

The central question is, did Ronnie Harmon intentionally lose a football game?

It was the January 1, 1986, Rose Bowl. The University of Iowa Hawkeyes versus the UCLA Bruins. Iowa lost 45-28.

Iowa's running back, Ronnie Harmon, *fumbled four times in the first half* of the game. *All four fumbles were recovered by UCLA.*

Was the weather bad? Maybe Harmon fumbled so much because the weather was cold and icy. No. The temperature in southern California was 71 degrees. The sky was described as overcast on Wikipedia. On YouTube videos, the weather looked pretty good to me.

Was Harmon a freshman? Maybe he fumbled so much because he was weak, inexperienced, and nervous, playing in his first big college game. No. He was a senior playing in his last college game. He played a lot for Iowa in his junior and senior seasons.

Was Harmon a fumbler? Maybe he fumbled so much because he was prone to fumbling in every game. No. *Harmon fumbled just once, and only once, his senior season.*

Was Harmon up until that point in time an unknown fumbler? Maybe UCLA discovered his potential weakness was fumbling while all other opposing teams failed to see it throughout Harmon's entire college career. No, and here the statistical evidence is overwhelming. According to NFLdotcom, Harmon fumbled just seven times in his entire, 12-year, NFL career. In the NFL, he ran the ball 615 times and caught 582 passes. According to Wikipedia, Harmon is "one of only five running backs to ever gain over 10,000 all-purpose yards and have less than 20 fumbles". *Harmon was known for not being prone to fumble, in college or the NFL.*

Was Harmon injured? Maybe he fumbled so much because one of his arms was broken. No. I didn't see any casts on his arms in the YouTube videos, and there were no reports – then, or since then – of Harmon having any injury of any kind for the game.

Was Harmon tackled hard? Maybe he fumbled so much because he was blindsided and knocked almost unconscious on all four fumbles. No. Here, I will give some details of each play when he fumbled the ball. I feel I need to state that Harmon didn't fumble every time he touched the ball in the first half. I am omitting those plays.

Harmon fumbled on Iowa's *very first offensive play of the game*. UCLA got the ball first and had to punt on their first possession. UCLA's punter couldn't catch a high snap which allowed Iowa to start their first offensive drive on the five-yard line. That's right, Harmon fumbled on Iowa's very first offensive play of the game, on the very next play following UCLA's botched punt, on the five-yard line. After taking a hand-off, he ran to the right. He was barely touched and fumbled to UCLA.

Iowa scored first, but after UCLA tied the game at 7-7, Harmon fumbled *the first time he touched the ball* on Iowa's next offensive drive. *It was just the third play of the drive*. He was dragged down from behind by a routine tackle and fumbled to UCLA.

After UCLA kicked a field goal to make it 10-7, Harmon fumbled on Iowa's *very first offensive play of the next drive*. He caught a pass and it was another routine solo tackle and he fumbled to UCLA. It isn't just the total number of four lost fumbles that is suspicious, it is the unlikely timing of the fumbles that is even more suspicious. Consider the following facts that *Harmon fumbled the very first time he touched the ball on three of Iowa's drives. He fumbled on Iowa's very first play of the drive twice. Harmon fumbled three times in the first quarter!!!* Harmon's fumbling early in the drives gave UCLA better field position than if he had fumbled later in the drives. The fumbles were timed to offer UCLA maximum help.

Later, Iowa scored a field goal and then UCLA scored a touchdown to put UCLA ahead 17-10. So, after three fumbles by Harmon, Iowa trailed by just one touchdown.

Harmon fumbled for the fourth time after catching a pass at about the 50-yard line with about two minutes remaining in the first half. If Iowa had scored on that drive, they might have gone in at halftime with the score tied at 17-17, or maybe trailing 17-13 after kicking a field goal as time expired, or maybe still trailing 17-10 as time expired. Instead, UCLA, with good field position, scored a touchdown and held a 24-10 lead at halftime. Do you see how costly the four fumbles were?

\*\*\*

Harmon wasn't taking any chances. He fumbled in situations where UCLA was almost guaranteed to recover the ball. In fact, he appears to pitch the ball to them in the air on his first fumble. Why is this significant? Because the rule back then was a fumble could only be advanced by the recovering team if the ball was caught in the air. The UCLA player actually catches the ball in the air, but it was a diving catch and by college rule a player is down after hitting the ground. If the UCLA player had stayed on his feet there was a good chance he could have returned it 95 yards for a touchdown. A touchdown for UCLA would have been an even bigger gift from Harmon than just ending Iowa's first offensive drive.

