

Monday, February 2, 2004



Jesse Thomas
Go the distance

Oregon's loss was actually pleasing

If it makes you feel better, go ahead and ask. I've done it and am still tempted to continue doing it.

What if Luke Jackson hadn't missed the free throw for the three-point play in the final 15 seconds to bring Oregon within one point?

What if Stanford's Matt Lottich hadn't found a way to bank in a three-pointer with one second remaining on the shot clock with Jackson's hand in his face?

What if Oregon hadn't missed 10 free throws, or what if each one of the three players off the bench could have managed just one point?

Any one of those could have made the difference in Oregon's 83-80 loss to No. 2 Stanford at McArthur Court on Saturday.

Asking such questions only leaves anger and grief for what could have been. It blinds you from the satisfaction that comes from such an excellent showing of college basketball.

The satisfaction that The Pit showed its finest colors.

Whether or not it was the 500 pizzas delivered before the game or because Stanford is undefeated, 111 decibels of noise is loud. That's louder than a jackhammer and some average rock concerts. Metallica concerts range from 120 to 140 decibels.

The satisfaction that when Oregon trailed 79-75 with 21 seconds left and everyone in the crowd silently whispered "It's over," Oregon didn't give in.

James Davis sprinted off the inbounds pass, hit Jackson baseline, where he then drove hard to the hoop and managed a reverse layup on two defenders.

Then Davis decided to hit a three-pointer with two-tenths of a second left in the game. What was he thinking? Someone in the crowd forgot to tell him it was over.

The satisfaction of it being a fight to the bitter end in which Davis nearly hit the best shot in Oregon history with two seconds left. The 9,087 at McArthur Court hung all their hopes and prayers on that one shot as it sailed toward the hoop, although the referee waived it off long before it got there.

There is bittersweet satisfaction that Stanford can find a way to score in its final 15 possessions. That was simply perfect execution and poise by an offense that was under the most pressure it has seen all season.

There is bittersweet satisfaction that any team can manage to score 35 more points in the second half than it did in the first half. Only an 18-0 team can find a way to shoot nearly 40 percent

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Patriots win with last-second field goal

Adam Vinatieri made up for two misses to send New England to its second Super Bowl victory in three years

By Bob Brookover
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

HOUSTON — Super Bowl XXXVIII deserved an R rating, but not for the partial displays of nudity that took place during halftime.

No, this R was for riveting.

In a Super Bowl that will long be remembered as one of the best, the New England Patriots got a 41-yard field goal from Adam Vinatieri with just four seconds remaining Sunday night to pull out a 32-29 victory over the Carolina Panthers.

It marked the second time in three years that Vinatieri had delivered a field goal that gave the Patriots a Super Bowl victory. He kicked a 48-yarder to beat the St. Louis Rams two years ago.

The Patriots (17-2) finished their season with 15 consecutive victories.

Though the Patriots walked away with another title, the Panthers walked out of Reliant Stadium knowing they belonged in this Super Bowl.

Both quarterbacks — New England's Tom Brady and Carolina's Jake Delhomme — passed for more than 300 yards, a feat accomplished only one other time in Super Bowl history and that was by two guys named Montana and Marino.

Brady's final pass of the evening, a 17-yard strike to Deion Branch, established a Super Bowl record of 32 completions. More important, it gave the Patriots the ball on the Carolina 23-yard line.

New England used its final time-out, and Vinatieri, after missing two field-goal attempts in the first half, came through with the game-winner.

Brady, who completed 32 of 48 passes for 354 yards and three touchdowns, was named the Super Bowl MVP for the second time in his career.

In a losing effort, Delhomme completed an incredible first season as a starter, completing 16 of 33 passes for 323 yards and three touchdowns.

