

## Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006: Minnesota vs. California Game Notes

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

- Looks like Cal may have found a quarterback. Nate Longshore looked good and the Gophers' defense looked terrible – so much slower than the crazy lateral speed and sure tackling we saw against Tennessee. Longshore still short-armed a couple balls, but overall, seemed much more confident and threw some truly beautiful passes to Desean Jackson (3 touchdowns).
- With all the hype about Jackson's three touchdown catches and even Robert Jordan's pretty first touchdown, it's easy to forget about Lavelle Hawkins who led the Bears with 9 catches and 125 yards receiving. But in my opinion, some of Hawkins' best work was blocking downfield for Marshawn and company. If you take a close look at the end of Lynch's first touchdown where he reversed field from left to sweep into the right corner, you'll notice that it would not have been nearly as easy if Lavelle had not eliminated the defensive back from the play. Blocking by Bear receivers has not been as strong since guys like McArthur, Lyman, Toler, and Makonnen left, so this was a particularly hopeful sign to me.
- “Man, free to kill gophers at will. To kill, you must know your enemy, and in this case my enemy is a varmint. And a varmint will never quit - ever. They're like the Viet-Cong...Varmint-Cong. So you have to fall back on superior firepower and superior intelligence. And that's all she wrote.” – Carl Spackler, Caddyshack
- Cal finally got its first sacks of the season on Minnesota's final drive, with Mebane and Pimentel finally breaking through after a few Bears had come close earlier in the game. It ended an eight game sack-free streak by the Gophers.
- I have never seen as much backwards running as I did by Marshawn Lynch and Lavelle Hawkins in this game. Both these guys played great overall, so it's hard to complain too much. Sometimes both these guys, and Desean Jackson too, need to learn to go down with the obvious short gain instead of giving ground to try to break a long one.
- All that being said, Lynch is a true warrior and an amazing football player. He is not as flashy as Reggie Bush or as big as Jerome Bettis or as shifty as Barry Sanders, but brings a combination of speed, power, instincts, balance, and determination to every contest that makes it truly an honor to watch his remaining college games.
- Daymeion Hughes showed his stuff with two interceptions of Minnesota quarterback Bryan Cupito. The first was a clear mistake by either Cupito or his receiver who broke long, and was an easy catch by Hughes on the sideline. The second was an outstanding read against a slant and a great jump by the pre-season All-American.
- Even more encouraging than Hughes' performance was that the rest of the defensive backfield looks like it is gradually getting its act together. Rover Brandon Hampton played well again, and was fearless in his tackling of 250+ lbs

Gopher back Alex Daniels, as was guy in the spotlight after the Tennessee game, Syd'quan Thompson.

- Veteran Bear left tackle Andrew Cameron, whose season was cut short last year by a knee injury (not his first either), got injured again. Fortunately, it appears that the problem is a seemingly far less serious ankle injury. Still, Cameron may not play in Cal's next game. His replacement, Mike Tepper, who suffered his own injury prior to last season, inflicted intentionally with a car, played well, helping to open some big holes for Lynch along with guard Erik Robertson. Seems like a bunch of sorority girls were ready for this occurrence at the game, as several were collectively wearing 'Tepp that Ass' T-shirts apparently being circulated by the house to which Mike's girlfriend belongs.
- The Bears need to cut down on penalties, particularly personal fouls such as those incurred by both Desean Jackson and Marshawn Lynch, even when provoked. Of course, both came back to have huge games, Jackson with visible swagger, Lynch with quiet resolve.
- Another huge cheer went up when Stanford's loss to the San Jose State Spartans was announced. Gone are the times of the trees losing to respectable teams like UC Davis.
- Questionable special teams coverage reared its ugly head again right after Cal took a 14-7 lead on Jackson's first touchdown catch. Minnesota defensive back Dominic Jones returned the ensuing kickoff 99 yards straight up a seam on the right side to bring the Gophers back even. Thankfully, both Reggie Bush and Maurice Drew are now playing on Sundays.
- Backup running back Justin Forsett looked far better against Minnesota than he did against the speedy Vols the previous week. His quickness is devastating when playing against non-elite defenses. Speaking of Tennessee, how in Oski's name did they almost lose to Air Force? Perhaps the Vols were just too cocky after the beat-down they put on the highly-ranked Bears the week before, and looking ahead to their huge match-up with the heralded Florida Gators this weekend.
- By contrast Cal plays a completely unheralded, but dangerous team in the D1-AA Portland State Vikings this week. It may be fair to say that PSU's defense, filled with former D1-A transfers, is better than Minnesota's slow and poor-tackling unit. The Vikings beat D1-A New Mexico 17-6 at Albuquerque in their first game before crushing D1-AA Northern Colorado 45-3 at home. Remember that New Mexico has gone to a bowl game three out of the last four years. Portland State is no joke, and is certainly no Sac State. If Jeff Tedford does not have the Bears ready, they could be in for a shock. On the other hand, if Cal brings their top game and effort, they should prevail fairly handily.

So I hope you all can make it out to Memorial this Saturday afternoon. Don't let this be a let down game. Make some noise!

Go Bears!