Think carefully about the implications of this rule and Harmon's fumbles. Harmon, of course, knew full-well a fumble couldn't be advanced after hitting the ground. Because of this rule, he knew UCLA couldn't pick up a fumble and score a touchdown or even advance the ball for better field position. He knew UCLA would have to take the ball where it hit the ground. This explains why he fumbled as soon as possible in the drives. This was the most help he could offer UCLA for field position since they couldn't pick up a fumble and advance it had he fumbled later in the drives.

Harmon did catch 11 passes in the game, but two of them ended in fumbles which more than cancels out the benefit of two of the catches. Fumbles do so much damage that Harmon's four fumbles offset a lot of any benefit of passes he caught or yards he gained. He couldn't be too obvious and drop every pass any more than he could fumble every single time he carried the ball.

In addition to all of the fumbles, Harmon dropped a perfectly thrown touchdown pass in the fourth quarter. He was perfectly in stride and the pass perfectly hit both of his hands. Remember, *Harmon was a great receiver and running back who played in the NFL for 12 years. And, he is still among Iowa's top ten in several offensive statistical categories 34 years after playing for the Hawkeyes.* Iowa kicked a field goal on that drive to trail 38-20. Then, UCLA scored to make it 45-20. Iowa would score one more touchdown and successfully go for the two-point conversion. It was Ronnie Harmon's younger brother Kevin Harmon who scored the two points. Ronnie Harmon didn't score in the game.

\*\*\*

Hayden Fry was Iowa's head coach in 1986, Fry wrote in his book, *A High Porch Picnic* (1999), "Harmon took a lot of heat because he lost four fumbles, all in the first half. That was uncharacteristic of him; I think he fumbled once during the regular season. The game film reveals that every fumble he lost was caused by a UCLA defender making a hard hit. They just knocked the ball loose. They did a great job of tackling. UCLA made bad things happen to Iowa; Iowa didn't self-destruct."

Fry is wrong about the tackles. They weren't hard hits. They were routine tackles. Judge for yourself, you can find videos of NBC's broadcast of the game on YouTube, several of them. There is a "1986 Rose Bowl (First Half)" video that condenses the first half into about eight minutes of highlights. There is also a condensed complete game "1986 Rose Bowl UCLA vs. Iowa" video of a little under two hours if you want to see everything in context.

Fry is correct that "Iowa didn't self-destruct." Iowa didn't, but Harmon did self-destruct and in turn sabotaged Iowa. If you had to point to one player that cost Iowa the game, it was Harmon and his four lost fumbles in the first half and no points in the game. I think Fry was just being loyal to his former player and giving a we-were-beaten-by-the-best type of explanation.

\*\*\*

Harmon's first fumble cost Iowa at least three points, but it wasn't just all of the points that were lost because of Harmon's fumbles, it was the lost momentum, physical energy, and enthusiasm. Momentum in sports can be difficult to define, but I think it is a few players making some nice plays and the rest of the team trying hard (physical energy) and believing in the possibility of victory (enthusiasm).

The fumbles were not only momentum killers and demoralizing, but Iowa's defense had to go right back onto the field after three of Iowa's offensive drives – consisting of a grand total of just five plays – ended with a fumble.

There is a dynamism to sports. It isn't just lost points, lost momentum, field position, or that a defense gets tired, it is also how an opposing team deals with the nearly opposite set of circumstances. If Iowa's offense is on the field and not getting cut short with fumbles, then it is UCLA's defense that is getting tired. Iowa's offense keeps UCLA's offense off the field, and if it is Iowa that is playing with momentum and a lead, then it is UCLA that might be forced to change offensive strategies.

It isn't possible to perform an experiment in this case. An experiment to test whether a different running back would fumble as many times against UCLA as Harmon did would require replaying everything in the game exactly the same way except for Iowa's running back. It would have been theoretically possible to stage a rematch the following week with a different running back for Iowa and then seeing how many times that running back fumbled. The weather conditions would be similar and all of the same players would be the "control group." Some things would be different, such as the absence of any injured players and the game plan by the coaches might be different after playing the same team just a week earlier. These are only some of the reasons why an experiment isn't always possible.

