

Sports

CHEEZ-IT BOWL: OKLAHOMA STATE 37, MIAMI 34

Cowboys race to 21-0 lead, then hold off Hurricanes' comeback

By **Corey Long**
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Oklahoma State went to the air early and often to finish its season on a high note.

Spencer Sanders threw for 305 yards and four touchdowns, and the Cowboys held off No. 18 Miami for a 37-34 victory in the Cheez-It Bowl on Tuesday.

Oklahoma State (8-3) called 15 consecutive pass plays to open the game and stormed out to a 21-0 lead. Sanders threw TD passes of 30 and 32 yards to Brennan Presley, and LD Brown had a 2-yard touchdown run.

“Our game plan going in was to try to offset some of the speed and strength they have in the front six,” Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said. “They are a fast, athletic team. We wanted to throw the ball 25 times in the first half.”

Sanders also led the Cowboys with 45 yards rushing and was named Most Valuable Player.

“That MVP doesn’t just go to me,” Sanders said. “The defense stopped them when they needed to stop them. We scored when we needed to score. I told them that this MVP is for everyone.”



Miami Hurricanes running back Donald Chaney Jr. (2) is tackled by Oklahoma State Cowboys safety Tre Sterling (3) in the second half during the 2020 Cheez-It Bowl at Camping World Stadium in Orlando on Tuesday, Dec. 29.

Presley caught a third touchdown pass in the fourth quarter to put Oklahoma State up 37-26. He finished with six receptions for 118 yards. Tay Martin had six catches for 73 yards, and Dillon Stoner also caught a

touchdown pass.

“We have a bunch of weapons,” Sanders said. “We have guys you haven’t even seen yet and guys that didn’t get many touches. Putting Brennan with that group makes it that much better.”

Miami (8-3) got on the board in the second quarter when D’Eriq King threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Brevin Jordan. But King left with a right knee injury with 4:06 remaining in the first half.

ALAMO BOWL

Texas rolls over Colorado, 55-23

By **Raul Dominguez**
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Texas has been tested all year, but losing senior quarterback Sam Ehlinger to a shoulder injury was an obstacle the Longhorns never anticipated.

The same spirit that pushed the team through this entire chaotic season helped the Longhorns thrive without him.

Sophomore signal-caller Casey Thompson came off the bench and passed for 170 yards and four touchdowns, and No. 20 Texas overcame Ehlinger’s injury to beat Colorado 55-23 in the Valero Alamo Bowl on Tuesday night.

Freshman running back Bijan Robinson had 183 yards on 10 carries with a TD for Texas (7-3). He was selected the bowl’s offensive MVP.

“We had a lot of young guys that stepped up in this game,” Robinson said.

The Longhorns are undefeated in four bowl games under Tom Herman, unbeaten as a head coach in five bowls overall.

“This is the culmination of a lot of hard work by some really dedicated young men that 10 months ago made a decision that they were going to go to work every day and do whatever it took to get through this season together,” Herman said. “And they did. We had our ups and downs, but they never wavered. They never gave up hope. They never gave up confidence. They kept playing for each other. I couldn’t be prouder of my team.”

More adversity developed against the Buffaloes (4-2). Ehlinger missed the second half after sustaining a shoulder injury in the second quarter. Herman said he was uncertain when the injury occurred, but Ehlinger returned to the field in the third quarter in warmups, with his right arm in a sling. There was no immediate word on the extent of his injury.

“I hated that he couldn’t finish the game, but we wouldn’t be here without him,” Herman said. “He was the leader behind this senior class. I don’t know what the future holds for him, but I know that I’m thankful for him being on our team, being on my team each and every day. What he means to us is indescribable.”

The NCAA is offering athletes an extra year of eligibility given the unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unknown if Ehlinger will return.

NBA season off to ‘strange’ start marked by blowouts

By **Tim Reynolds**
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI — Milwaukee coach Mike Budenholzer offered a simple assessment of some of the scores that he’s seen in the early days of this NBA season.

“It’s strange,” Budenholzer said.

He’s not wrong. There have been only seven gamedays so far this season, yet the NBA has already seen 11 games where one team has led by at least 30 points. The Bucks have been incredibly topsy-turvy: their last three games have seen them lead

Golden State by 43, trail New York by 28 and lead Miami by 51 on Tuesday before winning 144-97 in a game where they set an NBA record with 29 3-pointers.

Through 54 games this season, 14 have been decided by at least 20 points — a 26%

clip. Last season, including playoffs, 20-point wins happened in about 16.5% of games played.

Why?

Budenholzer points to a three-week training camp where some teams only played two preseason games, nobody

played more than four, and all that comes after an offseason where some teams were off for eight months because they didn’t go to last season’s restart bubble and others were off for less than eight weeks before having to get back to work.

It’s not only the Bucks who are playing wildly different styles of games.

The Los Angeles Clippers trailed Dallas by 57 on Sunday in what became a 51-point loss, then led Minnesota by as many as 31 on Tuesday in a bounce-back win.

Picking the NFL: week 17

Overall record: 138-77-1

Atlanta Falcons (4-11) vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (10-5)

After securing a position in the playoffs this past week, the Buccaneers host the Falcons to conclude the regular season. When a team has clinched a playoff berth there’s a chance they’ll rest some stars, but even if the Bucs do they’ll still overwhelm the Falcons defense and win 28-14.

