

SPORTS

FOOTBALL

Dores dominate stat sheet, but still lose

By Jarred Amato
SPORTS EDITOR

OXFORD, Miss. – Bobby Johnson sat down in the interview room where he was handed the final stat sheet. For nearly half a minute, the disheveled Vanderbilt coach stared at it in silence, hoping that with time, he would be able to explain how his team had just lost 17-10 to Ole Miss.

“We had to work hard to lose that one, and we did,” Johnson finally said.

The Commodores dominated the box score Saturday at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium. They had 23 first downs to the Rebels’ 7. They ran 74 total plays for 400 yards to the Rebels’ 47 for 179. They were 8-for-16 on third down, while the Rebels were 1-for-12. They controlled the clock for 35 minutes to the Rebels’ 25.

“I couldn’t believe them when I saw them,” Johnson said. “Looking at the stats, I wouldn’t think we would lose that game.”

But, Vanderbilt (2-4, 0-3 Southeastern Conference) turned the ball over five times – four fumbles and one interception – and missed two field goals, allowing Ole Miss (2-4, 1-2 SEC) to win its Homecoming game.

“We just made too many mistakes, had too many opportunities wasted, squandered,” Johnson said. “We gave them too many short fields and great opportunities to score.”

The Rebels took advantage of two Commodore miscues, a fumble by wide receiver George Smith and a failed punt attempt, to jump out to a quick 14-0 lead.

“We aren’t good enough to help other teams (and still win), and we certainly helped Mississippi,” Johnson said.

To Vanderbilt’s credit, it did not fold after Ole Miss got ahead early. Quarterback Chris Nickson led the team on a 10-play, 84-yard drive that ended in an 18-yard touchdown catch by Sean Walker, the first of his career.

Later in the half, Reshard Langford intercepted Ole Miss quarterback Brett Schaeffer (3-for-8, 31 yards, two interceptions) and returned it 37 yards to the Rebel 14-yard line. But, kicker Bryant Hahnfeldt missed a 35-yard field goal

and the Commodores went to the locker room trailing by seven.

The second half was no better than the first. Vanderbilt running back Cassen Jackson-Garrison fumbled on the team’s opening series, which set up a 32-yard field goal by Ole Miss’s Joshua Sheene.

“If the other team beats you, it’s one thing, but we beat ourselves,” Jackson-Garrison said.

With Nickson sidelined due to ankle and thigh injuries in the second half, redshirt freshman Mackenzi Adams led the Commodore offense.

After Adams conducted a successful drive early in the fourth quarter, Hahnfeldt missed another field goal, this time from 36 yards. The kicker admitted that he let the first one stay with him.

“I kind of let that get to me a little bit on the second kick,” he said. “I didn’t follow through, I kind of snapped my head up a little bit, and I didn’t even give the ball a chance. I can’t do that.”

While its defense kept Vanderbilt in the game, the offense continued to make mistakes that prevented it from winning.

After the Commodores forced Ole Miss to go three-and-out, Adams moved the ball quickly down field. However, on second-and-goal from the two-yard line, the young quarterback was stripped of the ball by Rory Johnson.

“I got stood up a little bit,” Adams said. “I was trying to get down but got stood up, and he just took it out of my arm and stripped me. I can’t let that happen.”

Vanderbilt got the ball back three plays later, after cornerback Darlon Speed’s interception, and Hahnfeldt kicked a field goal to come within seven.

After forcing Ole Miss to punt on its next possession, Vanderbilt had a chance to tie the game with one minute remaining. Adams found wide receiver Earl Bennett (10 catches, 179 yards) for 44 yards and then ran for 11 yards. However, Adams’s next pass was intercepted by Charles Clark, and the game was over.

“Overall, we played well enough to win, and we let it slip away,” Adams said. ■



NEIL BRAKE/VU Media Relations

Vanderbilt head coach Bobby Johnson paces the sideline Saturday during the Commodores 17-10 loss to Ole Miss. Although the Commodores dominated most facets of play, Johnson cited the team’s five turnovers as cause for the loss.