However, there were some other Iowa players to compare to Harmon. Another Iowa running back, David Hudson, ran the ball several times in the Rose Bowl and scored Iowa's first touchdown. Quarterback Chuck Long was tackled a few times and scored a touchdown running the ball. Several other players for Iowa caught punts, passes, and kicks, and none of them fumbled against the very same UCLA team.

In this case, it is possible to study facts, evidence, and statistics, as I presented earlier. From here, logic and rationalism – thinking skills – are necessary.

Logic can be put to good use even about a football game such as this one. There is one glaring logical error in what coach Fry wrote. Even if the tackles were hard hits (and they weren't), it's football. The tackles are supposed to be hard. I'm sure Harmon – like every other player who handles the football – was tackled hard a lot in college and in the NFL and still he rarely fumbled. So, the thought that Harmon was tackled hard (and he wasn't) in this game is still not a satisfactory logical reason for fumbling four times in a half. What was Harmon expecting, two-hand touch?

\*\*\*

I want to show you a few comments about Harmon's performance that I found in a couple of Internet forums. Although you already know the comments are going to be stupid, they do offer the opportunity to practice thinking skills.

Here is a comment by "Hawknick" who is skeptical about the idea that Harmon intentionally fumbled – or was "point shaving" – while referring to the fact that Iowa was favored to win the game by 2.5 points:

"I wish he would have benn [sic] better at point shaving if that was the case. He could have just fumbled once so Iowa could have won by a point or two." hawkeyenationdotcom. Oct 28, 2013.

So, if everything works out according to "Hawknick's" plan, everyone is happy. Iowa wins the game by "a point or two" and a bet on UCLA still pays off.

But, I hope you caught the absurdity of his comment and the flaw in his plan. Does he think Harmon could have come up with a plan before the game?: *Let's see, I think it will be a defensive battle with maybe a safety or two, so if I fumble just once that should be enough to give us a one point, 16-15, victory.* Or, maybe he thinks Harmon could have watched how the score was going and then fumble once later in the game: *Well, we're playing with a one-point lead, so I better fumble now so we don't win by eight and then hope our defense holds so we don't lose by six.*

Harmon couldn't take that chance. What if the Hawkeyes had scored on the first drive that started on the five-yard line? Iowa held an early 7-0 lead as it was. If Iowa had scored on that first drive they might have had an even bigger lead early in the game.

What if it had been Iowa, instead of UCLA, with a 21-point lead in the second half? How many times would Harmon have had to fumble then? What if coach Fry, with a good lead, started taking his starting players out of the game to give other players a chance to play in the Rose Bowl? Harmon would have completely missed his chance(s) to fumble and Iowa would have won. Harmon couldn't take that chance, so he fumbled early and often to UCLA.

“... Ronnie Harmon was probably the greatest Iowa player I have seen, and so I remember the other games. He may have been out on the town the night before.” “Guest”.  
tapatalkdotcom. Feb 20, 2002.

Note how many of the comments mention what a great player Harmon was. Great players don't fumble the ball four times in a half unless it is intentional. Did I mention that *Harmon was a first-round draft pick* entering the NFL? The commenter suggests Harmon “may have been out on the town the night before” the game. The presupposition here is that Harmon genuinely wanted to perform well and win the biggest game of his life up to that point, but was so stupid that he partied to the extent that it still adversely affected him by game time. There have been no reports – then, or since then – that Harmon was drunk, on drugs, or broke curfew the night before the game.

*Harmon has been accused of intentionally losing the Rose Bowl.* Admitting his poor performance was because he was drunk, on drugs, or broke curfew, would be *less* dishonorable, but he can't use any of these for an excuse because they are disprovable. His former coaches and teammates could verify that he was in bed by curfew and sober for the game.

“The defense didn't stop UCLA enough. Cause we certainly scored enough points to win.”  
“Birds of Fire” Apr 25, 2002.

This commenter isn't accounting for dynamism.

Iowa's defense was on the field for a longer period of time than they would have been if Harmon hadn't fumbled the ball four times. In turn, UCLA's offense was given more possessions with good field position due to Harmon's four fumbles.

“that [sic] Ronnie Harmon seems to be in good standing with the Hawkeye family and Hayden Fry well since that fateful day. I remember he was honored before the 1995 spring game, and the crowd respectfully applauded him. I doubt he would be so honored if Fry even had the slightest suspicion that he threw the game. I simply had to forgive the guy for having a bad day. I also remember the defense having a worse day than Harmon did. We gave up over 500 total yards and three long touchdowns to Freshman RB Eric Ball. UCLA would have scored another TD had they not mercifully ran out the clock. Each team also fumbled five times. If I recall, wasn't it an unusually hot and humid that day?” “Guest” Feb 21, 2002.

