

SPORTS

FOOTBALL

Nothing excessive about Bennett's celebration

Last season would have been different if not for questionable call against Florida.

By Zac Sugarman
SPORTS REPORTER

After Andrew Pace recovered an onside kick against No. 13 Florida with 2:17 remaining, Vanderbilt was in position to pull off the most unlikely of upsets in school history on national television.

Jay Cutler marched the Dores down the field and with 54 seconds left, connected with Earl Bennett in the back of the end zone to bring the Commodores within one point, 35-34. Unbelievable.

Vanderbilt fans everywhere were on their feet cheering, while Florida fans sat with their mouths open, thinking to themselves, "I can't believe that just happened."

An extra point would have tied the game, while a two-point conversion would have won it. The quarterback had not left the field and every indication from the sideline said Vanderbilt was going for two. Unbelievable.

Amidst the excitement, many failed to notice the little yellow box that ESPN2 conveniently placed underneath the score emerge in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. It meant only one thing: a penalty.

With Florida fans assuming it was offensive holding and Vanderbilt fans praying for any call against the Gators, the head official conferred with the back judge, and turned on his microphone: "Excessive celebration on the offense — a 15-yard penalty will be enforced on the extra-point attempt."

There was a moment of silence as Vanderbilt fans let the official's announcement sink in, and then...chaos. WHAT?!

We waited for the replay, and then we watched. And we watched again.

There was nothing excessive about Earl Bennett's celebration, just like there was nothing excessive about Reggie Bush's unnecessary somersaults into the end zone,

right? So instead of a possible two-point conversion to win the game, Vanderbilt was forced to kick a 35-yard extra-point just to send the game into overtime — and the rest, as they say, is history.

Here's what could've happened though: Cutler lines up in the shotgun; Erik Davis and Earl Bennett wide left; George Smith and Marlon White wide right; Cassen Jackson-Garrison stands to Cutler's right. The ball is snapped — all eyes are on Cutler.