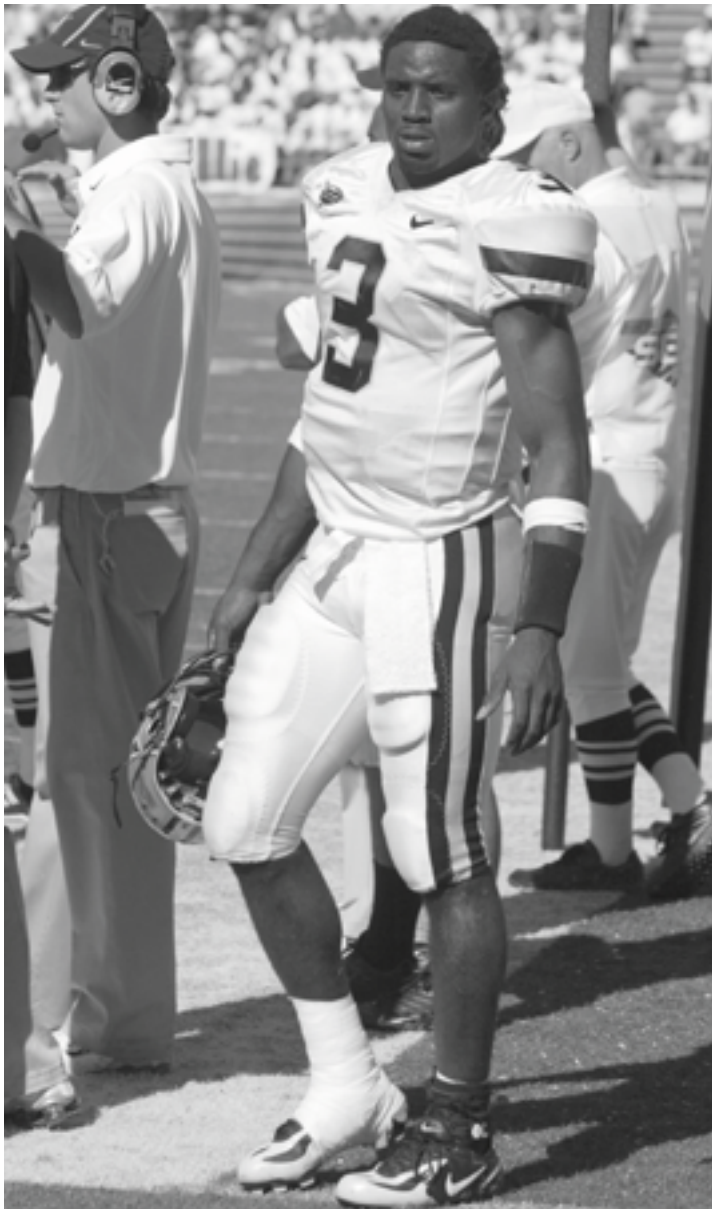
FOOTBALL

Adams replaces injured Nickson

By Jarred Amato
SPORTS EDITOR

OXFORD, Miss. – After a third-down play late in the second quarter, Chris Nickson got up slowly. He didn’t wait for a trainer, but as the quarterback hobbled toward the Vanderbilt sidelines, it was clear that he was in bad shape.

Although Nickson wanted to return, he was forced to watch from the sidelines with a heavily-taped right ankle as redshirt freshman Mackenzi Adams led the Commodore offense the rest of the way.



NEIL BRAKE/VU Media Relations

Vanderbilt quarterback Chris Nickson injured his right ankle late in the first half and didn’t return. Redshirt freshman Mackenzi Adams led the offense the rest of the way.

“I wanted to come back, but for our game strategy, I don’t think I would’ve been the best player out there,” said Nickson, who also suffered a thigh injury. “We wanted to run the ball with the quarterback a little bit and with me being hurt, Mackenzi was the best option. The coaches made a great decision, even though I wanted to play.”

Before his injury, Nickson had completed 11 of 13 passes for 95 yards a touchdown and run for 49 yards on eight carries. The first-year starter looked comfortable and said after the game that “had I not been hurt, I think I would’ve put up some great numbers.”

Instead, Nickson was forced to return the sidelines, where he spent the past two seasons watching Jay Cutler.

“I hadn’t felt that in a while,” Nickson said. “It was a difficult thing to do to go back to the sidelines. But to see Mackenzi run the offense and do as well as he did, it took a lot off me.”

Adams, who appeared in limited action against Tennessee State and Temple, had some nerves early on, but responded well. He was 10-for-20 for 176 yards and an interception and ran for a team-high 51 yards on 10 carries.

“When he came in, he had a lot of jitters, but once he got rolling, it was hard to stop him,” said wide receiver Earl Bennett, who had 10 catches for 179 yards.

While coach Bobby Johnson thought Adams could have been smarter in his decision-making, he was nonetheless encouraged by the performance.

“He did some excellent things,” Johnson said. “He’s a good runner. He has to get a few things read better in the passing game, but he certainly has enough arm to run our offense. He’s a competitor, and I like that about him.”

Trailing 17-10 with 1:04 remaining, Adams connected with Bennett for a 44-yard completion. Adams then ran for 11 yards, putting the Commodores on the Ole Miss 22.