This comment is factually and materially inaccurate. It is worse than a dog's breakfast of bad ideas, it is grasping at straws. Researching, writing, and thinking, takes effort. Don't just go off the top of your head.

“[T]he crowd respectfully applauded him.” So what? You could have a dog wearing the home team's jersey run out on the field and the crowd will cheer for it. A “bad day”? *Harmon somehow forgot how to hold on to a football!* The defense gave up a little under 500 yards from scrimmage, but that was due, at least in part, to Harmon's four fumbles. Running out the clock when a team has a lead is commonplace and that lead was due, at least in part, to Harmon's four fumbles. “Each team also fumbled five times.” False! Harmon fumbled four times all in the first half and UCLA recovered all four of them. Iowa's quarterback, Chuck Long, threw one interception.

UCLA's *four* turnovers were more random and typical of a football game. Their running back fumbled once and that fumble was recovered by UCLA's quarterback. The high snap UCLA's punter couldn't catch was recovered by another UCLA player. Since it was fourth down, it was considered a turnover on downs. UCLA's quarterback threw one interception and fumbled once to Iowa while scrambling to his left. So, UCLA had *three* fumbles and actually covered two of them. Only one of the three fumbles was a fumble that Iowa recovered. *That Harmon lost all four fumbles to UCLA is, in and of itself, suspicious.*

A quarterback's fumbles are a little more understandable. They get blindsided while looking down field to pass. When scrambling, they tend to run with the ball held out in front of them in both hands or even just one hand as they continue to look down field to pass. It is a running back's job to hold on to the ball.



The weather that day was just fine for football. But even in hot or cold weather, one player rarely fumbles four times in a half. Harmon, by that time, already had experience playing in all types of weather. His fumbles weren't caused by the weather.

“I do not believe it for a second. I remember watching a special on that game and the UCLA coaches said they spotted a certain way Harmon carried the ball. The [sic] knew they could strip it pretty easily. Thats [sic] what they did. Ronnie was such an exciting player (both as an RB & WR) I just cannot accept it. Remember as a WR he would go up in a crowd and always(it seemed) come down with the ball. What a player” “dbqhawk2” Feb 21, 2002.

Notice the commenter admired Harmon's abilities as a player yet could fumble “pretty easily” to UCLA if anyone sneezed on him. Harmon so readily fumbled on routine tackles by UCLA that other teams would have discovered his propensity to fumble on routine tackles by accident, if nothing else, during his junior and senior seasons. Causing fumbles and other turnovers is something every team tries to do. So, of course, the UCLA coaches are going to say it was all part of their plan. Had Harmon always been so loose with the football, his own excellent coaching staff (Hayden Fry, Barry Alvarez, Bill Snyder, Kirk Ferentz, Dan McCarney, and Bob Stoops, among others) would have seen it immediately and taken measures to correct it his freshman year.

“fumbling [sic] tendency, and it was only the UCLA coaches for that one game that picked up this tendency.” “deepsouthdoug” Feb 21, 2002.

I wrote in the first paragraph to think carefully about all of the facts and details. This commenter doesn't take into account *any* of the facts and details. The comment is incorrect insofar as Harmon didn't have a tendency to fumble at all. The very opposite is true. Harmon rarely fumbled in college or the NFL. This comment is a solipsistic, self-contained, circular argument, which is the beauty of it for a simple-minded person. There is no need to consider any of the facts, statistics, evidence, and logic. All that matters to such a person is what they see in that one moment in time and everything can be explained from there. Why did Harmon fumble four times in the Rose Bowl? Because UCLA's coaches saw that he would fumble pretty easily. Then why did Harmon fumble only once during the 11-game regular season? Because all of the other coaches must not have seen his fumbling tendency. Then why didn't he fumble later in the NFL? Because NFL coaches didn't see it or because Harmon remembered how to hold on to a football.

“I remember thinking that at least one of his fumbles should clearly have been ruled down. I also remember Ronnie seemingly pulling his hands away from a would be touchdown pass that hit him practically in the numbers. That, more than the fumbles, left me thinking he was on the take. A point about UCLA's coaches. Supposedly, they also figured out from game film that one of our offensive linemen always put one foot further forward when we were going to pass (or vice versa), so they pretty much knew on each play whether to defend the pass or the run. If they could figure that out (which presumably the Big 10 coaches had not), then maybe they did see something about the way Harmon carried the ball.” “MplsHawk” Feb 21, 2002.

