

# Game 1 NORTH TEXAS ..... 12 VANDERBILT ..... 29

August 30, 1997  
Vanderbilt Stadium  
Nashville, Tenn.

Vanderbilt linebacker Jamie Duncan was not a happy guy at halftime of the Commodores' season-opener with North Texas. His team was ahead, 13-9, but had just surrendered a 53-yard touchdown pass with under a minute to play in the half. A mix-up in the VU secondary enabled the visiting Eagles to cut into what had been a comfortable 10-point lead. Duncan had seen enough.

"We wanted to come out in the second half and shut them down," said the Commodores' All-SEC middle linebacker. And that is exactly what happened.

North Texas, making its first trip to Vanderbilt, managed just 36 total yards and two first downs in the game's final two quarters. The Vanderbilt defense, angered by its first-half miscue, allowed just one drive over 10 yards in a dominating second half.

But the story on this night, the night defensive guru Woody Widenhofer debuted as the Commodores' head coach, was not the defense. It was the offense, the revamped offense. It was an offense energized by an infusion of young talent. An offense powered by a once-forgotten fullback. An offense controlled by a senior quarterback allowed to do the things he does well.

The Vanderbilt offense, under the direction of offensive coordinator Ed Lambert, scored four touchdowns and topped the 400-yard plateau for the first time since the 1994 season.

"It was great to play one and win one," Widenhofer said. "We have a long way to go, there is no question about that."

Two of the young kids Widenhofer played—tailbacks Jimmy Williams and Jared McGrath—lived up to lofty preseason expectations. Williams, starting in place of the injured Alvin Duke, carried the ball 16 times for 61 yards, including an explosive 32-yard second-quarter touchdown.

While the freshman backs dazzled with their open-field moves, fullback Paul Morgan impressed with his power. The senior, virtually ignored in Rod Dowhower's one-back sets, ran for 49 yards on 10 carries and scored the first two rushing touchdowns of his career.

"One of the biggest injustices ever around here was not playing Paul Morgan," Widenhofer said. "Paul is a real

team guy. He is a tough, hard-nose guy. He is the best blocker on the football team and he ran the ball well today."

Quarterback Damian Allen, no longer forced to drop back seven steps in a pro-style set, enjoyed a career day for the second straight season against North Texas. A year ago in Denton, Tex., Allen completed 20 of 34 passes for 251 yards and one touchdown. Saturday, he responded with 206 yards in the air (14 of 19) and 51 more yards on the ground.

North Texas, forced to go with back-up quarterback LaDarrin McLane in the second half after starter Jason Mills was injured, struggled mightily down the stretch. McLane, a highly regarded redshirt freshman, completed just 3 of 9 passes for 10 yards and had his final two attempts intercepted.

Free safety Rahim Batten—who took the blame for the Eagles' first-half score—stopped one drive with an interception at the Vanderbilt 28-yard line. And Duncan stopped North Texas' final drive with his second career interception.

"It felt good," Duncan said. "Especially knowing that I dropped a couple last year. I should have taken it to the house. The next time I will score."

Following Duncan's interception, the Commodores had one final chance to add to their 29-point total. But Widenhofer, who had predicted a shutout on his Thursday night radio show, ordered his offense to run out the clock.

"This was a very festive evening," Widenhofer said.

## Scoring Summary

North Texas	3	6	3	0	-	12
Vanderbilt	6	7	7	9	-	29

### 1st Quarter

UNT: Courtney 43 field goal

VU: Morgan 4 run (kick failed)

### 2nd Quarter

VU: Williams 32 run (Speakman kick)

UNT: McGrew 53 pass from Mills (kick failed)

### 3rd Quarter

VU: Morgan 5 run (Markham kick)

UNT: Courtney 32 field goal

### 4th Quarter

VU: Markham 39 field goal

VU: Hogans 68 pass from Allen (kick failed)

## Team Statistics

	UNT	VU
First Downs	7	19
Rushing Attempts	26	52
Net Rushing Yards	61	236
Passing C-A-I	13-25-2	14-19-0
Net Passing Yards	149	206
Offensive Plays	51	71
Total Net Yards	210	442
Fumbles - Lost	3-0	4-2
Penalties - Yards	7-48	8-45

Interceptions - Yards	0-0	2-21
Punts - Yards	9-473	6-214
Average per Punt	52.5	35.7
Punt Returns - Yards	0-0	5-51
Fumble Returns - Yards	0-0	1-9
Kickoff Returns - Yards	4-54	3-84
3rd Down Conversions	1-11	5-17
4th Down Conversions	0-0	0-0
Time of Possession	25:54	34:06

## Individual Statistics

**Rushing** UNT: Allred 11-48, Coleman 2-4, Mills 7-1, Hampton 1-0, McLane 5-8 VU: J. Williams 16-61, McGrath 10-62, Morgan 10-49, Allen 12-51, M. Williams 1-5, Dunnivant 3-8

**Passing** UNT: Mills 10-16-0, 139 yards, McLane 3-9-2, 10 yards VU: Allen 14-19-0, 206 yards

**Receiving** UNT: Harrison 4-32, Allred 1-9, McGrew 2-65, Young 2-18, Waters 2-29, Grimes 1-(-2), Coleman 1-(-4) VU: J. Williams 3-13, Azama 3-59, Morgan 1-16, Condrey 1-3, Hogans 3-96, Woods 1-12, McGrath 2-7

**Attendance** 38,281

# Game 2 ALABAMA ..... 20 VANDERBILT ..... 0

September 11, 1997  
Vanderbilt Stadium  
Nashville, Tenn.

There was talk, lots of talk, in the Vanderbilt camp that the Commodores were ready to end their misery against Alabama. Four straight close games with the Tide, a renewed enthusiasm in Vanderbilt Stadium, the absence of Bama All-American Michael Myers, an improved offense, a dominating defense... it was all pointing to a possible upset, the first win over Alabama in 13 years.

It was no matter that the game would be played on what would have been Bear Bryant's 84th birthday. It was no matter that Alabama has perhaps the best cornerbacks in the SEC. It was no matter that 1,000-yard rusher Dennis Riddle was returning from a one-game suspension for Alabama.

