

CHC- Vandy Fights the Vols to a Tie in 1974

by Bill Traugher

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Vanderbilt had a great chance to beat Tennessee during the 1973 season in Knoxville for their first victory since 1964. With only minutes to play, the Commodores were leading 17-13, and a fourth down punt to attempt. Punter and tight end Barry Burton was standing at the Vanderbilt 24-yard line.

Burton received a clean snap, but decided to run for a first down. He was stopped short of the first down marker giving the Vols excellent field position. UT quarterback, Condredge Holloway, led Tennessee to the winning touchdown and a 20-17 victory.

One year later, the Vols coached by Bill Battle, came to Nashville with a 6-3-1 record. Steve Sloan and a 7-3 record led Vanderbilt. Sloan was in his second season as Vanderbilt's head coach. Battle had been in charge of the Vols since 1970.



Barry Burton

But in 1974 at Dudley Field, the Vanderbilt partisan (this was during the time Vanderbilt fans overwhelmed UT fans in the stands) had forgotten about the previous year. A winning record and a secured bid to the Peach Bowl gave the Black and Gold optimism.



Mickey Jacobs

"The year before we felt that we had given the game away," Mickey Jacobs recently said and who was a starting defensive tackle at Vanderbilt (1973-75). "We should have tied it or at least won the game. We were a better team in 1974 than 1973. We went into the game thinking we were going to win. We felt it would have been a disappointment if we lost to Tennessee.

"I thought that we were a special group of guys. A lot of us had started as sophomores and now we became juniors. We were to the point where we thought we could win no matter who we were playing."

Tennessee shocked Vanderbilt on its first possession when Holloway connected on an 81-yard pass to tight end Tommy West. A few plays later, Stanley Morgan rushed for a touchdown from two yards out. Later in the first period, Holloway directed another drive that resulted in a one-yard touchdown by Mike Gayles. The two-point pass conversion failed. Tennessee led, 13-0.

Rain fell for most of the afternoon to keep conditions slippery and the capacity crowd of 34,000 wet. Vanderbilt came back late in the first quarter when quarterback David Lee engineered a 73-yard scoring drive. The rushing of Lonnie Sadler, Jamie O'

Rourke and a key pass reception to Jesse Mathers led to a one-yard quarterback sneak by Lee. Vanderbilt trailed, 13-7.

The Vanderbilt defense came to life and shut out the Vols in the second quarter. Sadler took a screen pass from Lee and weaved his way through the Vols defense for a 20-yard touchdown. Mark Adams second conversion gave the Commodores a 14-13 halftime lead.

In the third quarter, Vandy's DB Jay Chesley intercepted a Holloway pass and returned the ball to the Vols 36-yard line. Once again the running duo of Sadler and O'Rourke were called upon. Sadler made an incredible dazzling 29-yard run to the UT six-yard line. O'Rourke skipped his way up the middle for the touchdown. Vanderbilt's lead was extended to 21-13.

The Vanderbilt defense was outstanding. The Vols lost a third quarter scoring chance when they controlled the ball at the Vanderbilt 27-yard line after an interception. On a fourth and a long one, Morgan was stopped at the Vandy 18. Tom Galbierz, Damon Regen, and Joe Reynolds led the defense that day.

With an eight-point lead in the fourth quarter and the defense playing superbly, Vandy went to a more conservative style of football to prevent the big play. The rain also slowed both offenses.

The strategy looked good until the end.

One minute remained in the game when Vanderbilt was in a fourth down situation and the ball resting on the Commodore 22-yard line. Burton was sent into his punting position standing inside his 10-yard line.

"Everybody thought the same thing when Barry went onto the field, punt Barry punt," said Jacobs who also was a Vanderbilt assistant coach in 1979-84. We knew that certainly he wouldn't try to run on his own like he did the year before. I just couldn't believe it when the ball hit him in the hands, hit his chest and fell to the ground."

The snap was a perfect spiral that went straight into Burton's hands. But Burton could not make a clean grab and bobbled the ball. He was unable to get a punt off and the Vols nailed him at the 11-yard line. Only 47 seconds remained.