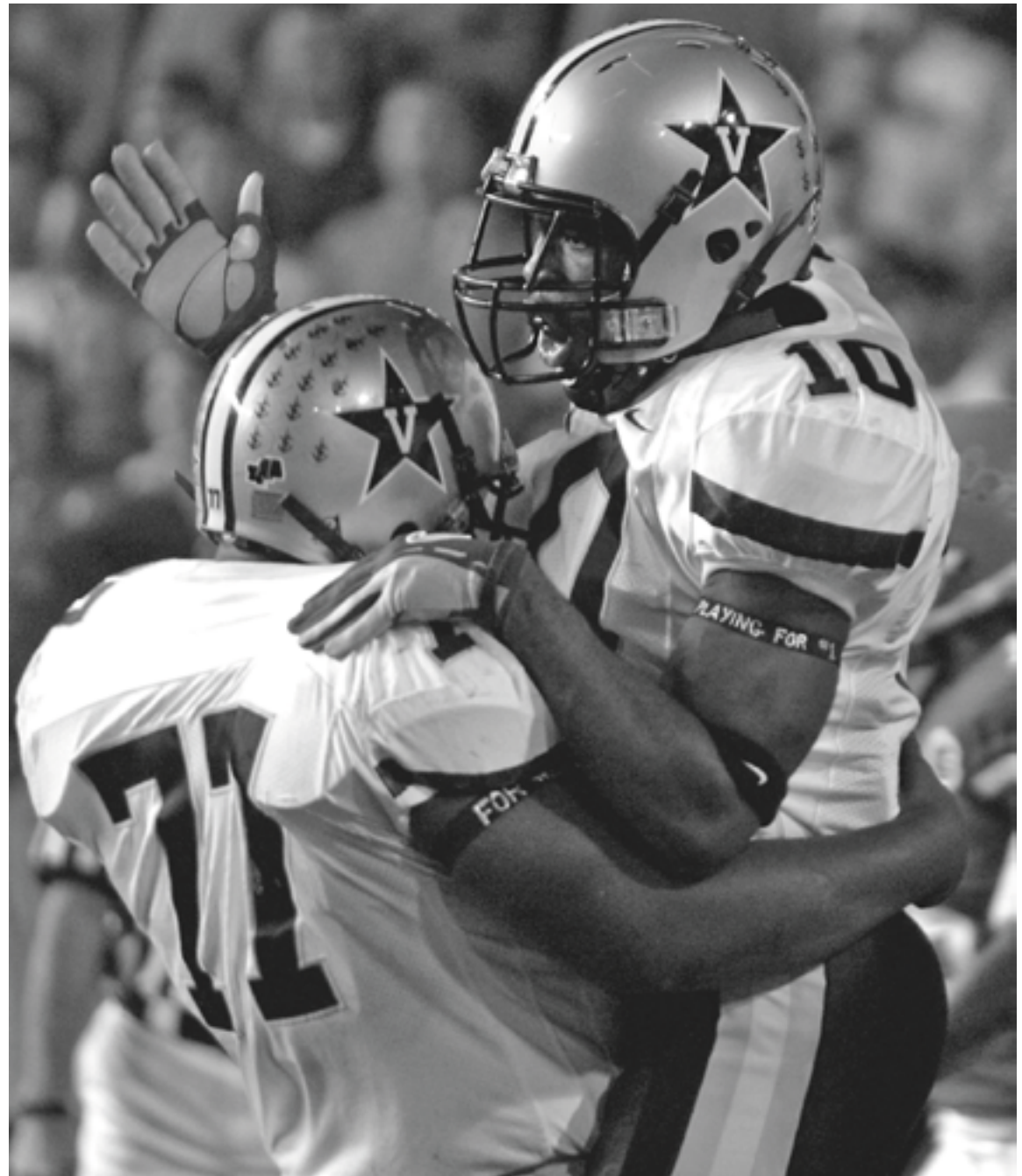
He rolls to the right with Jackson-Garrison acting as his lead block. Still rolling. Giving up on his receivers, Cutler tucks it to run. He crosses the five-yard line but the corners are creeping up to meet him and the rest of the Florida defense is pursuing from his blindside. Pump fake. One cornerback bites but the other maintains his angle, and Cutler is almost out of room.

With three yards in front of him and one man to beat, Cutler lowers his shoulder and absorbs the hit like every other before it, and drives himself forward, just enough to make sure the ball crosses to the left of the pylon before falling out of bounds. Touchdown Vanderbilt!

The voice of Joe Starkey (commentator of the Stanford-Cal game during "The Play") appears from out of nowhere to herald Vanderbilt's come-from-behind win as "the most amazing, sensational, dramatic, heart-rending...exciting, thrilling finish in the history of college football!"

With the victory, Vanderbilt would have improved to 5-4 with two games remaining — home against Kentucky and at Tennessee. Coming off the Gator upset and with bowl eligibility on the line, a win against the Wildcats would have been nothing short of guaranteed and at 6-4, Vanderbilt would have been assured of its first winning season and bowl bid since 1982.

If only... ■



Earl Bennett's touchdown with 54 seconds remaining in last year's game against Florida put Vanderbilt within one. Planning to go for two points and win the game, Vanderbilt had to kick the extra point when Bennett was penalized for "excessive celebration." The Dores went on to lose in double overtime.

FOOTBALL

Gators prove worthy of rivalry

They get to the training room about 10 minutes earlier every day during the week. They fight through leg cramps in the middle of practice. They push themselves just a little bit harder each day leading up to Saturday.

THE ANSWER

**ALEKSEY
DUBROVENSKY**

This is what a typical Southeastern Conference football player goes through in the week before a game against a major rival. In a conference studded with true college football superpowers and a half-dozen wannabes, the egos of fans, coaches and players alike run amok during the preparations for a game against a school's gridiron nemesis.