Woody Widenhofer had everyone believing in Woodyball.

The stage was set for an upset.

Somebody forgot to tell the Tide.

No. 15 Alabama extended its winning streak over Vanderbilt to 13 with a 20-0 victory before a packed house of 41,448 and a national television audience. It was a defensive war won by Alabama, whose defense somehow managed to be even stingier than Vanderbilt's. A couple of breakdowns in the first quarter proved costly to the Commodores, and while the



Vanderbilt defense managed to keep it close, Vanderbilt's offensive futility was too much to overcome. It was the same story, different opponent at Vanderbilt Stadium, as the Commodores lost defensive struggles to Notre Dame (14-7) and Tennessee (14-7) a year ago.

Vanderbilt's offense, which showed promise in the season-opening victory over North Texas, was stifled time and again by an Alabama defense thought by some to be down this year.

Alabama didn't fare much better on offense, putting together only one drive longer than 30 yards and earning just nine first downs. The Tide's heralded running back trio of Riddle, Curtis Alexander and Shaun Alexander gained only 64 yards on 24 carries (2.6 average).

#### Scoring Summary

Alabama	7	0	3	10	-	20
Vanderbilt	0	0	0	0	-	0

#### First Quarter

UA: Scissum 17 pass from Kithens (Cunningham kick)

#### Third Quarter

UA: Cunningham 48 field goal

#### Fourth Quarter

UA: Alexander 1 rush (Cunningham kick)

UA: Cunningham 46 field goal

#### Team Statistics

	UA	VU
First Downs	9	9
Rushing Attempts	34	44
Net Rushing Yards	75	66
Passing C-A-I	14-23-2	6-26-0
Net Passing Yards	163	58
Offensive Plays	57	70
Total Net Yards	238	124
Fumbles - Lost	2-0	0-0
Penalties - Yards	4-35	6-50
Interceptions - Yards	0-0	2-5
Punts - Yards	8-374	13-473
Average per Punt	46.8	36.4
Punt Returns - Yards	4-21	4-40
Fumble Returns - Yards	2-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	1-34	2-45
3rd Down Conversions	7-17	4-20
4th Down Conversions	0-0	1-3
Time of Possession	30:16	29:44

#### Individual Statistics

**Rushing** UA: Riddle 13-31, S. Alexander 6-22, Scissum 2-13, C. Alexander 5-11, Tucker 1-5, Phillips 2-3, Kitchens 4-(-3), Buchanan 1-(-7) VU: J. Williams 10-43, McGrath 9-30, Morgan 7-16, Duke 5-4, Carter 1-2, M. Williams 1-1, Allen 9-(-5), Hogans 1-(-11)

**Passing** UA: Kitchens 10-18-1, 124 yards, Tucker 4-5-0, VU: Allen 6-22-0, 58 yards Carter 0-4-0

**Receiving** UA: C. Alexander 3-16, Jackson 3-67, Riddle 2-10, Scissum 2-24, S. Alexander 1-14, Hall 1-25, Rutledge 1-4, Goss 1-3 VU: J. Williams 3-41, Duke 1-2, Morgan 1-7, Hogans 1-8

**Attendance** 41,448

Game	TCU .....	16
3	VANDERBILT .....	40

September 18, 1997

Vanderbilt Stadium

Nashville, Tenn.

Carlton Hall couldn't believe what he was seeing. The Commodores' senior linebacker has been around the Vanderbilt program for five years and only once before had he witnessed such a thorough second-half beating. But that was back in 1994 when Hall was buried on the depth chart as a redshirt freshman. This was different. This was 1997. This was his team.

"This feels great," Hall said. "It's been a long time since I have been able to look on the board and see 40 points on our side. All the aches and pains you have, they go away with 40 points. This is great."

Yes, Vanderbilt scored 40 points against TCU. But it was the Commodores' 30 second-half points which had the locker room celebrating. It was a dominating 30-0 second half which had head coach Woody Widenhofer excited in the post game press conference.

"We have heard we're, 'The same old Vanderbilt.' But me, my players, my staff have been trying to tell you, it is not the same old Vanderbilt team," Widenhofer said following his team's come-from-behind 40-16 win over the visiting Horned Frogs. "The same old Vanderbilt team would have buckled under in the second half. This team came out and scored 30 points in the second half."

And those 30 points could not have come at a more critical time in the early stages of the Widenhofer era. A loss and the record dropped to 1-2. And the fragile confidence of a struggling program surely would have been shattered. But it wasn't a loss. It was a win, and a 2-1 record heading into the first road game.

Vanderbilt's 24-point win was its largest margin of victory since a 41-7 win over Navy in 1993. And the 40-point effort was the Commodores' most productive offensive showing since a 43-30 win at Georgia in 1994.

The Commodores opened the second half in a very disappointing 16-10 hole. After opening strong with 10 unanswered first-quarter points, Vanderbilt allowed TCU 16 straight points heading into the break.

"At halftime, I approached it like (the season was on the line)," Widenhofer said. "I was hoping to get their attention about how serious this thing really is."

Widenhofer got his players attention.

Vanderbilt, which crossed midfield just once and picked up 44 yards in the the second half against Alabama, scored at will in the final two quarters Saturday night. The Commodores picked up 15 first downs, gained 253 yards and scored four touchdowns on their way to the easy win.