David Lee

John Bibb of the *Tennessean* gave his account of the final plays:

The Vols had no times out left, and quickly Morgan crunched to the one. The play required a measurement for a first down. This, of course, stopped the clock. In the hectic moments, stopping the clock may have been more important than getting the first down.

At any rate, Morgan was thrown back to the three when play resumed as the dogged Vanderbilt defense continued to demonstrate its effectiveness. However, the persistent Holloway gave the ball to Stan for the fourth straight time and Morgan swept to his right. He was bumped at the goal by Vandy's Ed Oaks, but slithered

across for the score with seven seconds remaining.

The conversion pass, Tennessee's fourth successful two-pointer of the year, triggered a scrap between a Vol and some Commodores. The play also brought a howl of protest from the Vandy rooters at that end of the field. They thought Seivers was out of the end zone when he caught the ball.

An official on the spot, identified as back judge Gordon Pettus, may have added to the Vandy fans disappointment with a somewhat unorthodox gesture to signal the score. At first, the official seemed to be in the process of calling the pass incomplete as he lowered his arms, placed his palms down and leaned forward. His continuous motion, however, was to bring his hands upward above his head signifying Seivers' catch was good.

Larry Seivers controversial catch tied the game at 21-21. Vanderbilt received the Vols squib kickoff. With one play left, Sloan ran out the final second with a running play. The Vanderbilt faithful left the stadium in shocked silence.

"Burton just dropped the snap," Sloan said after the game. "No one wants to drop one. I know how badly he feels. I feel badly for him. But, remember that these things happen in football games Tennessee took advantage of the break at the end and then made the two-point play.

"I am very proud of this football team and I told them in our post-game meeting that it is one of the best football teams Vanderbilt has ever had. These kids can play with any team in the country. I'm just sorry for our seniors that we were not able to beat Tennessee."



Jamie O' Rourke

Vanderbilt had 15 first downs to 11 for the Vols in the weather-burdened game. O'Rourke rushed for 152 yards (31 carries) and Sadler gained 100 yards with 19 carries. Lee hit on eight of 12 passes for 88 yards.

"I remember that the Vanderbilt fans were extremely sad and the UT fans were happy for a tie," Jacobs said. "As we went into the locker room, we said that would not happen again. There was a drawing of a UT player where he is bruised and battered and the captioned read, 'We Tied Vandy!'

"That was the attitude that a lot of people had. We were disappointed in a tie and they were excited about a tie. When you look at the history of that rivalry or what was supposed to be a rivalry, it's strange it turned out that way."

Tennessee recorded 316 total yards with 167 rushing and 149 passing. Morgan led UT with 81 yards in 18 carries. Gayle added 59 yards on the ground. Holloway connected on seven of 14 passes for 149 yards.

Vanderbilt would tie Texas Tech 6-6 in Atlanta's Peach Bowl in Fulton County Stadium. They concluded their season at 7-3-2. The Vols would beat Maryland, 7-3 in the Liberty Bowl in Memphis. The Big Orange also finished their season at 7-3-2.

The following year in Knoxville, Burton was amazingly in another punting situation at the end of the game. Standing near the Vanderbilt 10-yard line, he got off the punt. UT was unable to score and Vanderbilt won 17-14 with new head coach Fred Pancoast.

Sloan, at age 30, would be named the 1974 SEC Coach-of-the-Year, but left Vanderbilt after two seasons for the Texas Tech head coaching position.

Traughber's Tidbit: Mickey Jacobs is the only person to play in a Vanderbilt bowl game (1974 Peach Bowl) and coach (assistant for George MacIntyre) the Commodores in a Vanderbilt bowl (1982 Hall of Fame Bowl). Jacobs is currently a part-time defensive coach for Brentwood Academy that plays in the Division II Class AAA state championship game this Saturday against Chattanooga McCallie at MTSU.

If you have any comments or suggestions you can contact Bill Traughber via e-mail WLTraughber@aol.com.