So if you were to ask the average Vanderbilt fan who the Commodores' biggest rival is, the response should be straightforward: We hate Big Orange.

The University of Tennessee has been the anathema to the Commodores for decades in all manners of sports, but especially in football. Twenty-three consecutive victories by the Vols in the series between the SEC East schools almost made the "rivalry" a moot point. Last season's thrilling comeback victory in Knoxville by the Dores reignited the passions between the two schools, but even the most casual fan has to admit that while there isn't much love lost between the Vols and the Dores, there isn't much hatred either.

While the Dores shouldn't need any additional motivation going in to a game against any conference foe, perhaps the Black and Gold Nation needs a new game to circle on their schedules at the beginning of the season. They need an adversary whose past on-field antics against us are just insipid enough to rile up the crowd and stoke the ire of an often less-than-enthused fan base.

We need to start hating Gator Nation, too.

The Dores should look at their game this Saturday against the University of Florida Gators as their new archrivalry game. Last year's highly controversial double-overtime loss to the Gators in The Swamp should be enough to get the current crop of players excited and ready to play. But the Dores have taken abuse from the coaches, fans, and players from Gainesville for far too long not to get pumped up to play the Gators this year.

Former Florida and current South Carolina head coach Steve Spurrier did his part to anger Commodore fans every year the two played. In 1996, with the Gators ahead 35-0 at halftime of the Commodores' homecoming match, Spurrier chose to continue throwing the ball and running up the score in the second half en route to an embarrassing 70-0 victory. When Spurrier entered the NFL in 2002 as the head coach of the Washington Redskins, he remarked at his hiring press conference that the NFL would be more difficult than the college game because "there aren't any Vanderbilts in the NFL."

Anyone who has had the misfortune of being recognized as being associated with the visiting team at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, where the Gators play their home football games, knows that being verbally assaulted and having bottles and other debris thrown their way is a part of the tradition that Gator fans enjoy.

Last season's trip to Gainesville was no different as the small gathering of Commodore supporters who made it to the game were greeted by endless hours of malice from the mostly-inebriated home fans.

Granted, there is something to be said for taking the high road in any disagreement and treating opposing teams and their followers with respect. But Commodore fans shouldn't expect that sentiment to be returned next year in Gainesville. An entire slew of colleges would call their most important football game each season the one against the Gators, and we should be added to that list. ■

FOOTBALL



NEIL BRAKE / VU Media Relations

Johnson's thought on Florida

Vanderbilt coach answers questions about Saturday's game.

On stopping Florida's offense:

"You have to stop their running game or they will just continue to pound you. When you do that, they certainly have a bevy of receivers that can hurt you ... So as you are up there battling to stop the run, you had better be sound against the play action pass."

On the uniqueness of Gator offense:



"It is different than anybody else in

the league. We're probably the closest to whatever they do. They run some option and we have run some option before. So hopefully we understand option football, but that doesn't help you tackle those guys and beat the blocks."

On last year's double-overtime loss in Gainesville:

"I don't know if it is the sting, but we try and play off the fact that we played well in their stadium and had a chance to win the game. We tell our guys that if we execute and do our jobs, that we are going to have a chance to win."

GAME 10

FLORIDA
(7-1, 5-1 SEC)

AT

VANDERBILT
(4-5, 1-4 SEC)

Date: Tomorrow
Kickoff: 11:30 a.m., CT
Stadium: Vanderbilt Stadium
Location: Nashville, Tenn.
Radio: 104.5 "The Zone"
TV: Lincoln Financial Sports