#### Scoring Summary

Texas Christian	0	16	0	0	-	16
Vanderbilt	10	0	13	17	-	40

#### First Quarter

VU: Allen 18 rush (Markham kick)

VU: Markham 27 field goal

#### Second Quarter

TCU: Brown 25 pass from Dover (kick failed)

TCU: Mitchell 14 rush (Reeder kick)

TCU: Reeder 18 field goal

#### Third Quarter

VU: J. Williams 2 rush (kick failed)

VU: Yoder 13 pass from Allen (Markham kick)

#### Fourth Quarter

VU: Woods 18 pass from McGrath (Markham kick)

VU: J. Williams 23 pass from Allen (Markham kick)

VU: Markham 27 field goal

#### Team Statistics

	TCU	VU
First Downs	17	25
Rushing Attempts	31	48
Net Rushing Yards	112	185
Passing C-A-I	17-34-1	18-27-0
Net Passing Yards	180	202
Offensive Plays	65	75
Total Net Yards	292	387
Fumbles - Lost	2-1	5-3
Penalties - Yards	8-89	2-20
Interceptions - Yards	0-0	1-2
Punts - Yards	5-169	1-39
Average per Punt	33.8	39.0
Punt Returns - Yards	0-0	2-11
Fumble Returns - Yards	4-4	3-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	5-80	3-101
3rd Down Conversions	4-14	8-15
4th Down Conversions	0-2	0-1
Time of Possession	25:37	34:23

#### Individual Statistics

**Rushing** TCU: Mitchell 15-88, Tomlinson 9-20, Porch 2-12, Canine 1-4, Hunt 1-1, Dover 2-(-1) VU: J. Williams 15-77, McGrath 15-75, Morgan 2-17, Carter 7-15, Allen 8-1, M. Williams 1-0

**Passing** TCU: Dover 16-24-1, 134 yards, Canine 4-9-0, 45 yards, Huffman 1-1-0, 1 yard VU: Allen 15-24-0, 160 yards, Carter 2-2-0, 24 yards, McGrath 1-1-0, 18 yards

**Receiving** TCU: Moore 3-35, Batteaux 3-30, Brown 3-36, James 2-29, Tomlinson 2-16, Simmons 2-21, Dover 1-1, Mitchell 1-12 VU: Yoder 4-50, J. Williams 3-39, Fleming 2-11, McGrath 2-12, Azama 2-18, Hogans 2-17, Carson 1-31, Woods 1-18, Duke 1-6

**Attendance** 34,824

Did You Know?

The original Dudley Field, which was built back in 1892 and lasted till 1922, was the first stadium built in the South.



# Game 4 VANDERBILT ..... 3 MISSISSIPPI ..... 15

September 27, 1997  
Vaught-Hemingway  
Oxford, Miss.

The question that circulated in the week leading up to Saturday's Vanderbilt-Ole Miss clash was, who had the better team?

In the postgame press conference following Ole Miss' 15-3 victory over Vanderbilt, Rebel coach Tommy Tuberville made sure everyone knew where he stood on the issue.

"I don't think there is any question the better team won," he said.

Who could argue?

Not Widenhofer, who told it like it was in a different part of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium after the game.

"I don't think we gave it to them," he said. "I think they flat whipped us."

A defensive struggle throughout, the game was sealed on an interception by Rebel defensive back Malikia Griffin which killed Vanderbilt's only hope of sneaking out a win in the fourth quarter.

"I thought if we didn't self-destruct, we would have a chance to win the ballgame, and we really did have a chance," Widenhofer said. "It was 9-3 and we had a drive going. They made a big play on the interception and they got a score out of it. We had an opportunity to take the ball in and win it 10-9."

Vanderbilt's offense, which wasted prime field position repeatedly in the first half, finally came to life early in the fourth quarter trailing 9-3. Taking over at its own nine-yard line following an Ole Miss punt, Vanderbilt began the drive with a Jimmy Williams eight-yard carry.

Quarterback Damian Allen hit tight end Elliott Carson for 10 yards, then rifled a pass into Anthony Azama for 16. Suddenly, after spinning its wheels for three quarters, the Vanderbilt offense was picking up first downs and threatening to possibly take the lead.

After an Allen incompleteness, Williams picked up eight more yards up the middle, then Ole Miss jumped offside, giving Vanderbilt a first down at the Rebels' 44.

"That last drive, we knew it was now or never and we made some plays downfield," Allen said.

But the drive, and ultimately the game, ended on the next play. Allen dropped back and received pressure from linebacker Broc Kreitz, who blew past Vanderbilt running backs Paul Morgan and Jimmy Williams. Kreitz hit Allen as

he threw, and the ball fluttered toward the right sideline intended for Todd Yoder.

"I was doing and out-route," Yoder said. "The ball was just floating and the guy had time to run up underneath it. The play was there. It wasn't Damian's fault. That interception changed the course of the game."

Griffin picked off the pass at the Ole Miss 38 and sprinted 40 yards to the Vanderbilt 22 where he was run down by Williams. Four plays later, Deuce McAllister punched it across the Vanderbilt goal line from four yards out with 8:05 remaining and Ole Miss took a 15-3 lead.

"Any time you lose, you take a step back," Widenhofer said. "We didn't do a good job offensively. We had our opportunities. When you don't take advantage of them, it kills you."

The opportunities Widenhofer was referring to came in the first and second quarter, when some remarkable punting by Vanderbilt's Joe Webb left Ole Miss in desperate field position. Three times Ole Miss was pinned inside its own three-yard line and all three times Vanderbilt's defense forced a three-and-out. Yet the Commodores, who started their ensuing three drives at the Ole Miss 35, the Vanderbilt 47 and the Ole Miss 32, could only muster three points.

## Scoring Summary

Vanderbilt	0	3	0	0	-	3
Ole Miss	7	2	0	6	-	15

## First Quarter

UM: Anding 6 pass from Patridge (Lindsey kick)

## Second Quarter

VU: Markham 49 field goal

UM: Safety (tackle by Johnny Jones)

## Third Quarter

No Scoring

## Fourth Quarter

UM: McAllister 4 run (pass failed)

## Team Statistics

	VU	UM
First Downs	10	16
Rushing Attempts	24	40
Net Rushing Yards	89	95
Passing C-A-I	9-27-1	20-28-1
Net Passing Yards	100	253
Offensive Plays	51	68
Total Net Yards	189	348
Fumbles - Lost	1-1	0-0
Penalties - Yards	10-75	14-109
Interceptions - Yards	1-0	1-40
Punts - Yards	9-366	9-370
Average per Punt	40.7	41.1
Punt Returns - Yards	4-46	3-8
Fumble Returns - Yards	0-0	1-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	2-36	2-55
3rd Down Conversions	0-11	6-17
4th Down Conversions	1-1	1-1
Time of Possession	23:50	36:10