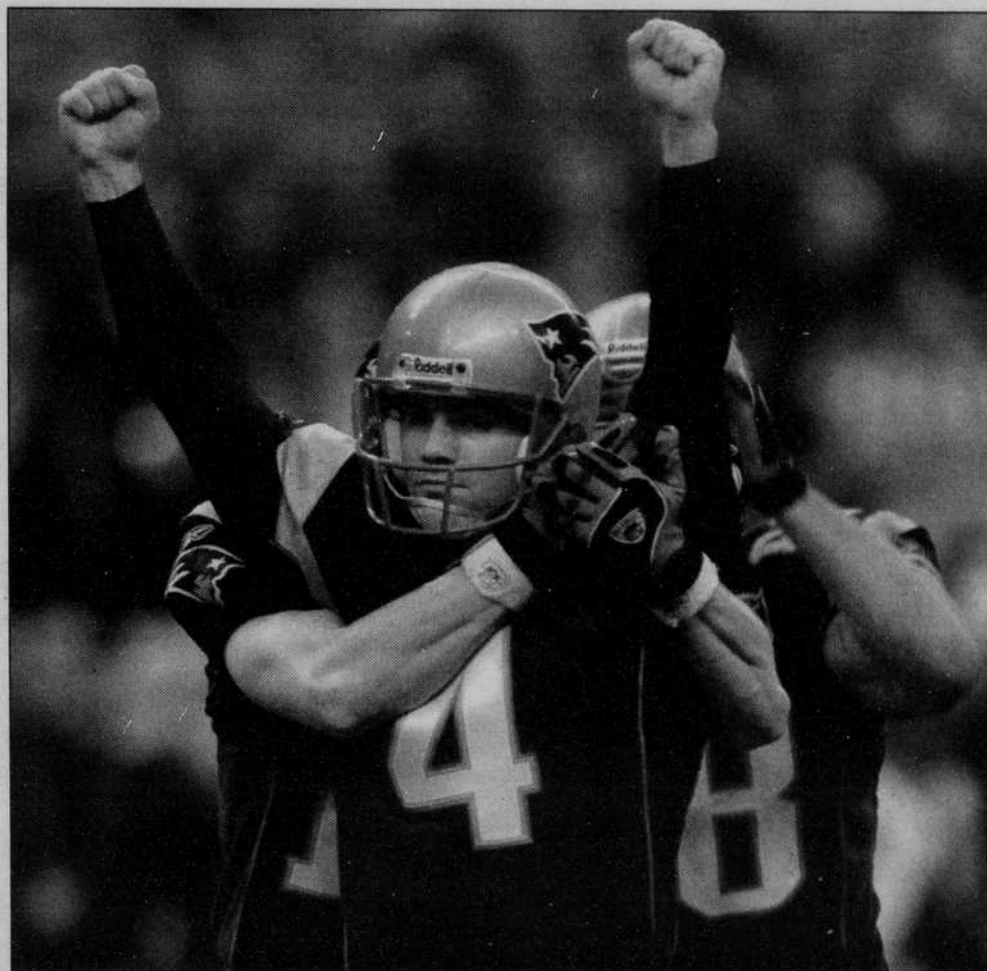
The Panthers took their first lead of the game with 6:53 remaining when Delhomme connected with Muhsin Muhammad for an 85-yard touchdown, the longest play from scrimmage in Super Bowl history.

After the Panthers failed on their two-point conversion attempt, Brady took the Patriots 68 yards on 11 plays and connected with linebacker — yes, linebacker — Mike Vrabel for a 1-yard TD that allowed New England to regain the lead. A two-point conversion run by Kevin Faulk made it 29-22.

But the Patriots left the Panthers plenty of time and Delhomme connected with Ricky Proehl for a 12-yard touchdown with 1:13 remaining. John Kasay's extra point tied it, but then he kicked the ball out of bounds, giving Brady great field position for the final drive.

As usual, he made the most of it.

The teams set a Super Bowl record by going scoreless through the first 26 minutes, 55 seconds, then combined for an amazing 24 points in the last 3:05.



Lionel Hahn Abaca Press

After a close game, the Patriots scored a field goal with just four seconds remaining in Super Bowl XXXVIII.

