitely has the body-type and toughness of a football player rather than that of a track star. Hopefully we will see plenty more of Best backing up Forsett, along with ostensible second string back James Montgomery (1 catch for 1 yard) as the season goes on.
- Neither Cal nor Tennessee threw the ball deep much. This may have been a mistake on UT's part as their young receivers could rely more on instinct and less on knowing the play-book on fly patterns and deep posts. They may have been worried about Cal's defensive pressure, which only came occasionally with LB blitzes (esp. Follett and Williams). So Fulmer and Cutcliffe had Ainge get rid of the ball after quick drops, which worked ok until the fourth quarter. Cal on offense was also definitely worried about the Vols' pressure and also stayed with short to mid-range passes rather than the home run ball.
- Longshore looks a little better on his outs. The commentators pointed one on the final scoring drive in particular, where he threw a perfect out to a pretty well covered Jordan before RJ had made his cut - nicely done. Of course Ainge demonstrated some beautiful outs on Saturday, but no deep passes, perhaps for the reasons stated above. I think Ainge will be earning an NFL salary next year.

- Wow, Tennessee RB Arian Foster is a stud back. He looked better than last year. He made Bear tacklers look pretty bad on both rushes and returns.
- Our DL is still mediocre at best, though big DE Rulon Davis certainly showed flashes with a quarterback hurry and good coverage on a 4th down swing pass to Foster and DE/DT Tyson Alualu looked ok.
- At the end of the game, I'm sure those yelling "Pac-10 Football" did not see the scary injury to Tennessee DE Xavier Mitchell or its seriousness, but on TV, it unfortunately came off as kind of unsportsmanlike since viewers did not know that fans did not know. Fortunately, it looks like the kid is all right. Now that we know that, I feel comfortable saying that what Mitchell was trying to do on that play *\*is\** spearing, attempting to lead with his helmet to hit Forsett who was already down. (Remember the argument regarding whether Follett speared on his sack of Ainge). Mitchell's head hit teammate, phenom Frosh CB Eric Berry instead, snapped back, and the big man lay unmoving for several minutes before being carted off.
- I don't care for Brent Musberger as an announcer, but he did tear the tree-sitters a new one on national TV, and was very chummy regarding Cal's players.
- Our safeties played well - certainly Decoud as usual. Marcus Ezeff had a big game at rover, I thought ... more so than Hicks (though I still like Hicks). Ezeff is a very sure tackler. I should have given him more pub in our preview instead of focusing solely on Decoud and Hicks. With other young guys like Robert Peele, Brett Johnson, and true Frosh D.J. Campbell waiting in line, the future at safety looks bright.
- The crowd and the band sounded very loud - nice. As loud as the Oregon game last year, if not louder. I hope the Louisiana Tech game in a couple weeks (the next home game) is not too much of a let down.
- I guess Justin Forsett can be an every down back after all: 26 carries, 156 yards, 1 rushing touchdown to go with a 49 yard reception on a swing pass and run.
- Worrell Williams was a beast, not only on his speedy fumble scoop-up and return, but also on a blitz which forced an Ainge fumble that the UT back recovered for a loss. His best game ever as a Golden Bear. Both he and Follett did make a couple mistakes as well, but far more up than down.
- Funny reference by the reporter on Tightwad Hill about the 'Berkeley California-style partying' going on, obviously talking about pot-smoking as Musberger laughed and said he detected a haze coming from up there.
- I am very bummed that we did not score that final touchdown. Hanging a 50-spot on UT would have been a monster statement. What the hell was that weird quick-sneak play anyway, and why the hell would you run it when leading by 2 TDs and the clock winding down? 4 straight kneel-downs would have been better. I did like Tedford's play-calling overall though, particularly in the red-zone - nice middle screen to Jordan, and good recognition by Nate on the quick out to the uncovered Hawk. When we kicked the FG, we should have had a TD twice, but



Nate overthrew one, and Morrah dropped a sure TD on a slant, though there was holding on that play anyway.

- I am also very bummed that Colorado State lost a game in OT that they should have won at Colorado. The Rams' offense looks very good and will score points against us. I just wish it was a let down game after a big win for them as well as for us.
- Props to backup kicker Jordan Kay for stepping up when Tom Schneider got hurt during warm-ups and going 1/1 on FGs and 6/6 on PATs.
- Against Tennessee, the fourth quarter really was ours: leading by only 7 at the start of the quarter, Cal out-gained Tennessee 171 yards to 2. Tennessee's lack of a vertical passing game (unlike last season when they had their 3 great receivers) really hurt them.
- Cal-Colorado State is on an unusual channel: CSTV is DirecTV 610 and Comcast 418 (may require a sports package) per the official Cal website. This is another big one – CSU is a much improved team this year, and the Bears can't afford to let down.

Go Bears!!!