## Individual Statistics

**Rushing** VU: McGrath 9-44, J. Williams 5-24, Allen 7-11, Morgan 3-10 UM: McAllister 14-51, Avery 19-43, Cannon 1-1, Patridge 6-0

**Passing** VU: Allen 9-27-1, 100 yards UM: Patridge 20-28-1, 253 yards

**Receiving** VU: Azama 2-28, Morgan 2-30, McGrath 1-0, Duke 1-(-1), Carson 1-10, Yoder 1-28, J. Williams 1-5 UM: Heard 5-31, Reed 3-88, French 3-34, Peterson 3-48, Rone 2-15, Avery 2-15, Anding 1-6, McAllister 1-16

**Attendance** 36,417

# Game 5 LSU ..... 7 VANDERBILT ..... 6

October 4, 1997  
Vanderbilt Stadium  
Nashville, Tenn.

Jamie Duncan warned his teammates all week long—they better be ready to play some defense Saturday afternoon.

"LSU is such a physical football team," Duncan said before the 14th-ranked Tigers came to Nashville. "When you play a physical football team you have to be prepared or it can get ugly quickly."

Duncan was half right. It did get ugly. Ugly for the LSU offense. After opening with a 13-play, 45-yard drive which ended with a missed 44-yard field goal, the vaunted Tiger attack sputtered. The next seven LSU drives averaged just 4.8 plays and 6.2 yards. Duncan and the Vanderbilt defense dominated an offense which was averaging over 475 yards per game.

The Vanderbilt offense, which had yet to score a touchdown in two SEC games, moved the ball through most of the first half. Three times in the first two quarters, the Commodores marched inside the LSU 25-yard line. But three times they came out without any points.

Trailing, 7-0 with 2:48 to play in the game, the Vanderbilt offense assumed control at its own 41-yard line. After two drops and three completions, Allen capped off the most memorable drive of the season with a 12-yard bullet to Tavarus Hogans over the middle at the one-yard line, and he muscled into the end zone for the second touchdown of his career.

With all 37,000 fans on their feet, the call was made from the Vanderbilt sideline with no hesitation. Widenhofer was going for the two-point conversion and the stunning win. The play—a pick with Hogans and Todd Yoder to the slot-side—was called before the Commodores even scored their touchdown.

The LSU defense called for a timeout



before Vanderbilt ran the conversion play. During the timeout, the offense retreated to the sideline to meet with offensive coordinator Ed Lambert.

The players huddled, to hammer out the play's final details. LSU returned to the field. The officials started the 25-second play clock and the Commodores could not get settled quickly enough to get the play off. After another delay of game, Widenhofer sent John Markham in for the game-tying 30-yard extra point.

Barnett's snap from center was high, but holder Billy Miller handled it nicely and set it down. Markham's kick was low and an LSU defender blocked it, leaving the score 7-6.

"The one thing I promised our team when I got the head coaching job," Widenhofer said, "is we would give them a chance to win the game as a group of coaches. (The players) had fought and battled their tails off the whole course of the game and we didn't get it done as a coaching staff."

#### Scoring Summary

LSU	0	0	7	0	-	7
Vanderbilt	0	0	0	6	-	6

#### Third Quarter

LSU: Foster 13 pass from Tyler (Boyd kick)

#### Fourth Quarter

VU: Hogans 12 pass from Allen (kick blocked)

#### Team Statistics

	LSU	VU
First Downs	10	13
Rushing Attempts	53	30
Net Rushing Yards	177	105
Passing C-A-I	9-18-0	11-27-1
Net Passing Yards	53	143
Offensive Plays	71	57
Total Net Yards	230	248
Fumbles - Lost	4-0	4-2
Penalties - Yards	7-58	6-36
Interceptions - Yards	1-0	0-0
Punts - Yards	9-420	7-305
Average per Punt	46.7	43.6
Punt Returns - Yards	5-16	3-44
Fumble Returns - Yards	6-2	2-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	0-0	2-32
3rd Down Conversions	4-16	3-14
4th Down Conversions	1-2	1-1
Time of Possession	35:18	24:42

#### Individual Statistics

**Rushing** LSU: Faulk 31-135, Mealey 7-44, Collins 3-13, Foster 1-2, Tyler 11-(17) VU: J. Williams 5-59, McGrath 10-47, Morgan 4-9, Carter 3-2, Allen 6-(-4), Duke 2-(-8)

**Passing** LSU: Tyler 9-18-0, 53 yards VU: Allen 11-24-1, 143 yards, Carter 0-3-0, 0 yards

**Receiving** LSU: Faulk 4-10, Foster 3-30, Mealey 2-13 VU: J. Williams 3-39, Winkler 2-25, Azama 2-13, Hogans 2-43, Fleming 1-13, Yoder 1-10

**Attendance** 37,045

## Game 6 VANDERBILT ..... 17 NORTHERN ILLINOIS ... 7

October 11, 1997

Huskie Stadium

DeKalb, Ill.

What is it about these Northern Illinois Huskies? They just seem to love to scare the pants off Vanderbilt before the Commodores come up with a closer-than-expected victory.

Three years ago, Vanderbilt denied Northern Illinois on a two-point conversion with a minute to go and eked out a 17-16 win at home.

Saturday at Huskie Stadium, the Commodores squirmed through a 17-7 win that was very much in doubt with under four minutes to play.

"We were fortunate to get out of here with a victory," a relieved Woody Widenhofer told the media after the game. "Maybe we learned at Vanderbilt a big lesson: Never underestimate your opponent. Never."

While the Commodores should never look past any team, it was understandable how they could come into this game very confident, especially after losing 7-6 to LSU despite outgaining the Tigers the week before.

Northern Illinois sported the worst offense in the nation, had the nation's longest losing streak and at or near the bottom in most power ratings.