If Iowa's offensive linemen had been giving away that many signals, Iowa's record would have been closer to 2-10 for the year instead of 10-2. Iowa finished the prior year by defeating the Texas Longhorns in the Freedom Bowl 55-17. Surely, if Iowa's football program had been that sloppy and poorly coached, the Texas coaching staff and the Big Ten coaching staffs would have also seen such simple signals. Teams already have some idea of what an opponent is going to do. For example, if it is third down and long, teams are more likely to throw the ball. Iowa's offensive line was the same offensive line that went 10-1 up until the Rose Bowl. Harmon's four lost fumbles in the first half were what really hurt the Hawkeyes.

The following is a comment by someone who understands a few things. Here is a portion of his comment.

“Something was rotten in Pasadena. Harmon was never a fumbler. And I seriously doubt that the UCLA coaches – after four years of teams watching tape of Harmon – suddenly found a magical flaw in the way he carried the ball that made him prone to fumble. You don't think a coach like Bo Schembechler, or even Hayden Fry, would've noticed it a couple of years sooner?” “Guest” Feb 21, 2002.

Exactly. Michigan's Glenn “Bo” Schembechler was one of the best coaches in college history. Michigan's only loss during the 1985 season was at Iowa 12-10. Michigan had one game end in a tie against Illinois. Do you really believe Schembechler – and every one of the coaches whose teams played, and lost to, Harmon and the Hawkeyes – was thinking about the missed opportunity: *Force fumbles? Create turnovers? Study game tape? Gee, I never would've thought of that in a million years!*

Coaches and players always want to believe it is their clever strategy and great play that causes them to win and causes the other team to commit turnovers and lose. So, of course, the UCLA coaches are going to say it was all part of their plan.

\*\*\*

I saved an important piece of information for the end. In 2002, there was an episode of HBO's *Real Sports* that covered this same subject. The episode was hosted by Bernard Goldberg.

The following article is a summary of that episode on HBO in which it is stated that *Harmon admits to accepting money from sports agents while playing college football.*

“Hawkeye Past and Hawkeye Future”. By Barry Crist. 247Sportsdotcom. July 24, 2002.

More than 16 years after Ronnie Harmon's final football game for Iowa, people are still saying he threw the 1986 Rose Bowl. Harmon, a standout running back and pass receiver who lettered as a Hawkeye from 1982-85, is featured on the Real Sports show on HBO. Michael Franzese, a thug who was associated with sports agent Norby Walters, said on the show that evidence points to the belief that Harmon threw the Rose Bowl game against UCLA. That is not a new thought. It's been debated for years. Harmon, who had lost only one fumble during Iowa's 10-1 regular season, coughed up the ball four times in the first half against the Bruins, who won the game, 45-28. Tape of the game is shown as Franzese is interviewed by correspondent Bernard Goldberg. “I can't honestly say because I was away in prison at the time,” Franzese said. “It doesn't look good, that's for sure. And I would certainly have my suspicions.” “Which are?” Goldberg asks. “He threw the game,” Franzese answers. Goldberg then says Harmon, “who admits he took \$50,000 from Walters and Franzese, denies he threw the Rose Bowl game.”

Barry Crist then writes:

When I was at the Chicago Bears' preseason training camp four years ago, I interviewed Harmon and asked him about the controversial Rose Bowl game. He told me he didn't fumble intentionally.

I wish Crist would have *pressed* Harmon to *fully explain in his own words* his torrent of four fumbles in a half instead of just accepting Harmon's denial.

Dan McCarney, then Iowa's defensive line coach and now Iowa State's head coach, said Harmon's four fumbles in the Rose Bowl game still puzzle him. "It was so uncharacteristic of him," McCarney said. "It was a shock to all of us on the sideline. Harmon had great ball security, tremendous speed and his hands were as great as anyone I've seen in a collegiate running back. To this day, I can't figure it out."

*"Harmon had great ball security" ... "I can't figure it out" ... "his hands were as great as anyone I've seen in a collegiate running back" ... "I can't figure it out."* Oh, I think McCarney has it figured out. In football terminology, McCarney is attempting to punt with his answer.

