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Mariota and Niumatalolo win big in college bowls

By Mike Street
Special to The Asian Reporter

Aside from Samoan linemen, few college teams feature Asian players, and even fewer have Asian coaches. This year's bowl season contained two of these rarities: Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota and Navy head coach Ken Niumatalolo. Both emerged victorious in their respective bowl games, solidly trouncing their opponents.

Niumatalolo became the first Samoan head coach in college football history and the second Polynesian head coach in Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) history when he was named the Navy head coach in late 2007. Since then, he's gone on to establish a new standard of excellence with the Midshipmen.

Among other records, he has won the most games (40) of any coach in his first five seasons, and his win total is already the school's fourth best. Next season, he should win the seven games needed to tie Navy's all-time leader, George Welsh. Niumatalolo is also the first coach to lead Navy to a bowl game in each of his first three seasons, and the first Service Academy head coach to win the Commander-in-Chief's trophy in his first two years.

Niumatalolo continued to rack up the wins this season, with a 9-4 overall record that included an undefeated home record. Unlike the slow, grinding offenses of the past, this year's Midshipmen have averaged more than 33 points per game, including two games scoring more than 50 points, and four more topping the 40 mark. And most of these games weren't shooting matches: Navy's average margin of victory was more than 18.

After a strong season, Niumatalolo and his Middies faced the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) Blue Raiders in the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl. Navy sophomore sensation, quarterback Keenan Reynolds, entered the game with 29 rushing touchdowns this



BOWL WINS. Navy Midshipmen head coach Ken Niumatalolo (left photo, center) led his team to victory over the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders, 24-6, during the Armed Forces Bowl college football game in Fort Worth, Texas. Marcus Mariota (right photo, #8) of the University of Oregon is pursued by Caleb Bluiett (#42) of the University of Texas at Austin during his team's 30-7 win over the Longhorns at the Valero Alamo Bowl in San Antonio, Texas. Both games were played on Monday, December 30, 2013.

season and he led the team to an easy victory.

On the first drive of the game, Reynolds added another rushing score, making him the first quarterback to reach 30 in a season and one of just four FBS players to reach that mark. MTSU could only respond to the score with a field goal, struggling to move the ball, as they would all day.

MTSU's frustration became evident by their increasingly physical play. After having his eyes gouged, Reynolds had a visor added to his helmet to prevent further problems. The player who did so was later ejected after two unsportsmanlike conduct calls, half of all such penalties assessed against the Blue Raiders, who also committed two personal fouls.

Despite these infringements, the Midshipmen kept their cool and kept scoring. The Blue Raiders only added another field goal during the course of the game, while Navy cracked the game open with two more touchdowns in the fourth quarter. Reynolds scored again to boost his season total to 31, finishing as

the game's leading rusher with 86 yards and its leading scorer. Navy's bowl game victory was its first since 2009, and with Reynolds at quarterback for the next two seasons, Niumatalolo should see continued success.

Similarly dominant in their bowl game, Marcus Mariota and the Oregon Ducks entered this season with high expectations despite offseason changes, including losing head coach Chip Kelly to the Philadelphia Eagles. The season before leaving, Kelly lost starting quarterback Darron Thomas, the team's all-time leader in touchdown passes, to the National Football League draft.

As his replacement, Kelly chose Mariota as Oregon's first freshman in 21 years to start the season at quarterback, bypassing Thomas' backup, the older Bryan Bennett. Mariota repaid Kelly's confidence by leading the Ducks to the nation's second spot, throwing a touchdown in all 13 starts and setting a conference freshman scoring record. He led the nation in completion percentage and set a new Oregon record for points scored in a season with



228, which ranked 14th in the country.

Under its new head coach this season, Oregon started out strong, but failed to deliver on lofty expectations. The team won its first eight games but stumbled against Stanford and Arizona, finishing the season 11-2 and ranked 10th.

Mariota entered the Stanford game with a knee brace, having sprained his MCL in the previous contest. That he played under such conditions shows his endurance; that his team could not win without him at his best shows his importance. Whatever the reason for those two losses, they kept Oregon from reaching a BCS bowl for the first time in five years.

Instead, they settled for an Alamo Bowl matchup against the unranked Texas Longhorns. A healthy Mariota helped the Ducks trample the Longhorns, who wanted the win for its departing coach, the legendary Mack Brown. But emotion wasn't enough to overcome the quick-hitting offense and smothering defense of the Ducks.

Although Texas had the ball first, Oregon's Avery Patterson intercepted a pass from quarter-

back Case McCoy and ran it back for the game's first score. Oregon scored again on its first possession, with Matt Wogan hitting a short field goal, and when Texas responded with a touchdown to trail by just three, the game looked like it might be competitive. Instead, Oregon added a field goal a few minutes later, then a touchdown on a shovel pass from Mariota to Josh Huff with just under a minute to play in the half, and the rout was on.

This was the last offensive touchdown that the Ducks would score in the game, as Wogan kicked one fewer field goal in the game than he had all season. Mariota experienced cramps on the team's first drive in the second half; this and the lopsided score shifted the game plan to a more conservative and slower pace.

Regardless, Mariota led all players in rushing yards with 133, eclipsed McCoy in the air by throwing 253 yards to McCoy's 48, and was named Player of the Game for his accomplishments. As rare as it is to see a Samoan under center, Oregonians can expect to see Mariota excelling again for the Ducks in 2014.

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Cave in Indonesia reveals history of ancient tsunamis

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cy.”

Despite the long record preserved in the cave, Rubin said it did not provide any clear clues about tsunami frequency or when events might happen in a relatively close period of time.

Geologist Kerry Sieh, director of the Singapore group and also part of the cave investigation, has predicted that another monster quake could rock the area in the next few decades. They tend to come in cycles and the 2004 temblor heaped more pressure on the fault. However, the history is so

variable, it's impossible to make an exact forecast.

“By learning about the type of tsunamis that happened in the past, maybe we can do planning for mitigation for the next tsunami,” said Nazli Ismail, head of the physics and geophysics department at Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh who worked on the project.

Indonesia is an archipelago located on the so-called “Ring of Fire,” a horseshoe of fault lines and volcanoes surrounding the Pacific Basin. It is home to some of the world's biggest and deadliest seismic activity.