Vanderbilt, with the No. 10 defense in the country, was expecting nothing less than a shutout. Vanderbilt's offense, which moved the ball fairly effectively against LSU, was facing a much-less talented defense. The odds-makers slated Vanderbilt as a 22-point favorite.

Yet until Stallworth scooped up a fumble at the Northern Illinois 43-yard line following a Jordan sack and rumbled into the end zone for the game-clinching touchdown, the game was unexpectedly a battle.

"We underestimated these guys," said junior cornerback Fred Vinson. "We did something we shouldn't do. It is a lesson learned."

Vanderbilt boosted its record to 3-3 for the first time since 1994, while Northern Illinois dropped its 13th straight game and fell to 0-6 on the season. The Commodores outgained the Huskies by a healthy 298-132, with Damian Allen throwing for 175 yards and a touchdown and Paul Morgan and Jimmy Williams each rushing for 69. But the Commodores could never quite put the game away despite being the superior team.

"I was surprised that we could look up at the scoreboard and they had a chance to win the game," said linebacker Jamie Duncan. "I was just mad we were in that situation."

On the Huskies' final drive, they were nearing field goal range at the Vanderbilt 38-yard line with under four minutes to go. Thoughts of a possible overtime began, but Vanderbilt's defense ended them with authority.

At the Vanderbilt 35-yard line, Finlen was sacked by Jordan and lost the ball. Stallworth grabbed up the bouncing ball and legged it into the end zone to finally clinch the victory.

Northern Illinois could do nothing on its ensuing drive, and the Commodores ran out the clock and breathed a big sigh of relief.

#### Scoring Summary

Vanderbilt	0	7	3	7	-	17
Northern Illinois	0	0	0	7	-	7

#### Second Quarter

VU: Yoder 23 pass from Allen (Markham kick)

#### Third Quarter

VU: Markham 30 field goal

#### Fourth Quarter

NIU: Mitchell 2 pass from Finlen

NIU: Stallworth 43 fumble return (Markham kick)

#### Team Statistics

	VU	NIU
First Downs	17	12
Rushing Attempts	43	46
Net Rushing Yards	123	68
Passing C-A-I	15-25-0	9-17-0
Net Passing Yards	175	64
Offensive Plays	68	63
Total Net Yards	298	132
Fumbles - Lost	6-2	4-1
Penalties - Yards	4-55	6-35
Interceptions - Yards	0-0	0-0
Punts - Yards	4-168	7-294
Average per Punt	42.0	42.0
Punt Returns - Yards	2-8	2-(-8)
Fumble Returns - Yards	1-43	0-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	0-0	2-49
3rd Down Conversions	7-17	3-16
4th Down Conversions	0-0	1-2
Time of Possession	28:23	31:37

#### Individual Statistics

**Rushing** VU: Morgan 10-69, J. Williams 12-69, McGrath 11-9, Duke 2-4, Allen 7-(-9) NIU: Bryant 17-56, Johnson 18-47, Stack 4-9, Mitchell 1-(-2), Jackson 1-(-6), Finlen 5-(-36)

**Passing** VU: Allen 15-25-0, 175 yards NIU: Finlen 9-12-0, 64 yards, Jackson 0-5-0

**Receiving** VU: Yoder 4-63, Hogans 3-30, Azama 2-23, Baker 2-16, Winkler 1-24, Morgan 1-9, J. Williams 1-6, Carson 1-4 NIU: Mitchell 5-23, Johnson 2-24, McCareins 2-17

**Attendance** 17,567



Did You Know?

The Commodores bounced back from a 39-0 loss to LSU in 1996 and almost beat the Tigers in '97, falling 7-6.



# Game 7

## GEORGIA ..... 34

## VANDERBILT ..... 13

**October 18, 1997**  
**Vanderbilt Stadium**  
**Nashville, Tenn.**

It was the nation's ninth-ranked offense against the fourth-ranked defense. It was Georgia's high-powered, multi-dimensional attack against Vanderbilt's SEC-leading defense. Something had to give.

Georgia made enough plays to leave Vanderbilt Stadium with a 34-13 victory, its third straight victory in Nashville. The Dawgs, off to their best start in five years, improved to 5-1.

The Bulldogs rolled up 396 total yards, joining Ole Miss as the only team this season to top 300-yards against VU.

Mike Bobo, the most efficient quarterback in the Southeastern Conference, was almost flawless, completing 18 of 28 for 267 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions. The 34 points Bobo and the Dawgs posted were the most scored by an opponent at Vanderbilt Stadium since Arkansas topped VU 35-7 in 1995.

"Anytime you can score 34 points on the Vanderbilt defense, you've done a good job," said Bulldogs' second-year head coach Jim Donnan. "Bobo is real strong. When they bring that many people at the quarterback, you can't block them all. He took some hits but he got rid of the ball."

The Dawgs won the toss, took the ball and quickly set the tone with their offense. Bobo led Georgia on a surprisingly easy 11-play 58-yard drive to set up a 26-yard chip shot by kicker Hap Hines.

"They took the fire right out of us on the first drive," said linebacker Jamie Duncan. "From the opening toss, they said they wanted the ball and they got it and drove down the field and beat us."

The Commodore offense, which ended up with some pretty impressive numbers, didn't help matters on their first drive. On Vanderbilt's third play from scrimmage, Georgia's Orantes Grant and Ronald Bailey burst into the backfield untouched. Grant sacked and stripped quarterback Damian Allen and Bailey scooped up the ball and walked 10 yards for the game's first touchdown.

"We made a bad read on our blocking," Allen said. "Georgia made a good play, but we could have picked that guy up. He came in scott free."

Despite the quick 10-point hole, spirits were still high on the Commodores'

sideline. "Heads were still up," center Jeff Barnett said. "They got us on a look they hadn't run all year and popped us real quick. But then you are just down 10-0. It wasn't 'Here we go again.' We didn't get down after that."

Another Hines field goal in the second quarter increased the lead to a still manageable 13 points. The Dawgs, however, went for the jugular late in the second quarter, driving 70 yards on just five plays for their first offensive touchdown of the game.

