

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

ARIZONA BOWL
Ball St. 34
(22) San Jose St. 13

ARMED FORCES BOWL
Mississippi St. 28
(24) Tulsa 26

LIBERTY BOWL
West Virginia 24
Army 21

Armed Forces Bowl ends in ugly brawl

FORT WORTH, Texas — A bowl victory that increased Mississippi State's win total this season to four and No. 22 Tulsa's failed attempt to add another unlikely comeback to its impressive collection this season took a back seat to the melee that broke out Thursday shortly after the Armed Forces Bowl ended.

True freshman Will Rogers scored his first rushing touchdown of the season and had a 13-yard TD pass to lead Mississippi State past Tulsa 28-26 in a game that was tense from the start.

Minutes after it ended, the teams became involved in a large brawl on the field, with players punching and kicking one another. Tulsa coach Greg Montgomery said sophomore safety Kendrin Ray, who was helped off the field after being at the bottom of a dogpile during a scrum, was treated for "some sort of concussion."

"I'm not sure what exactly caused that," said Mississippi State coach Mike Leach, who referred to the altercation as a "mash pit." "It was something before the game, too. We've never had any problem with that the entire season, so I can only guess without seeing the film."

In a video posted from Mississippi State's locker room, Malik Heath joked about kicking a Tulsa player in the facemask.

"The one thing I'll say is our program, our guys, we're a team that are going to stand up for each other and we're going to battle," Montgomery said. "We talk about faith, family, football, and family's going to take care of family. We're a team that has battled all year long. We battled again today. From that standpoint, our guys are going to continue to protect each other and go from there."

Tulsa quarterback Zach Smith threw a 15-yard scoring pass to Keylon Stokes with 1:23 to play, and Tulsa failed to recover the ensuing onside kick. On the play, Mississippi State's Erroll Thompson leveled Tulsa's Ryan Nixon and was penalized 15 yards for taunting.

"It's just dumb," Leach said. "There was some stuff going back and forth during the course of the game. With any of it on our side, I don't want to see it because I feel like I got shorted, what, 15 yards, 30 yards on deals where if we could keep our mouth shut, you know."

During the brawl, Mississippi State's DeMonte Russell, in street clothes beneath his jersey, ripped the helmet off Tulsa's TieNeal Martin and appeared to land a punch to Martin's head.

"Coach Leach addressed us as a team after the game, and we will handle that in-house," Kobe Jones said. "It was emotional and a mishap. We have to be better and more disciplined."

— Associated Press

Year in Sports

Breaking through barriers

Women are making strides on and off the field

BY ERIC OLSON • Associated Press



Josie Lepe/AP file

San Francisco 49ers offensive assistant Katie Sowers watches her team warm up before a game against the Arizona Cardinals in Santa Clara, California, in 2019.

It was a milestone year for women in sports, starting with Katie Sowers becoming the first woman to coach in the Super Bowl and ending with Becky Hammon serving as an NBA head coach.

In between was a series of breakthroughs for women who just wanted a chance — and got it.

Sarah Fuller became the first woman to score in a major college football game, and Kim Ng became the first to be hired as a general manager for a major league team.

WNBA players achieved a higher level of financial security and professional women's hockey got a boost in exposure. International soccer saw an unprecedented transfer fee paid for a woman to move from one team to another, and the U.S. women's national soccer team took a step toward its goal of equitable treatment.

"2020 was certainly a tumultuous and challenging year," the Women's Sports Foundation said in a statement to The Associated Press on Thursday. "It was also transformational, with many exciting, history-making firsts for women's sports, athletes, coaches and leaders. Sports is a connector, a unifier and a microcosm of society. As we reflect on the power of women athletes and teams



Eric Gay/AP

San Antonio Spurs assistant coach Becky Hammon calls a play during a timeout in Wednesday night's game against the Los Angeles Lakers, after coach Gregg Popovich was ejected in San Antonio. Hammon was the first woman to act as head coach of an NBA team.

"I look forward to the day where none of this is news, just people accomplishing things and everybody having a chance and everybody having a shot at the same thing."

— Rudy Gay, San Antonio Spurs player who is close with assistant coach Becky Hammon

who spoke up, challenged the norms, shattered glass ceilings and showed girls, boys and everyone the limitless potential one can achieve, it gives us all hope for 2021 and beyond."

Sowers had been working as a San Francisco 49ers offensive assistant since 2017 but wasn't widely known until she was featured in a Microsoft television commercial that began running in January.

When the 49ers played the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl, she be-

came the first female assistant and first openly gay coach to take the sideline in pro football's biggest game.

Hammon became the first female coach to take charge of a team during an NBA game, taking over the San Antonio Spurs on Wednesday night against the Los Angeles Lakers following Gregg Popovich's ejection in the second quarter.