Dallas Cowboys (6-9) vs. New York Giants (5-10)

In the very unpredictable NFC East, both are still in for the running. The Cowboys secured a big win last week against the Eagles, and I see their momentum carrying into this game. The Giants will make this game a close one, but the Cowboys will win by a field goal, 27-24.

New York Jets (2-13) vs. New England Patriots (6-9)

Never thought I would say this during this 2020 NFL campaign, but the New York Jets are in the midst of a winning streak! The Patriots were blown out by the Bills Monday night but I still give them the edge at home, 28-21.

Minnesota Vikings (6-9) vs. Detroit Lions (5-10)

For two teams out of playoff con-



COREY KIRK

tention, this NFC North battle will be solely for morale. The Vikings are more promising, with offensive stars Justin Jefferson and Dalvin Cook. Detroit has its running back for the future in D’Andre Swift, but quarterback Matthew Stafford might be seeing his final days in the Motor City. The Vikings will win this game on the road, 35-21.

Pittsburgh Steelers (12-3) vs. Cleveland Browns (10-5)

This game is a must win for the Cleveland Browns, after they were upset by the Jets last weekend, if they want to end one of the longest playoff droughts in NFL history. The Steelers secured their spot in the playoffs after winning the NFC North, so we could see guys on their team resting this week. Even so I see the Steelers denying the Browns a playoff berth, 24-21.

Baltimore Ravens (10-5) vs. Cincinnati Bengals (4-10-1)

Currently holding one of the wild card spots in the AFC, the Ravens find themselves on the road at Cincinnati to end their regular season. Though they are battling injuries

left and right, the Bengals have won their last two games, showing promise for next season. The Ravens have really been clicking the past couple of weeks, though, and they’ll win with some ease, 35-14.

Miami Dolphins (10-5) vs. Buffalo Bills (12-3)

This could be a preview of a playoff game in a couple weeks. The Dolphins haven’t settled on a quarterback, and the Bills have been impressive. I see Buffalo finishing the regular season with a 35-31 win.

Seattle Seahawks (11-4) vs. San Francisco 49ers (6-9)

The playoff-bound Seahawks take on the injury-riddled San Francisco 49ers in Arizona. Although the 49ers upset the Cardinals last week, and the Seahawks are likely to limit their starters in preparation for the playoffs, I just don’t see San Francisco stopping the Seahawks’ aerial offense in a 28-14 Seattle win.

Arizona Cardinals (8-7) vs. Los Angeles Rams (9-6)

In this NFC West matchup, we see two teams who are fighting for the last couple of playoff spots. The Cardinals suffered a tough loss against the 49ers, but I am going to give them the slight edge because the Rams will be without injured quarterback Jared Goff. The Cardinals will win, 24-21.

Jacksonville Jaguars (1-13) vs. Indianapolis Colts (10-5)

Now the sole leader for the first pick in the draft, the Jaguars travel to Lucas Oil Field to take on the Colts, who are in an interesting predicament. Despite a 10-5 record, the Colts need to win to have any chance at the playoffs. Fortunately for them, they are facing a team with numerous problems on both sides of the ball. The Colts will defeat the Jaguars, 35-10.

Tennessee Titans (10-5) vs. Houston Texans (4-11)

This couldn’t be a better scenario for Tennessee. The Titans are vying for a playoff spot, and running back Derrick Henry will wreak some havoc. The Titans will win, 27-21.

Las Vegas Raiders (7-8) vs. Denver Broncos (5-10)

It was quite a collapse for the Raiders this season, after losing four out of their last five games, they are now heading home after this week to prepare for a long offseason. However, I do see them winning this game as the Broncos won’t be able to stop the Raiders’ offense consistently. Las Vegas will win, 21-10.

Los Angeles Chargers (6-9) vs. Kansas City Chiefs (14-1)

Leading the AFC as the number one seed, the Chiefs find themselves back at home to take on their divisional opponent in the Chargers. Though the Chargers’

season didn’t go as planned, they continue to show promise. But even if the Chiefs rely largely on their reserves, I see them winning, 17-7.

Green Bay Packers (12-3) vs. Chicago Bears (8-7)

For all the teams that are on the fringe of joining the playoffs, the Bears find themselves with the biggest hurdle to accomplish, needing to beat their longtime division rival. The Packers have been arguably one of the hottest offenses in the game. I give the edge to the Packers, 31-28.

New Orleans Saints (11-4) vs. Carolina Panthers (5-10)

Though they will begin preparing for the playoffs starting this week, and they lost by a field goal to the Panthers on Oct. 25, I see the Saints, with Taysom Hill leading the offense while Drew Brees rests, winning 28-21.

Washington Football Team (6-9) vs. Philadelphia Eagles (4-10-1)

After suffering a tough loss against their divisional opponent in the Cowboys, the Eagles find them facing another divisional foe in Washington. Washington’s quarterback troubles continue with the release of former first-round pick Dwayne Haskins Jr. due to poor conduct. Regardless of who’s under center for Washington, I see the Eagles, behind rookie Jalen Hurts, winning 17-14.

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