

BYU snatches big one from Utes

By GARY LESSER
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The University football team has finally ended the season-long mystery for its fans and followers. The questions of "how good are they?" and "how will they do in that bowl game against somebody good?" have at long last either been answered or been made obsolete.

In one afternoon, the hopes and expectations of the entire squad of a Western Athletic Conference championship were shattered, and what had been worked for all season long, day in and day out in practice, now became meaningless.

Coach Bill Meek's troupe of guys nobody ever gave half a chance to, will play their season's last game for only pride and the winning season many didn't get last year. For they can now officially shelve their suntan lotion and tennis rackets until next year, and along with it their dreams of December sunshine and a Fiesta Bowl berth and national television exposure, and its attendant fame for the University.

Nightmare

On Saturday, in front of 24,917 wild football fans, Brigham Young University turned the Utes' dream

into a nightmare, as the Cougars walked all over the home team on Robert L. Rice Field and for all intents and purposes ended the Utes's season, 16-7.

The tempo of the game was quickly established as Utah fumbled on its third play from scrimmage with BYU recovering, and after some great runs by "Fleet" Pete Van Valkenberg and Steve Stratton the Cougars took the lead late in the first quarter. Stratton's four-yard run for the score gave the Y a lead they never lost, and the way BYU's two power runners were slashing and fighting and dragging Ute defenders along, play after play, it was lucky the score wasn't much more lopsided.

Praise to Cats

Heaps of praise is due to the Cats' offensive line for opening gaping holes in a defense that all year long hasn't belonged on the same field with many little league teams. Van Valkenberg rushed for 71 yards in the first period alone, while running mate Stratton tacked on another 50.

The only bright spot for Utah all day may have been punter Dan Marrelli, who boomed kicks high and far, many over 60 yards. But even he couldn't stop a safety that

resulted when Jerry Buchert snapped the ball over his head and out of the end zone for a 9-0 BYU lead in the early second quarter. Dan watched the ball sail over his head with an "I don't believe it" type expression.

With Meek shuttling quarterbacks Dan Payne and Steve Marshall in and out like they were yo-yo's, the Utah offense never did get going. The coach said afterwards that Payne just wasn't throwing as well as he is capable of, and that Marshall couldn't do anything either against the tough BYU defense.

The second quarter was dullsville and the half ended 9-0, with Utah lucky to be on the field for the second half-hour. It was said that the first half was the fifth and sixth quarters of the Utah State game. Coach Meek said, "I guess fate can be cruel sometimes. We were going along so good and then we lost our number one man (quarterback Don Van Galder, out with a cracked collarbone). These poor kids—they worked so hard all year, and to have this happen to them. The kids definitely missed Brownie."

Late in the third quarter, Ute place-kicker Flemming Jensen tried a 53-yard field goal, only to have the ball hit the uprights. This was a big

play, for soon after, Utah scored to make it 9-7, and if good, the FG would have put the Utes ahead. The final BYU score wouldn't have occurred, because Utah wouldn't have been passing while ahead, but armchair quarterbacking, is clearly much easier than what goes on in the game.

In the only exciting play all day for the Utes, halfback Ike Spencer took a Marshall handoff and ran 70 yards for a touchdown, outrunning the secondary and getting a key block from Back Judge Jack Combes, who took out BYU safety man Craig Crompton. The guys in the striped shirts aren't always the enemy, you know.

And the score remained 9-7 through most of the fourth quarter, as fumbleitis, that rare tropical disease that has been inflicted time

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and time again upon the Utes, struck their opponents, struck again. Ute would recover a BYU fumble, only to give the ball back on the final play, apparently figuring that possession wasn't necessary for a score.

In the final few minutes of the game, there were four fumbles, but the Utes fate was sealed when Crompton intercepted a Payne pass with 1:33 left and had his teammates fumble it over to the Utes. One last chance. But Utah couldn't want it that badly. George Gourley nabbed another Payne pass and ran it in from 16-7 and give the score to make a squad from south of the Utah border.

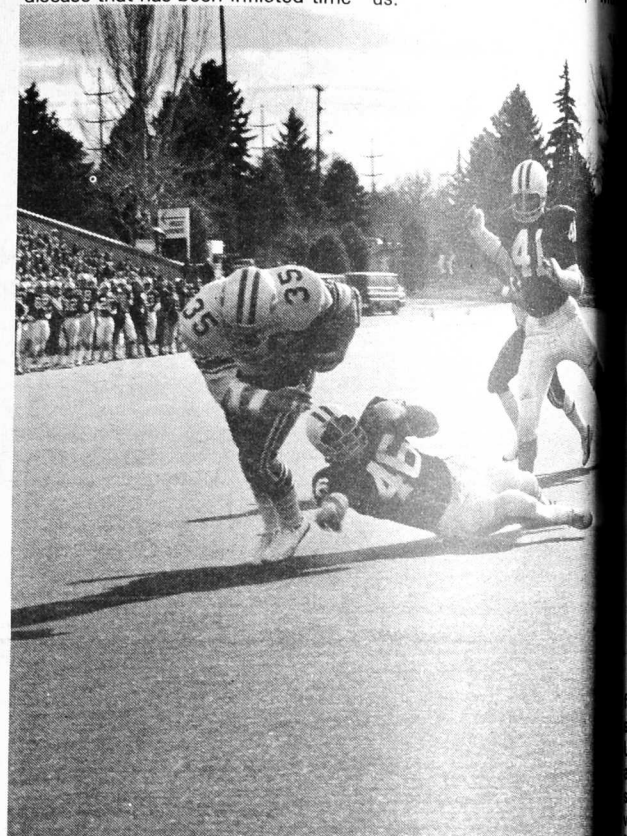
It just wasn't Payne's day—3-17 for 38 yards and 4 interceptions. Marshall was 1 of 5. If that doesn't tell the story, what does?

Coach Meek summed it all up when he said, "I guess it just wasn't meant to be. The law of averages finally caught up with us."



Utah's Ike Spencer (22) heading for the wide open spaces on his 70 yard TD jaunt. Ike picked up 101 yards in 11 carries, but it wasn't enough.

— Photos by Ron Kessler



BYU fullback Steve Stratton (35) bulls over for a TD to make it 16-7. Stratton and Pete VanValkenberg gave the Cougars a great punch.