



Ole Miss Captures Seventh BBVA Compass Bowl In Front Of Record Crowd

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. ----- Quarterback Bo Wallace tossed three first half touchdowns as Ole Miss took control early en route to a 38-17 victory over Pittsburgh in the Seventh Annual BBVA Compass Bowl.

The game was played in front of a bowl record crowd of 55,099. The Panthers were making their third consecutive appearance in the BBVA Compass Bowl.

Ole Miss, playing its first season under head coach Hugh Freeze, set the tone early in the game when cornerback Senquez Golson picked off a Tino Sunseri pass five plays into the contest, returning the interception 19 yards to the Pitt 23.

The Rebels then took five plays to score their first points of the game as Wallace found Ja-Mes Logan for a 14-yard touchdown pass. Ole Miss made it a 14-0 game on its second possession with a 72-yard drive, capped off by a 27-yard touchdown throw from Wallace to Randall Mackey.

The Panthers cut the lead in half as they capitalized on a Rebels' turnover deep in Ole Miss territory midway through the second quarter. K'Waun intercepted a Wallace pass at the Rebels' 25 to set up a short scoring drive. Sunseri hit Devin Street on a 10-yard scoring pass to trim the margin to 14-7.

Ole Miss answered back quickly on the ensuing kickoff with a 49-yard return by Jaylen Walton. Five plays later, Wallace connected for his third touchdown pass of the opening half as he hit Vince Sanders for an 18-yard touchdown.

The teams traded field goals to close out the first half as Pitt's Kevin Harper booted a 47-yard field goal with 1:56 remaining, culminating a 10-play/45-yard drive. Walton set up Ole Miss in solid field position after another outstanding kick return. The Rebels then marched 50 yards in quick fashion with Bryson Rose kicking a 31-yard field goal as time expired. Ole Miss led 24-10 at halftime.

The teams went most of the third quarter without scoring before another Panthers' turnover — this time a fumbled punt — gave Ole Miss an excellent opportunity. Starting their drive at the Pitt 48, the Rebels used eight rushing plays, including a key 16-yard run on a 4th-and-1 from the Panthers' 25, to notch their fourth touchdown of the game. Barry Brunetti scored on a 1-yard run to increase the margin to 31-10.

The real story of the third period was the Ole Miss defense as the Rebels allowed only four rushing yards and no passing yards by Pittsburgh. Ole Miss enjoyed a sizable advantage in time of possession as well as it controlled the ball for 11:43 of the quarter.

The Rebels left little doubt in the outcome with just under nine minutes remaining as I'Tavius Mathers raced 62 yards for the final Ole Miss touchdown of the game. The 62-yard rushing score was the longest in bowl history.

Pitt managed to post a final touchdown later in the period as Sunseri teamed up with Mike Shanahan for a 16-yard scoring pass to make the final score, 38-17.

Ole Miss finished with 387 yards of offense with 224 of those coming on the ground. Wallace, the game's Most Valuable Player, finished with 151 passing yards and three touchdown throws. He hit 22-of-32 passes. Pitt had 266 offensive yards as Sunseri was 16-of-32 through the air for 185 yards and a pair of touchdown tosses. The Panthers were held to 81 rushing yards with Rushel Shell netting 79 of those.