Upon further review, Georgia's touchdown—a third-down toss from Bobo to Michael Greer—should not have been allowed. The play clock reached zero before Bobo snapped the ball. But the officials did not blow the whistle and the play counted.

Vanderbilt found itself in unfamiliar territory at halftime. Sure the Dorees had been down at the half before, but 20 points was by far Vanderbilt's largest halftime deficit.

"We knew coming out we were down 20-0 that we had to score on the first drive," Barnett said. "We knew we could do it, that we had the ability to do it. We had shown bits and pieces in the first half."

Allen almost single-handedly led the Dorees 75 yards down the field for their first score of the game. He opened with a 42-yard option keeper around the left corner. Seven plays later, he connected with fullback Paul Morgan for a 17-yard touchdown, trimming the Bulldogs' lead to 20-6. Allen finished the game with a season-high 235 yards passing. Nine different receivers caught passes in the game. But the Commodores would come no closer than a two-touchdown deficit.

"National TV. Homecoming. Maybe we read too many articles about being the No. 1 defense in the SEC," said Vanderbilt head coach Woody Widenhofer. "Georgia made some big plays against our best players. We just got our butts kicked pretty dog-gone good."

### Scoring Summary

Georgia	10	10	7	0	-	34
Vanderbilt	0	0	13	0	-	13

### First Quarter

UG: Hines 26 field goal

UG: Bailey 10 fumble return (Hines kick)

### Second Quarter

UG: Hines 26 field goal

UG: Greer 25 pass from Bobo (Hines kick)

### Third Quarter

VU: Morgan 17 pass from Allen (rush failed)

UG: Greer 27 pass from Bobo (Hines kick)

VU: J. Williams 15 pass from Allen (Speakman kick)

### Fourth Quarter

UG: Gary 23 rush (Hines kick)

### Team Statistics

	UG	VU
First Downs	22	20
Rushing Attempts	36	26
Net Rushing Yards	110	113
Passing C-A-I	19-29-0	18-42-0
Net Passing Yards	286	235
Offensive Plays	65	68
Total Net Yards	396	348
Fumbles - Lost	0-0	2-1
Penalties - Yards	5-29	4-35
Interceptions - Yards	0-0	0-0
Punts - Yards	3-130	4-145
Average per Punt	43.3	36.3
Punt Returns - Yards	1-3	2-15
Fumble Returns - Yards	1-10	1-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	3-93	7-134
3rd Down Conversions	9-16	5-14
4th Down Conversions	1-1	1-3
Time of Possession	34:33	25:27

### Individual Statistics

**Rushing** UG: Edwards 14-41, Gary 6-39, Pass 6-29, England 1-4, Bradley 2-4, Arnaud 1-4, Calloway 1-4, Bailey 1-4, Bobo 4-(-19) VU: Allen 10-64, McGrath 6-30, J. Williams 7-11, Morgan 3-8

**Passing** UG: Bobo 18-28-0, 267 yards, England 1-1-0, 19 yards VU: Allen 18-42-0, 235 yards

**Receiving** UG: Small 7-83, Brown 2-24, Greer 2-52, Edwards 2-5, Allen 2-21, Bailey 2-59, Wiggins 1-19, Pass 1-23 VU: J. Williams 3-19, Fleming 3-50, Azama 2-33, McGrath 2-11, Yoder 2-8, Carson 2-40, Hogans 2-51, Morgan 1-17, Baker 1-6

**Attendance** 35,124

# Game 8

## VANDERBILT ..... 3

## SOUTH CAROLINA ... 35

**October 25, 1997**  
**Williams-Brice Stadium**  
**Columbia, S.C.**

For the second straight season, Vanderbilt handed South Carolina an early Christmas gift, this one in the form of a 35-3 blow-out. In fact, South Carolina did not even have to outgain the Commodores. It simply had to convert when given the opportunity.

And Vanderbilt gave South Carolina opportunity after opportunity. The Commodores handed the ball over five times and had a muffed punt at its own 10-yard line. Vanderbilt also surrendered a 100-yard kickoff return and gave up a touchdown on a fake field goal.

"I felt we could win some ballgames this year if we got it to the fourth quarter as a close game," said Vanderbilt coach Woody Widenhofer. "When we don't get it to the fourth quarter and keep it close, it is because of what you saw today, turnovers, and things like that. We are just not a powerful enough



football team to overcome them and beat a team on the road."

The game turned on Boo Williams' 100-yard kickoff return in the third quarter. Vanderbilt showed signs of life after trailing 14-0 at intermission, twice driving inside the South Carolina 10-yard line on its first two possessions of the third quarter. The two trips produced just three points, however, as quarterback Damian Allen threw a critical interception at the goal line to kill the first scoring opportunity.

"I tried to make a play and force the ball in there," said Allen, who threw for 175 yards on 13 of 29 passing, but had two interceptions and one fumble which led to South Carolina's final touchdown.

After the next drive stalled at the South Carolina five-yard line, John Markham booted a 22-yard field goal to cut the lead to 14-3.

"I was ready to watch the defense force a three-and-out and get back out there," Allen said. "We were having more success in the second half."

But then Markham kicked off, Williams made a move to the inside and broke it outside where Vanderbilt's outside contain man left too much room along the sideline. One hundred yards later, the game was essentially over.

"That changed the game," said special teams coach Bill Maskill. "That broke our back. We just can't allow those things to happen. I'll take the blame because I coach those guys."