On the next play, Adams thought George Smith was open for a game-tying touchdown. However, free safety Charles Clark jumped in front of the receiver to intercept the pass and seal the Rebel victory.

“He broke on the ball and made a good play,” Adams said. “I was trying to hit George down the seam in the end zone. I threw it on a rope, probably should have put some air under it, but he made a good play and picked me off.”

Adams, who said he prepares every week like he is going to play the whole game, will undoubtedly benefit from Saturday’s experience.

“With the amount of reps I got, I am going to learn from it, and it will help in the future,” Adams said. “As the game progressed, it slowed down a little bit, and I got into a rhythm.”

As for who will be the starting quarterback at Georgia next week, Johnson did not say whether Nickson would start, even if he is healthy.

“We’ll see who does the best in practice,” Johnson said. “It always is (open). Any position we got on the football team is (open)—tackle to the quarterback, the kicker, anybody.” ■

GAME
BREAKDOWN

Player of the game

Earl Bennett proved once again why he is the Commodores’ most explosive offensive weapon. He racked up 10 catches for 179 yards, and nearly single-handedly brought the Dores back into the game. When Mackenzi Adams entered the game, he connected with Bennett on three crucial deep balls.

Inside the numbers

	UM	VU
Score	17	10
First downs	7	23
Passing yards	31	271
Total plays - yards	47-179	74-400
Turnovers	2	5
Points off turnovers	17	3
Possession Time	24:35	35:25
Third-down	1/12	8/16

Quote

of the game

“I’m dumbfounded. I’m bewildered.”

- Vanderbilt running back Cassen Jackson-Garrison’s response to a question about his state of mind after the Commodores’ inexplicable defeat at the hands of Ole Miss. The Dores dominated in all aspects of the game, but came up on the short end of the scoreboard.

SEC East Standings

Team	Conf. Record	Overall	Next Opp.
FLORIDA	4-0	6-0	@ AUBURN
GEORGIA	2-1	5-1	VANDY
S. CAROLINA	2-2	4-2	BYE
TENNESSEE	1-1	5-1	BYE
KENTUCKY	1-2	3-3	@ LSU
VANDY	0-3	2-4	@ GEORGIA

SOCCER

Baumann's goal lifts Vandy

By Max Franklin
SPORTS REPORTER

The women's soccer team exploded for three second-half goals to beat South Carolina 3-0 and move into a tie for second place in the Southeastern conference Eastern Division. The Commodores (9-5-1, 3-2-1 SEC) trail only Florida, who beat them 1-0 Friday.

"South Carolina's a very good team and they posed a difficult problem for us, to get behind them and have some quality looks on their goal," said coach Ronnie Coveleskie. "We had to work really, really hard to have any space at all to have a good looking shot. For us to score three goals, I'm just really proud of the girls."

The game was much closer than the score suggested. The Dores only recorded two shots on goal in the first half while allowing four, and senior goalkeeper Tyler Griffin was forced to leave the game after being undercut with eight minutes left in the half, but she did return for the second half.

Vanderbilt finally broke through midway into the second half, when freshman defender Megan Forester dribbled up the left side of the field and sent a ball past the Gamecock defensive line. Sophomore forward Amy Wilcox took the pass and crossed it to the far side of the box, where junior midfielder Amy Baumann headed it past the goalkeeper's diving hands for a goal, the Dores'

first goal in their past three games.

"We were a little slow in the first half," said senior forward Lea Lafield. "We went in for halftime and we knew we were a better team and we knew that we had to get it done because we needed a win. The road to the SEC tournament is really starting to take form, every game is really important and we had to go out and stick it to them and show we were the better team."

The Vandy defense allowed only four second-half shots and Lafield gave the Dores two late goals.

"To be honest, we were a little (upset) after Florida, and we wanted to take it out on someone," Lafield said. "Who better than South Carolina, who as of two days ago was the number one team in our league? We thought it was a great opportunity to take out our frustration on a team we knew we could beat. The Florida game was unlucky, but we'll see them again down the road."

While it doesn't show up in the statistics, senior defenders Kari Boersma and Monica Buff both played great defense all weekend, helping to hold both the Gamecocks and the high-powered Gators to only six shots on goal each. At halftime on Sunday, Buff was honored for the second year with the David J. Elia 110 Award, given by former player Kate Elia to the player who always gives 110% and embodies the "tough as nails" spirit of the award. The victory on Sunday was also the 50th career victory at Vanderbilt for Coveleskie.