"I look forward to the day where none of this is news, just people accomplishing things and everybody having a chance and everybody having a shot at the same thing," said the Spurs' Rudy Gay, who is close with Hammon.

Hammon, a star player in the college and pro ranks, already was the first full-time female assistant coach in league history.

Hammon acknowledged it was "a substantial moment" but said she was more interested in winning the game.

See **Women** / B4

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF SEMIS

Unfinished business for Clemson, Ohio State in Sugar Bowl

BY RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Everybody loves a comeback story, and both No. 2 Clemson and No. 3 Ohio State arrive at the Sugar Bowl looking for redemption of sorts.

For Trevor Lawrence and the Tigers, this College Football Playoff semifinal brings them back to the site of last season's national championship game loss to LSU.

For Justin Fields and the Buckeyes, the Sugar Bowl is a chance to avenge their last defeat, a thrilling semifinal against Clemson last year that effectively ended with Ohio State's star quarterback being intercepted in the end zone.

See **Sugar Bowl** / B6

Notre Dame, 'Bama move Rose Bowl dash to Texas

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Playing a Rose Bowl game deep in the heart of Texas is anything but normal. Top-ranked Alabama being in a College Football Playoff semifinal game is nothing new.

The SEC champion Crimson Tide (11-0) are in a familiar position despite the chaos of playing during the pandemic. No. 4 Notre Dame, which finished runner-up in the ACC after temporarily giving up its cherished independent status, gets another playoff chance two years after a big thud in the same stadium.

"We're going to keep knocking at the door. We don't listen to the narratives about what Notre Dame can and can't do," Fighting Irish coach Brian Kelly said Thursday.

See **Rose Bowl** / B6

Special Olympian spreads message of love

BY JOHN MARSHALL

Associated Press

Gary Schottle arrived in time to see the other kids in line hitting and jumping on his young son.

Nicknamed "Tank," Derek towered over the pestering kids, yet lacked the confidence to stick up for himself and was too kindhearted to intentionally hurt anyone. Head down, he took the blows without reacting.

Special Olympics changed everything.

Tank felt accepted and confident. He blossomed into a leader, became an inspiration to everyone he met.

Self-assuredness allowed Tank to take his message of hope and love to social media, where his daily affirmations have been a beacon of joy to more than 100,000 followers

during the bleak days of a pandemic.

"If you'd have told me back then what he's doing now, I wouldn't have believed it. There's just no way," Gary Schottle said. "It truly is amazing."

Special Olympics, founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, have melded competition and confidence for people with intellectual disabilities since the first games in 1968. Special Olympics has since branched out to more than 170 countries, empowering more than 5 million athletes who had often been cast aside.

The mission has always been one of acceptance and inclusion. Tank, a seven-sport athlete, paid it forward.

As a young boy, he lacked skills, had few friends and was often picked on by

other kids.

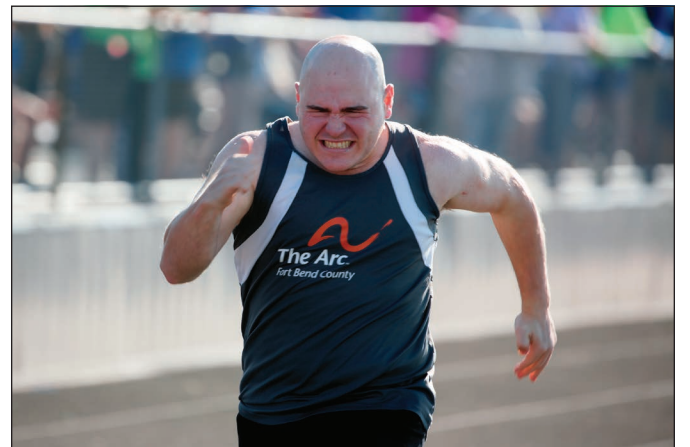
In 20 years of Special Olympics competition, Tank's confidence has soared, his leadership spreading across playing fields, the Houston area and beyond.

Tank, 31, has received local and national awards for being an advocate for Special Olympics and anti-bullying. He regularly gives speeches about love and hope.

Tank appeared on CNN and other networks to fight for Special Olympics when Education Secretary Betsy DeVos threatened to halt funding for the organization in 2019.

Once one of the bullied, he has become a living embodiment of the Special Olympics message.

"He's a gregarious individual, extremely outgoing, always positive," said Aaron Keith,



Gary Schottle/via AP

Derek "Tank" Schottle competes in the 100-meter dash as part of the Pentathlon at a Special Olympics track meet in Rosenberg, Texas, in 2017. Special Olympics changed everything for Tank. He blossomed into a leader, spreading love and inspiration to everyone he met.

executive director of the Special Olympics Texas east region, where Tank competes. "What he's done as a leader and

a change agent for individuals with ID is way bigger than what he's done on the field."

See **Olympian** / B4