



MEDIA RELEASE

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA VICTORIOUS IN 2010 INTERNATIONAL BOWL

Mike Ford's Stellar Second Half Performance Leads Bulls To Victory

Toronto, ON - 2010 International Bowl MVP Mike Ford played the best game of his career in the South Florida Bulls 27-3 victory over the Northern Illinois Huskies at Rogers Centre in Toronto. Ford ran for a career-high 207 yards and scored one touchdown, B.J. Daniels threw two scoring passes to A.J. Love to lead the offence in the win over the Huskies.

Ford had just one carry in the first half, an 18-yard gain in the second quarter. He broke out in the third, rushing 12 times for 106 yards, then capped his day with a 24-yard touchdown run in the fourth.

"I thought it was extraordinary the way our team changed at halftime, especially our offence," South Florida coach Jim Leavitt said. "I told our offensive coaches that we really need to put the ball into Mike Ford's hands, similar to what we did (in a Dec. 5 loss at) UConn, and let's see if we can take a little pressure off B.J. and then work the play-action game off Mike's runs."

Ford set the tone for his big second half by breaking off a 36-yard run, his longest of the day, three plays after the break.

"There was one guy, that poor soul, Mike went right through him," Leavitt said. "I go, 'My goodness that was a pretty good run.' Mike's so strong. He's just so big and strong and he has good feet."

Ford had holes to choose from as fatigue slowed Northern Illinois' defence in the second half. "It was like a kid in the candy shop: Which way do you want to go?" Ford said.

It's the third straight year a Big East running back has topped 200 yards in the International Bowl. Ray Rice of Rutgers turned pro after rushing for a game-record 280 yards and four touchdowns in 2007, while Connecticut's Donald Brown ran for 261 yards in last year's game.

Carlton Mitchell caught six passes for 94 yards for the Bulls, who won back-to-back bowls for the first time. South Florida beat Memphis 41-14 in last year's St. Petersburg Bowl, part of a streak of five straight bowl appearances.

"It's very exciting to see where we are right now and see where we could possibly be," said Daniels, a freshman. "We have a lot of young talent and a lot of guys coming back."

Daniels threw for 217 yards but was sacked five times.

South Florida scored 24 unanswered points in the second half after the teams traded field goals in a dreary first half.

"Momentum kind of got away from us in the second half and we kind of got worn down a little bit," Huskies coach Jerry Kill said. Northern Illinois running back Chad Spann called South Florida "probably the fastest team we've seen all season."

"They were tremendously fast," Spann said, "We've been trying to preach these last couple of weeks that we've got to get everything north and south because they're very fast east and west. As plays broke down, you'd think the bounce (to the outside) would be there but there'd be a guy right there to swallow me up."

Spann carried 20 times for 93 yards, giving him 1,038 for the season.

Big East teams have defeated their Mid-American Conference opponents in all four International Bowls, the only bowl game played outside the United States. Cincinnati beat Western Michigan in the inaugural game in 2007, followed by victories for Rutgers over Ball State in 2008 and Connecticut over Buffalo in 2009.

The Bulls took the lead for good on the opening drive of the third quarter. Ford's 36-yard run set up Daniels' 31-yard pass to Mitchell, who shook off a tackle and raced down the sideline to the six.

It was a record-setting catch for Mitchell, giving him 680 yards on the season and breaking Hugh Smith's school mark of 661 set in 2002. The Bulls couldn't punch it in, but went ahead on Eric Schwartz's 19-yard field goal.

Daniels hooked up with Love for the game's first touchdown on the Bulls' next possession, rolling to the outside before firing a 46-yard strike off his back foot and capping an eight-play, 81-yard drive.

"B.J. was moving all over the place, which he usually does, and then found A.J. off to the right side," Leavitt said. "The catch he made was great."

Cornerback Jerome Murphy picked off Huskies quarterback Chandler Harnish on the next possession, giving South Florida the ball at its 48. Ford carried five times to get the Bulls to the 7, where, on the first play of the fourth quarter, Daniels connected with Love again, making it 20-3.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL BOWL:

The International Bowl is the only NCAA Division I football game played outside the U.S. The fourth annual International Bowl will be played on Saturday, January 2, 2010 at Rogers Centre with a noon kick-off. For further information, including media credential requests, please visit the official International Bowl website at www.internationalbowl.org.

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