MASON HENSLEY/The Vanderbilt Hustler

"I didn't even think about it," Coveleskie said. "I think all the credit goes to the girls. It's their 50 wins, not mine. All I do is sit on the sideline and talk to them, they put in all the hard work and I'm really just part of the group." ■

FOOTBALL

Tough loss to swallow

By Will Gibbons
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

OXFORD, Miss. — The looks on the players' faces said it all. As the team walked off the field following Saturday's 17-10 loss to Ole Miss, each one had a look of despair. Only defensive end Chris Booker could muster the strength to acknowledge the Vanderbilt section.

"We feel that we could have won this game and that we should have won this game," Booker said. "Coming into it, we felt that we were going to win it. We gave our best; we just came up short."

For all those involved, it was the type of game that in retrospect seems impossible to lose.

"I can't explain it," said running back Cassen Jackson-Garrison. "I'm dumbfounded."

"I wish we could replay the game all over again," said wide receiver Earl Bennett, who caught 10 passes for 179 yards.

There were a number of mistakes one can point to: George Smith's fumble, Brett Upson taking a 13-yard loss to avoid a punt block, a bad option pitch that led to a fumble, two missed field goals, Jackson-Garrison's fumble to start the second half, Ole Miss linebacker Rory Johnson's strip of Mackenzi Adams, and Adams's interception to end the game.

Time and time again, the Commodores were their own worst enemy. All this was against an Ole Miss defense that was next to last in the NCAA in forced turnovers.

"We had to work hard to lose that one, and we did," said coach Bobby Johnson. "We just made too many mistakes. We had too many opportunities that we wasted and squandered. We gave them too many short fields and opportunities to score."

Still, Vanderbilt kept offering glimmers of hope. Chris Nickson threw a picture perfect ball to Sean Walker for a touchdown. The defense stopped Ole Miss on fourth and short following a kick return to the Commodores' 13 yard-line. They also intercepted Rebel quarterback Brent Schaeffer twice and gained more yards off interception returns than Ole Miss did passing.

"We played extremely good defense, gained a lot of yards and ended up scoring 10 points," Johnson said.

Vanderbilt out-gained Ole Miss by 211 yards and took 37 more snaps than the Rebels. Mackenzi Adams, in for the injured Chris Nickson, showed poise bringing the Commodores back and giving them a chance to win the game. The most important stat, however, was on the scoreboard.

"Stat-wise, you can have 1,200 yards, but if you don't put it in the end zone, you could hold their offense to negative yards, but all that matters is the points," Booker said.

While there is big difference between an even 3-3 and their current 2-4 record, all Vanderbilt can do now is move on. The opposition doesn't get any easier, as the Commodores travel to Athens for a tussle with the Georgia Bulldogs next weekend. The Commodores know that if they regroup anything is possible.

"I know they say 'any given Sunday'; well, any given Saturday," Bennett said. "We were on the bad end this weekend, but hopefully next weekend, we'll come out on top." ■

WOMEN'S GOLF

Women's golf wins Lady Tar Heel Invitational

HUSTLER STAFF REPORT

The Vanderbilt women's golf team posted three among the top 10 finishers en route to winning the Lady Tar Heel Invitational Sunday at the UNC Finley Golf Course in Chapel Hill, N.C. The 18th-ranked Commodores finished 10-over par for the tournament (301+294+298=893) after grabbing the tournament lead on Friday and maintaining their advantage throughout the competition. Vanderbilt held off second-place and ninth-ranked Virginia and two-time defending national champion and second-ranked Duke. The tournament field included 11 squads ranked in the latest Golfweek magazine top-25 poll.

"We never let anything bother us throughout the tournament," said Vanderbilt head coach Martha Richards Freitag. "I was proud that the team was persistent and patient and just played the golf course. It's the best I've seen this team play and is as good as any win we've had at Vanderbilt."

The team title was Vanderbilt's first since its historic 2003-04 campaign that saw the Commodores win five tournaments, including both the SEC

Championship and the NCAA Central Regional crown.

Commodore senior Chris Brady tied two other players for fourth place. Brady carded an even-par 72 on Sunday. She took a bogie on No. 5, posted a birdie on No. 7 and shot even par on the other 16 holes.

Brady finished five strokes behind Ashley Knoll of Texas A&M and Caroline Westrup of Florida State, who shared medalist honors.

Two other Commodores finished in the top 10, including sophomore Jacqui Concolino, who tied for seventh place, and senior Kristen Svicarovich, who tied for ninth place. Concolino was steady most of the day, shooting even par on 14 holes to go along with one birdie and three bogeys. Svicarovich parred 13 holes with a birdie and four bogeys.

"To place three players in the top 10 is outstanding," Freitag said. "That's the type of performance you need to come out on top, and now we understand what it takes to win tournaments."

The Commodores next compete in the Stanford-Pepsi Women's Intercollegiate Oct. 20-22 in Palo Alto, Calif. ■

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