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For Iowa, all not Harmony - Butterfingeread back greases UCLA's way

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PASADENA, Calif. - If it weren't for the money, the television exposure, the prestige and the knowledge they are bringing so much joy to people who weren't really expecting it, the Big Ten would probably want to consider dropping its Rose Bowl pact with the Pacific 10. Yesterday afternoon, it was Iowa's turn to spread a little happiness around Southern California by taking the Big Ten's annual upset beating in the New Year's Day game.

UCLA was the 45-28 winner, and the outcome was a surprise in more ways than one.

For one thing, the Bruins (9-2-1) were rated only 14th in the country, while Iowa (10-2) came in with a No. 4 ranking and faint hopes of winning the mythical national collegiate championship.

For another, UCLA started a substitute quarterback, Matt Stevens, who hadn't played in more than half a season and who was so nervous he later said he was glad UCLA wore yellow pants.

And for another, there was Eric Ball.

All he did was become an instant Rose Bowl hero by gaining 227 yards in 22 carries and tying

a Rose Bowl record with four touchdowns. Which is not bad for a guy who only got a lot of playing time because starting tailback Gaston Green pulled a hamstring early in the game.

If Ball's name is not familiar, don't worry about it. He's only a freshman, so there's plenty of time for us to learn how he escaped Bo Schembechler's clutches even though he lived in Ypsilanti, only two miles from the University of Michigan's Stadium.

Iowa's performance here won't soon be forgotten, either. The Hawk eyes provided more than just the Big Ten's fifth consecutive Rose Bowl loser and 11th in the last 12 seasons. It also gave this storied game a goat to rival Roy Riegels.

Iowa running back Ronnie Harmon is too good a player not to come back from this ignominious moment, but it will be a long time before he forgets the game in which he fumbled four times before 103,292 spectators and a national television audience.

Prior to yesterday, the most fumbles a team had ever lost in a Rose Bowl was four. Harmon lost that many in the first half.

"What happened to Ronnie Harmon was just incredible," said Iowa coach Hayden Fry. "He had just one fumble the whole year. He's very hurt right now."

Harmon: 'I feel fine'

A few moments later, Harmon himself appeared, his face hidden behind a large pair of black glasses, but his ego apparently none the worse for wear.

"I feel fine," he said when asked how much the fumbles hurt. "I would think it would be a shock to anyone who hasn't fumbled a lot. They did what they had to do and I didn't. Maybe it was in their game plan to strip the ball. They did a good job of it."

Harmon lost the ball twice while running - once from the UCLA 5 - and twice more after catching passes from Chuck Long. To make his day complete, Harmon threw a halfback pass way out of bounds and dropped a sure touchdown pass in the end zone. A real triple threat, to be sure.

"It's probably one of the worst days I ever had," Harmon said, "but you've got to keep on going."

Asked if he felt responsible for the Iowa loss, Harmon said, "Maybe I should. I don't know. What do you think?"

Me? I think UCLA would have won anyhow. So did Fry. Better than Michigan?

"You just witnessed the complete annihilation of the Iowa football team," the coach said.

"UCLA was the superior team and I can't tell you why. They're far superior to any team we've seen. We had 26 first downs against Michigan and held them to nine. They couldn't hold a light to this club."

What about Ball? somebody asked him.

"I couldn't tell Ball from the rest of them," Fry said later. "They all ran right past us."

If Fry couldn't identify the precise reason for his club's rout, other observers had no such trouble. The way Ball was running, the Bruins were hardly about to be denied their third Rose Bowl victory in four years.

The first time the 6-foot, 215-pound tailback scored, he cut quickly through the left side before Iowa could react and went 30 yards for a touchdown.

The second time, he took a pitch from Stevens, swept the right side and simply went around the entire Iowa defense. The third time, he started from the Iowa 6, was hit at the 5 and powered his way into the end zone.

By the end of the first half, Ball had carried the ball five times for 89 yards and three touchdowns. All in all, it more than made up for his fumble on the goal line when UCLA was going for the winning touchdown late in its loss to USC in the regular-season finale.

"I couldn't even think straight after the game," Ball said of that low point. "It was a jump play and the ball came out. I felt responsible. I ran as hard as I could today. I sure wasn't going to save anything."

Bo fumbles Ball

Michigan recruited him hard, Ball said, but "I'd been around there about 10 years" and wanted

a change. After redshirting his first season because of a hip injury, he divided time with Green this year and led the Bruins with seven touchdowns.

The biggest thing UCLA had to overcome was the nervousness of Stevens, who became the starter early this week when David Norrie went down with a hamstring injury.

"He was nervous early," said UCLA coach Terry Donahue. "Not as nervous as his head coach, but a little shaky. I was a little nervous after his first two series. I thought he was pressing."

But Stevens recovered enough to complete 16-of-26 passes for 189 yards and a touchdown. Long had better numbers - 29-of-37 for 319 yards - and even ran for a touchdown that brought his team within a touchdown early in the third period.

But UCLA came right back to increase its lead to 31-17. Shortly after that, a Long pass was intercepted for the eighth and final turnover of the game. Iowa didn't threaten again.

Fry shook off a question about whether the way he sequestered his team from all the Rose Bowl hoopla might have hurt.

"Can you imagine what the score might have been if they'd been out honky-tonking?" he said.

"I've had a lot of fun," Long said, summing up his Iowa career. "It's better to be out here than nothing."

For the Big Ten, unfortunately, being out here and nothing are pretty much the same thing.

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