New England moved the ball, but couldn't get it into the end zone or over the upright. After driving to the 13-yard line on their first possession of the game, the Patriots sent Vinatieri out for a 31-yard field-goal attempt.

He pushed the kick wide right, marking the first time in six games the Patriots had failed to score on their opening drive.

The Patriots drove into Carolina territory again on two of their next three possessions and had nothing to show for it. A tackle for a 10-yard loss by blitzing linebacker Will Witherspoon ruined one drive, and Shane Burton blocked a 36-yard field-goal attempt by Vinatieri to snuff another New England scoring opportunity.

The Panthers, meanwhile, were an offensive disgrace until the two-minute warning in the first half.

Up until that point, Delhomme had completed just one of his eight passes for 1 yard and had been sacked three times for minus-25 yards. As a team, the Panthers had minus-2 yards of offense.

The third time the Patriots leveled Delhomme, linebacker Vrabel jarred the ball loose from the quarterback, and defensive tackle Richard Seymour covered the ball at the Carolina 20-yard line.

After taking the ball to the 5-yard line with a

12-yard run, Brady connected with Deion Branch for the game's first touchdown.

What transpired the remainder of the half was stunning.

Backed up to their 5-yard line by an inexplicable unnecessary-roughness penalty on Brian Allen, the Panthers appeared to be in danger of going down by more before the half.

Instead, Delhomme engineered an eight-play, 95-yard drive to tie the score. He completed four of seven passes for 90 yards.

On third and 5 from Carolina's 10, Delhomme hit veteran Ricky Proehl over the middle for a 13-yard gain. That was the Panthers' second first down of the game and their first that wasn't helped by a penalty.

Delhomme then found Muhammad for a 23-yard gain and Proehl again for 15 yards. After two incomplete passes, the Patriots called a time-out with 1:14 to go before halftime. When play resumed, Steve Smith beat cornerback Tyrone Poole off the line of scrimmage and Delhomme threw a strike to the streaking receiver for a 39-yard touchdown that tied the game.

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Trojans take care of tired Ducks in L.A.

Oregon's exhaustion from Thursday's victory over UCLA showed Saturday in a 71-56 loss to the Trojans

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

The Southern California women's basketball team kept the Ducks running the court in the first half and took a one-point lead, 35-34, into the locker room.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

All that running tired Oregon in the second half as the Ducks scored 22 points during that time.

For the 11th consecutive year, Oregon (11-10 overall, 3-8 Pacific-10 Conference) split its trip to Los

Angeles with a 61-55 victory over UCLA on Thursday and a 71-56 loss to the Trojans (11-8, 8-3) on Saturday.

The Ducks hoped Thursday's win would propel them against USC, who lost to Oregon State on Thursday, to the first sweep in Los Angeles in school history.

"Mentally, we were ready to take on the pressure," Oregon head coach Bev Smith told KSCR (1320 AM) Radio. "We just physically didn't finish those plays. I think we just ran out of a little gas. Playing as few people as we played in the last couple of days, it takes a little bit out of your legs."

Oregon brought three players off the bench Thursday, and it showed Saturday as the five starters averaged 31 minutes against USC.

The Ducks tried to take advantage of Pac-10 Player of the Week Ebony Hoffman's absence

after she was suspended for the first half of Saturday's game for disciplinary reasons. It was the fifth time in the senior's career that she didn't start a game.

When Hoffman returned to the court to open the second half, her fresh legs tore past Oregon. She scored 12 points in her 19 minutes of play.

There were 14 lead changes and seven ties in the game. The Ducks had their biggest lead, 42-38, with 13:40 remaining when the Trojans started to put Oregon away.

"We played 40 minutes against UCLA and we played 30 minutes today," Smith said. "So out of 80 minutes, we played a good 70 minutes and for us that is very good progress. Certainly that is what we have to build on."

Guard Brandi Davis led the Ducks for the sixth

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