

CHC: Vandy Surprises Vols in 1937

by Bill Traugher

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The Vanderbilt football team rolled into Knoxville, Tenn., for its annual gridiron match in November 1937. The Commodores held an all-time lead in the series, 20-9-4. But, the rival Vols had won seven of the past nine games with one tie in the mix. The teams began playing the series in 1892.

Commodore coach Ray Morrison led his team into East Tennessee with a 6-1 record and a key upset victory over No. 6 ranked LSU. Major Robert Neyland, who was in his second stint as head coach following service time in the army, led the Vols. Tennessee entered the game, 4-2-1.

The *Tennessean* gave a preview of the game from Knoxville:

One of the oldest football rivalries in the South will be renewed here tomorrow when the Vanderbilt Commodores and the University of Tennessee Volunteers clash.

Tennessee officials reported a homecoming day crowd of more than 20,000 is expected to see the game. Observers rated the tussle a toss-up. With the weather bureau predicting, "occasional light rains," Tennessee's Coach Bob Neyland became more gloomy than usual.

"A wet field would give Vanderbilt a distinct edge," he declared. "They already have played three games in the rain and practiced three days in it this week. On the other hand, all our games have been played on a fast field."

Neyland did get his wish as the weather forecasters were wrong and it was reported that sky opened with sunshine. Football fans from both schools arrived hours earlier than the 2:00 p.m. kickoff. An hour before the game, both the Vanderbilt and Tennessee bands came upon the field to play "several beautiful college tunes."

The opposing teams ran onto the field and *The National Anthem* was played. Representing

Vanderbilt at the center of the field was captain and All-American center, Carl Hinkle. Captain Joe Black Haynes represented the Vols and he won the coin toss, but elected to defend the north goal.

Raymond Johnson of the *Tennessean* reported on the results:

Vanderbilt came back today.

The Gold and Black Commodores, halted two weeks ago by Georgia Tech, rose to great heights as they emerged with a 13 to 7 victory over an inspired and improved Tennessee machine as 23,000 persons pack Shields-Watkins Field this sunny afternoon to see the beautiful thrill-packed battle that was crammed with much excitement as any ever staged between Vandy and Tennessee in a decade.

Removed from the unbeaten and untied ranks two weeks ago by Georgia Tech, Vanderbilt was an entirely different machine as it thrilled and shocked the nearly capacity crowd at Shields-Watkins Field. It was an alert Vanderbilt team, one chucked full of determination and confidence that rode to their seventh victory this fall.

The first quarter was scoreless, but Tennessee began the game's first scoring drive late in the quarter. Taking over at their own 36-yard line, the Vols tailback Walter Woods raced for 24 yards around end. Running in the Single-T, Woods ran for two yards, threw an incomplete pass and was sacked by the Commodores. But, a Vanderbilt off sides gave the Vols another down.

Vols wingback Edwin Duncan ran a reverse play for a first down at the Commodore 26-yard line. Wood failed to gain any yardage on a run into the middle of the line, but on the next play he completed a first down pass to end Ralph Eldred. Duncan ran for three yards, Wood ran for no gain and fullback Marion Perkins carried the ball to the Commodore goal line as the quarter ended.

On the first play of the second quarter, Wood swept around the left end for a Vols touchdown. The stands, "seemed to shake as the mammoth crowd, the majority of them Tennessee supporters, turned loose a roar that resounded over these east Tennessee hills." Duncan converted the conversion kick for a Tennessee lead, 7-0.

Vanderbilt responded immediately. With the ball on the Vandy 23-yard line, Commodore fullback Turney Ford ran for two yards, quarterback Bert Marshall scampered around left end for another 18 yards to the Vandy 44-yard line.

Halfback Ralph Hinton ran for five yards on first down. On the next play Marshall tossed a pass to Hinton, who dashed untouched into the end zone for a Commodore touchdown. Joe Agee added the extra point to knot the game at 7-7. The rest of the quarter and third quarter was scoreless.

The *Tennessean* described Vanderbilt's winning touchdown drive late in the fourth quarter:

Hollins shifted his hips through tackle for five to the seven. Two plays later he squirmed down to the two and a first down. Injured on the near-payoff gallop, he retired in favor of Bert Marshall. Bert, trying hard at end, wasn't good enough on the next play, and Duncan spilled him for no gain.

Then Ray Andrus was nominated Vanderbilt's golden-jersied backfield spun on a reverse and

Andrus digging in with his thrusting strides, knifed through the line for the game-winning touchdown. Wyatt smashed through to block Franklin's place kick just as it was soaring. Vanderbilt was ahead 13-7.

Less than two minutes remained in the game when the Vols attempted a desperate comeback. Hinkle intercepted Vols backup quarterback Red Harp's pass attempt and returned it to midfield. The Commodores ran out the clock to secure the 13-7 victory.

Tennessee's George Cafego entered the game in the second quarter. Cafego was in his first season as a Vol and in two years would become an All-American back. During a fourth quarter run into the middle of the Vanderbilt line, Hinkle slammed Cafego to the ground. Hinkle is to have said, "He's through! Take him off!" Cafego was not the only Vols player Hinkle put out of this game.

Vanderbilt would finish their season the next week with a tough 9-7 loss to No. 4 ranked Alabama on Dudley Field. After trailing 7-6, Alabama kicked a late fourth quarter field goal for the win. Hinkle narrowly missed blocking the kick. It was not known at the time, but the winner of the Vandy/Bama game would be invited to the Rose Bowl.

Vanderbilt finished the 1937 season at 7-2. The Vols ended their season with victories over Kentucky and Mississippi and a 6-3-1 record. The triumph ended a victory streak by Neyland over the Commodores. It was the first time Vanderbilt could manage a win over a Neyland-coached team since 1926. Bill Britton (1935) was the Vols head coach while Neyland was in Panama for army duty.

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