PROJECTED STARTERS	FLORIDA		VANDERBILT	
OFFENSE				
QB	12	Chris Leak	3	Chris Nickson
FB/TE	42	Billy Latsko	83	Brad Allen
TB	21	Deshawn Wynn	22	Cassen Jackson-Garrison
WR	81	Dallas Baker	10	Earl Bennett
WR	5	Andre Caldwell	82	Marlon White
TE/WR	6	Jemalle Cornelius	88	George Smith
LT	75	Phil Trautwein	74	Chris Williams
LG	63	Jim Tartt	73	Ryan Custer
C	79	Steve Rissler	53	Hamilton Holliday
RG	67	Drew Miller	65	Mac Pyle
RT	73	Carlton Medder	55	Elliot Hood
DEFENSE				
DE	94	Jarvis Moss	46	Chris Booker
DE	95	Ray McDonald	48	Curtis Gatewood
DT	20	Joe Cohen	94	Ray Brown
DT	44	Thomas	54	Theo Horrocks
LB	13	Brian Crum	40	Kevin Joyce
LB	40	Brandon Siler	47	Jonathan Goff
LB	30	Earl Everett	24	Marcus Buggs
CB	28	James Smith	4	Sean Dixon
CB	22	Reggie Lewis	14	Josh Allen
FS	1	Reggie Nelson	2	Ryan Hamilton
SS	19	Tony Joiner	33	Reshard Langford
SPECIAL TEAMS				
P	10	Eric Wilbur	39	Brett Upson

BASKETBALL

Drake shines as Vandy holds off Northern State

By **Andrw Hard**
SPORTS REPORTER

The Vanderbilt men's basketball team got off to a shaky but victorious start Wednesday night, beating Northern State 98-94 in its lone exhibition game. The Commodores held an 86-61 advantage with seven minutes remaining, only to see the Wolves put together a furious 30-6 run to close the gap to one with under a minute to go.

Guard George Drake provided a big spark for Vanderbilt off the bench, leading the team in scoring with 17 points on 7-for-8 shooting. Shan Foster finished with 15 points, including 3 for 7 from beyond the arc. Alan Metcalfe started at center and scored all 10 points and grabbed five of his six rebounds in the first 20 minutes as Vanderbilt held a 9-point lead at the break.

Vanderbilt, which finished 17-13 and lost in the first round of the NIT last season, was out-rebounded 44-30, including 22-7 on the offensive glass, by an undersized Northern State team. While it also failed to protect its lead, coach Kevin Stallings took it all in stride.

"No doubt there was some good, some bad and some ugly," said coach Kevin Stallings. "What surprised me most was that our guys were a little uptight, but then I remembered that 40 percent of our players were in a Vanderbilt uniform for the first time."

Vanderbilt enters the season with two true freshmen, point guard Jermaine Beal, who scored six points and recorded a team-high five assists and two steals, and power forward JeJuan Brown, who scored six points and blocked two shots.

Stallings said he was impressed with Beal, who scored, and that he could potentially start at point guard over junior Alex Gordon.

"Beal was the least jittery of the new guys," Stallings said. "We haven't decided on a starting point guard yet, but when we do there won't be any wavering back and forth; we'll be finding a combination that works and sticking to it."

Junior forward Ross Neltner also made his debut after transferring from LSU, and finished with eight points, four rebounds and three assists, while Drake suited up for the Commodores for the first time after redshirting last season.

"I was excited to be on the court," Drake said. "I sat out my redshirt year, so I wanted to play hard. We were all very excited for our first game. I was nervous



BRETT KAMINSKY/The Vanderbilt Hustler
Senior Derrick Byars attacks the rim in Vandy's 98-94 win Wednesday.

a little bit, but I was more excited than anything."

Senior Derrick Byars scored 13 points and said he and Foster have made a concerted effort to lead the team.

"The whole team looks to me and Shan being aggressive and assertive at all times," Byars said. "If we can do that successfully, we can rev up the crew and get everyone going through our leadership."

In addition, Byars said that the Commodores have the capability to run a fast-paced offense.

"Coach emphasized to us that we had to put pressure on them offensively," he said. "Our team has the athletes to run and gun and take good shots."

With just 10 scholarship players, Stallings said that everyone will contribute.