#### Scoring Summary

Vanderbilt	0	0	3	0	-	3
South Carolina	7	7	14	7	-	35

#### First Quarter

USC: Mixon 1 rush (Florio kick)

#### Second Quarter

USC: Kelly 13 pass from Wright (Florio kick)

#### Third Quarter

VU: Markham 22 field goal

USC: Williams 100 kick return (Florio kick)

USC: Penn 5 rush (Florio kick)

#### Fourth Quarter

USC: Kelly 8 pass from Wright (Florio kick)

#### Team Statistics

	VU	USC
First Downs	16	14
Rushing Attempts	37	38
Net Rushing Yards	155	113
Passing C-A-I	13-30-2	12-27-0
Net Passing Yards	175	160
Offensive Plays	67	65
Total Net Yards	330	273
Fumbles - Lost	3-3	0-0
Penalties - Yards	7-39	4-42
Interceptions - Yards	0-0	2-13
Punts - Yards	7-297	9-335
Average per Punt	42.4	37.2
Punt Returns - Yards	3-35	3-20
Fumble Returns - Yards	0-0	3-32

Kickoff Returns - Yards	4-85	2-117
3rd Down Conversions	2-14	4-14
4th Down Conversions	0-1	1-1
Time of Possession	29:57	30:03

#### Individual Statistics

**Rushing:** VU: McGrath 16-61, J. Williams 8-57, Morgan 5-19, Allen 5-14, Duke 2-9 USC: Williams 18-42, Hambrick 6-29, Wright 8-16, Hood 1-15, Bush 2-6, Penn 1-5, Mixon 2-0

**Passing:** VU: Allen 13-29-2, 175 yards, Carter 0-1-0 USC: Wright 10-25-0, 134 yards, Penn 2-2-0, 26 yards

**Receiving:** VU: Hogans 4-62, McGrath 2-12, Morgan 2-8, Yoder 2-71, Carson 1-9, Woods 1-4, J. Williams 1-9 USC: Kelly 5-57, Davis 3-51, Owens 1-11, Mixon 1-6, Mays 1-33, Hood 1-2

**Attendance:** 79,014

Game	VANDERBILT	7
9	FLORIDA	20

November 8, 1997

Ben Hill Griffin Stadium  
Gainesville, Fla.

For a Vanderbilt team still searching for its first league win, it was a frustrating afternoon. Once again, the Commodores' defense managed to slow down the Florida offensive attack but was unable to put enough points on the board.

The result—a hard fought 20-7 loss at Florida Field before 85,301 at the Swamp.

For the game's first two quarters, the Vanderbilt offense didn't do much of anything. After opening with a modest eight-play, 32-yard drive, the Commodores managed just one more first down the entire half.

"You have to throw and catch to get (Florida) out of that eight-man front to loosen them up a little bit or else you are dead," Widenhofer said. "We don't throw and catch well enough to do that."

But thanks to a relatively stingy VU defense, the Commodores trailed just 17-0 at the halftime break.

Still trailing 17-0 midway through the third quarter, the Commodores embarked on its best drive of the afternoon. Freshman Jimmy Williams ran around the left end for 18 yards and a first down. On the drive's fourth play, quarterback Damian Allen connected with Tavarus Hogans on a slant for 10 yards and another first down.

After a nine-yard run by freshman Jared McGrath and a Damian Allen quarterback sneak for another first down, the Commodores drive had reached six plays and 44 yards.

"We had them where we wanted

them," said center Jeff Barnett. We were making the plays and executing."

The Commodores' solid execution and good fortune came to a screeching halt on the next snap when wide receiver Todd Yoder dropped a sure touchdown on a beautifully executed halfback pass from Williams. The ball knocked off Yoder's forearms and fell to ground for a painful incomplete pass.

Seven plays later, the Commodores finally punched the ball across the goal line. McGrath soared over the top on fourth down from the one-inch line.

But the Commodores would come no closer, falling 20-7.

"I was proud of our guys the way they hung in there in the second half," Widenhofer said. "They hung in there and battled and gave us a chance to win."

#### Scoring Summary

Vanderbilt	0	0	7	0	-	7
Florida	3	14	0	3	-	20

#### First Quarter

UF: Cooper 21 field goal

#### Second Quarter

UF: McGriff 44 pass from Brindise (Cooper kick)

UF: Carroll 13 pass from Brindise (Cooper kick)

#### Third Quarter

VU: McGrath 1 run (Markham kick)

#### Fourth Quarter

UF: Cooper 35 field goal

#### Team Statistics

	VU	UF
First Downs	10	16
Rushing Attempts	48	34
Net Rushing Yards	127	112
Passing C-A-I	5-17-1	13-25-1
Net Passing Yards	60	222
Offensive Plays	65	59
Total Net Yards	187	334
Fumbles - Lost	0-0	1-0
Penalties - Yards	7-41	9-54
Interceptions - Yards	1-15	1-27
Punts - Yards	10-365	6-256
Average per Punt	36.5	42.7
Punt Returns - Yards	5-36	5-29
Fumble Returns - Yards	0-0	1-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	4-81	1-0
3rd Down Conversions	4-18	3-12
4th Down Conversions	1-2	0-0
Time of Possession	30:15	29:45

#### Individual Statistics

**Rushing:** VU: McGrath 17-23, Allen 21-0, J. Williams 8-98, Morgan 206 UF: Taylor 22-76, Green 3-33, Brindise 3-(-10), Frazier 1-1, Carroll 5-12

**Passing:** VU: Allen 5-16-1, 69 yards, J. Williams 0-1-0 UF: Brindise 13-25-1, 222 yards

**Receiving:** VU: J. Williams 1-12, Carson 1-13, Hogans 1-10, Morgan 2-25 UF: Taylor 3-15, Green 5-120, McGriff 3-70, Carroll 1-13, Frazier 1-4

**Attendance:** 85,301

Did You Know?

RB Jared McGrath, a native of Ocala, Fla., scored his first career TD in front of the home folks against the Gators.



# Game 10 KENTUCKY ..... 21 VANDERBILT ..... 10

**November 15, 1997**  
**Vanderbilt Stadium**  
**Nashville, Tenn.**

This Vanderbilt-Kentucky match up had potential. Tim Couch and Kentucky's top rated offense versus Vanderbilt's top rated defense. So what decided the game? Vanderbilt's offense and Kentucky's special teams, of course.

Thanks largely to five Vanderbilt turnovers and a UK kickoff return for a touchdown, Vanderbilt ended on the short side of a 21-10 margin on Senior Day at Vanderbilt Stadium.

"I thought one third of our football team played well and that is the defensive side of the ball," said Vanderbilt coach Woody Widenhofer. "You can't win in this league with a collapse in the kicking game and turnovers. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out."

