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On Iowa's first play of the Rose Bowl, Ronnie Harmon fumbled. Then things grew worse.

By MIKE BARNES, UPI Sports Writer



PASADENA, Calif. -- On Iowa's first play of the Rose Bowl, Ronnie Harmon fumbled. Then things grew worse.

The senior halfback, who in 1985 became only the second Hawkeye to gain more than 1,000 yards in the ground in a season, lost three more fumbles in the first half Wednesday. No. 3 Iowa could never recover, and fell 45-28 to the No. 13 Bruins.

'They did a good job of stripping the ball,' said Harmon, who appeared at a post-game press conference in surprisingly good mood. 'They did a great job of stripping the ball. It's the worst day in my four years at Iowa, but you can't look back. You've got to look ahead.'

The Hawkeyes, 11-1, had lost only nine fumbles in their first 11 games, and only two in the last six.

'Harmon fumbled four times, that's incredible,' Iowa coach Hayden Fry said. 'He fumbled the ball just once all year. But you have to give credit to UCLA. They were going for the ball.'

Harmon personally accounted for a TEAM record for lost fumbles in a Rose Bowl, set by three clubs, the last Stanford vs. Michigan in 1972.

Want more Harmon misery?

He tried a option pass in the fourth quarter -- and the ball sailed 10 yards out of bounds. The awful afternoon was complete when Harmon dropped a pass in the end zone from Chuck Long with 12 minutes remaining.

'He ran as hard as anyone on the field when he had the ball,' said Fry. 'It was just one of those things. It happens to all great athletes. I just hated to see it happen in the Rose Bowl.'

Harmon's first fumble came at the UCLA 5. The Iowa opportunity came after a high snap flew through the hands of leaping UCLA punter Ted Henderson just two minutes into the game.

After Eric Ball scored the first of his four touchdowns for UCLA, Harmon fumbled again when hit by linebacker Melvin Jackson at Iowa's 43, and that led to John Lee's 42-yard field goal.

The Hawkeyes got the ball back, and Long connected with Harmon in the left flat. But the halfback was hit by linebacker Ken Norton Jr., and lost the ball again.

Norton, proving he hits as hard as his father, the former heavyweight champion, then pounded Harmon near midfield after another reception in the second quarter. That led to another Bruins' touchdown and a 24-10 halftime lead.

'The ball was out there and I just went for it,' said Norton.

Long, second in the Heisman Trophy balloting and one of the greatest quarterbacks in Big Ten history, did all he could to overcome Harmon's off-day.

He completed his first nine passes and finished 29-of-37 for 319 yards and one touchdown, but was sacked five times.

The Hawkeyes' defense, ranked seventh in the nation entering the game, played about as poorly as Harmon. It allowed only 276.7 yards and 12.9 points per game during the regular season. UCLA amassed 488 total yards.