After fumbling once all season, the senior and future NFL first-round draft pick fumbled four times in the first half...he lost all four fumbles...he fumbled three times in the first quarter...*he fumbled the first time he touched the ball on three different drives...*on two of those drives he fumbled on the very first play of the drive...and on one of those drives it was Iowa's very first play of the game. It is all just too many coincidences and too non-random for it to have been unintentional.

On the HBO show, Franzese said Walters “recruited top (NFL) draft choices to be part of his agency. If, in fact, he did that, we would be able to influence the outcome of some games. That's what we had planned.” Goldberg said Walters and Franzese “paid to get that talent. From 1985 to 1987, even when Franzese was doing time for a racketeering conviction, the pair built a virtual all-star team of players paid under the table and signed to illegal post-dated contracts – players like Ronnie Harmon, the star running back at Iowa.” As Goldberg speaks of Harmon, tape is shown of the former Hawkeye playing. Goldberg said Harmon and his father secretly taped a conversation they had with Walters, in which the agent spelled out the financial arrangement he was planning with Harmon. Goldberg said “Harmon signed and the checks began rolling in – part of the \$800,000 Harmon and 57 other college stars were to get them to sign with Walters and Franzese. Then strange things began happening in college football – like the 1986 Rose Bowl” Tape of Harmon's fumbles and a dropped pass from quarterback Chuck Long that would have given Iowa a touchdown against UCLA followed. On the show, Franzese is called “a big mobster – one of the most powerful in the country. Sports was his passion, and he got some of the biggest athletes on his side.”

\*\*\*

Does this HBO episode increase your suspicion that Harmon tried to intentionally lose the Rose Bowl? Did you catch the part where Harmon and his father actually secretly recorded the conversation they had with the sports agent? The Harmons had at least an inkling that what they were participating in was wrong, but they went ahead and accepted the money anyway. That Harmon was greedy enough to accept the money and break NCAA rules says something about his character. Harmon no longer gets the benefit of the doubt about whether he intentionally lost the game.

Why not just wait until he entered the NFL to enjoy making millions of dollars? For the same reasons some people think college athletes should get paid in today's debate. They think college athletes shouldn't have to wait until they become professional athletes to get paid and they shouldn't have to wait until they graduate to get real jobs like other college students.

The scheme described on HBO broke NCAA rules, although it might not have broken any U.S. laws. This is why Harmon can openly admit he accepted money. Legally, he is in the clear. He can admit to taking money because all of us have money. You have money, I have money, and Harmon made lots of money in the NFL. The money doesn't stand out as categorically different, it is just different in amount.

The only piece of the puzzle missing from all of this is an admission from Harmon that he intentionally fumbled. The picture is clear. But admitting that he tried to intentionally lose a football game would tarnish Harmon's football reputation forever, which is why he can admit to taking money but can't admit to intentionally losing the Rose Bowl.

All of the people mentioned so far, except for Bernard Goldberg, are biased out of their own self-interest for various reasons. Iowa's coaches don't want to admit Harmon was corrupt because it might taint the entire University of Iowa football team during that period of time. College coaches are some of the highest paid public employees in every state. They are under pressure to be shrewd and politic. UCLA coaches and players don't want to admit their Rose Bowl victory was tainted. They want to believe they earned their victory and that it wasn't given to them by Harmon. Organizations, such as the NCAA, didn't want to discover that so many top teams were involved in this scandal and had a few of these players on their teams. The NCAA didn't want so many top teams to get a 1980s, SMU-style, football "death penalty."

I don't know the exact reason why Harmon intentionally fumbled the ball, only that I am pretty sure that he did. The most likely reasons are financial or personal. Harmon and/or the sports agents had a financial stake in the outcome of the game. The sports agents' scheme was to control Harmon (and other players) to the extent that they were going to take a percentage of Harmon's future NFL annual salary in exchange for the money they gave to him in advance while in college. So, another corrupt financial deal involving the outcome of the game is a possibility.

It could be that money had nothing to do with it. It could be that Harmon thought he should have been promoted as the star of the team and was jealous of Heisman Trophy runner-up Chuck Long, or he was mad that he didn't get the ball more during the season. It could be that he had a disagreement with the coaches or his teammates and decided to sabotage them in the last game of their college career.

I could be wrong, but if Harmon didn't try to intentionally lose the 1986 Rose Bowl, his four fumble performance in the first half is one of the biggest statistical anomalies in sports history.