Vanderbilt outgained the vaunted Wildcat offense 262-234. The game marked the third time this season Vanderbilt outgained an SEC opponent and lost.

Couch threw for 168 yards on 17 of 36 passing. He was sacked five times and did not complete a pass over 13 yards in the second half. At one point, Couch threw 12 straight incompletions.

Plug those numbers into a computer, and you come up with a Vanderbilt victory, don't you?

Actually no, not when the special teams give up a 95-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and not when the offense gives the ball away again and again, as it has had the tendency to do for two years.

## Scoring Summary

Kentucky	0	7	7	7	-	21
Vanderbilt	0	0	10	0	-	10

## Second Quarter

UK: Yeast 25 pass from Couch (Hanson kick)

## Third Quarter

VU: Markham 37 field goal

UK: Yeast 97 kick return (Hanson kick)

VU: Hogans 55 pass from Allen (Markham kick)

## Fourth Quarter

UK: Homer 31 rush (Hanson kick)

## Team Statistics

	UK	VU
First Downs	13	11
Rushing Attempts	30	36
Net Rushing Yards	66	51
Passing C-A-I	17-36-0	16-32-3
Net Passing Yards	168	211
Offensive Plays	66	68

Total Net Yards	234	262
Fumbles - Lost	1-0	6-2
Penalties - Yards	15-108	6-63
Interceptions - Yards	3-25	0-0
Punts - Yards	9-325	8-312
Average per Punt	36.1	39.0
Punt Returns - Yards	2-12	2-0
Fumble Returns - Yards	3-0	4-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	3-117	3-70
3rd Down Conversions	1-14	3-17
4th Down Conversions	0-3	0-2
Time of Possession	28:19	31:41

## Individual Statistics

Rushing: UK: Homer 6-38, A. White 13-26, Grant 1-7, Couch 10-(-5) VU: Morgan 12-49, McGrath 7-13, Allen 11-8, J. Williams 4-8

Passing: UK: Couch 17-36-0, 168 yards VU: Allen 16-32-1, 211 yards

Receiving: UK: Yeast 6-76, Robinson 4-38, Homer 4-31, A. White 1-4, Coleman 1-15, Sanford 1-4 VU: Yoder 7-94, J. Williams 3-12, Carson 2-30, Hogans 2-64, Morgan 1-5, McGrath 1-6

Attendance: 40,256

# Game 11 VANDERBILT ..... 10 TENNESSEE ..... 17

**November 29, 1997**  
**Neyland Stadium**  
**Knoxville, Tenn.**

Odds makers installed UT as a 30-point favorite. This was Peyton Manning's final appearance in front of the adoring home folks. A Tennessee rout was expected.

But it never came. Yes, Tennessee won the game and the SEC Championship game, but the celebrating came after the final whistle, because during the game, the Vols had to fight for their lives. Vanderbilt's defense secured the No. 1 ranking in the SEC with yet another stellar performance.

It was a familiar storyline for the Commodores—strong defense, little offense and costly turnovers leading to a disappointing near upset. But for the third year in a row, Tennessee knew it had been in a battle. The No. 3 Volunteers escaped with a 17-3 victory.

"Give them a lot of credit," said Tennessee coach Phil Fulmer. "They have really good players. The defense is exceptional. My hat's off to Woody and his defensive players."

Manning had a very un-Heisman-like day, completing 12 of 27 passes for 159 yards. This was one week after he threw for 523 yards and five touchdowns against Kentucky.

In fact, Tennessee abandoned the pass for much of the game and handed the ball

to freshman Jamal Lewis, who gained 196 yards on 36 carries.

"They ran the ball on us because we were rushing the passer," Widenhofer said. "We thought Manning would be looking for a big day to ice that Heisman Trophy. It is hard to take Manning out of the game and still play great run defense."

After Vanderbilt took an early 3-0 lead on a 47-yard boot by freshman John Markham, Tennessee put up 17 straight points and looked to have the game in hand. But Vanderbilt's offense responded with its first sustained drive of the day. Behind the strength of an inspired offensive line and the legs of freshman Jared McGrath, the Commodores marched 71 yards on 11 plays to put the game back in doubt at 17-10.

"We haven't quit all season," said McGrath, who gained 97 yards on 17 carries. "Why would we quit today?"

## Scoring Summary

Vanderbilt	0	3	7	0	-	10
Tennessee	0	10	7	0	-	17

## Second Quarter

VU: Markham 47 field goal

UT: Copeland 33 pass from Manning (Hall kick)

UT: Hall 19 field goal

## Third Quarter

UT: Manning 1 run (Hall kick)

VU: McGrath 14 run (Markham kick)

## Team Statistics

	VU	UT
First Downs	13	19
Rushing Attempts	39	47
Net Rushing Yards	180	180
Passing C-A-I	7-24-2	12-27-1
Net Passing Yards	35	159
Offensive Plays	63	74
Total Net Yards	215	339
Fumbles - Lost	2-1	3-2
Penalties - Yards	7-47	2-20
Interceptions - Yards	1-0	2-4
Punts - Yards	8-270	7-276
Average per Punt	33.8	39.4
Punt Returns - Yards	5-42	1-1
Fumble Returns - Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns - Yards	3-37	3-57
3rd Down Conversions	2-14	8-18
4th Down Conversions	2-3	0-0
Time of Possession	27:58	32:02

## Individual Statistics

Rushing: VU: McGrath 17-97, Allen 8-53, Hogans 1-9, Williams 8-20, Morgan 4-4, Duke 1-(-3) UT: Lewis 36-196, Price 1-(-5), Bryson 2-0, Manning 8-(-11)

Passing: VU: Allen 6-23-2, 21 yards, Williams 1-1-0, 14 yards UT: Manning 12-27-1, 159 yards

Receiving: VU: Duke 4-20, Allen 1-14, Williams 1-(-6), Azama 1-7 UT: Copeland 3-54, Price 4-40, Nash 2-21, McCullough 1-19, Bryson 1-28, Lewis 1-(-3)

Attendance: 106,683