"It is not a lot for practice, but it is plenty for games," Stallings said. "And we are going to have to get production from all 10 of them in order for us to be successful."

Vanderbilt opens its regular season at home Wednesday, Nov. 15 at 8 p.m. against the eighth-ranked Georgetown Hoyas. ■

SOCCER

Dores await tourney fate after losing in shootout

By **Max Franklin**
SPORTS REPORTER

The fourth-seeded Vanderbilt women's soccer team fell to fifth-seeded South Carolina in an overtime shootout in the first round of the Southeastern Conference Tournament. South Carolina (11-5-5) advances in the SEC tournament for the first time ever, while the Commodores (10-4-6) were eliminated after having made the second round each of the last two seasons.

"We played very hard, and we played very well," said coach Ronnie Coveleskie. "We hit the post three times. Sometimes you get unlucky; this game can be very cruel. There are no excuses. We simply didn't find a way to score a goal. We're disappointed that we're going home tomorrow, but I'm proud of the effort."

The Dores started strong as senior forward Lea Lafield took a feed from junior forward Amy Baumann and scored from 5 yards out. The score was later tied after a shot deflected off of senior defender Monica Buff and went in for a goal.

The Gamecocks only had five shots all game and did not manage a shot on goal, while the Dores had nine shots but only three on target. Vanderbilt had two quick chances to score at the beginning of overtime, but junior midfielder Meredith Kohn's hit the crossbar and Baumann had a shot saved by Carolina goalkeeper Laura Armstrong. Neither team managed a shot in the second overtime period and the game headed to penalty kicks, the third straight postseason game that ended in a shootout for the Dores.

"Anytime you take yourself down to penalty kicks,

it's potluck," Coveleskie said.

The shootout started with Baumann in the box, and her shot was blocked by Armstrong. Armstrong then stepped in to shoot against her counterpart in Commodore senior goalkeeper Tyler Griffin. Armstrong scored to give a 1-0 lead to the Gamecocks.

"It was an unbelievable performance by Laura Armstrong," said South Carolina coach Shelley Smith. "Vanderbilt had great chances and Laura was huge in goal tonight. Plus, coming up to stop the first shot in (penalty kicks) and scoring the first goal of the penalty kick shootout. She was our MVP tonight."

Senior midfielder Susan McAleavey, senior defender Kari Boersma and Kohn each made their penalty kicks, as did their Gamecock counterparts, and South Carolina held a one goal advantage entering the final frame. Junior midfielder Brette Healy's shot was saved by Armstrong to clinch the victory for the Gamecocks with a 4-3 penalty advantage.

Top seed Florida, second seed Kentucky and third seed Tennessee all advanced to the second round. Without a shot at the SEC automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament, the Dores must wait for the NCAA Tournament selection show on Monday afternoon to see if they will receive a bid for the tournament.

"Do I think we're one of the best 64 teams in the country?" Coveleskie said when asked about the Commodores' tournament chances. "Absolutely. We'll be sitting there on pins and needles watching the selection show on Monday." ■

VANDERBILT HUSTLER PICKS THE WINNERS

MATCHUPS	JARRED AMATO (25-20) Sports Editor	JAMBU PALANIAPPAN (28-17) Assistant Sports Editor	WILL GIBBONS (27-18) Senior Sports Reporter	ALLISON MALONE (31-14) Editor-in-Chief
#7 Florida @ Vandy	VANDY	VANDY	VANDY	FLORIDA
#13 LSU @ #8 Tennessee	TENNESSEE	LSU	TENNESSEE	TENNESSEE
#16 Boston College @ #22 Wake Forest	WAKE FOREST	WAKE FOREST	BOSTON COLLEGE	BOSTON COLLEGE
Penn State @ #17 Wisconsin	PENN STATE	PENN STATE	WISCONSIN	WISCONSIN
#18 Oklahoma @ #21 Texas A&M	TEXAS A&M	OKLAHOMA	TEXAS A&M	OKLAHOMA

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