



January 2, 2004

Attendance - 73,928

Mississippi 31, Oklahoma State 28

Mississippi All-America quarterback Eli Manning came to Dallas well aware of the legacy of high-profile senior signal callers at the SBC Cotton Bowl.

Such greats as Theismann, Montana and Aikman finished their memorable college careers by leading their teams to victories in the Cotton Bowl. Now, add one more name to the distinguished list.

Manning guided the 16th-ranked Rebels to a 31-28 win over No. 21 Oklahoma State, while throwing for two touchdowns and running for another in front of a sellout crowd of 73,928 at the 69th Classic.

It was Ole Miss' first major bowl victory since Eli's father, Archie, accomplished the feat 34 years earlier in the Sugar Bowl. The Rebels finished the season 10-3, marking their first 10-win season since 1971.

Manning, winner of the Maxwell and Unitas Awards, was chosen as the Classic's Outstanding Offensive Player after completing 22 (second highest in Cotton Bowl history) of 31 passes for 259 yards with one interception.

Not to be outdone, OSU junior quarterback Josh Fields put on a show of his own, completing 21 of 33 passes for a Cotton Bowl record 307 yards and one touchdown.

Fifty-nine years had passed since Oklahoma State's last trip to the Cotton Bowl, and the Cowboys were returning to the sight of the first-ever bowl appearance with a trio of offensive stars, including Fields, wide receiver Rashaun Woods and running back Tatum Bell.

OSU jumped out to a 14-7 lead in the second quarter after Bell took a Fields handoff in for a three-yard touchdown.

The Rebels took the ensuing kickoff and drove deep inside OSU territory. On the seventh play of the drive, Manning found flanker Mike Espy for a 25-yard touchdown pass to tie the score at 14-14.

Despite the offensive output, the biggest play of the contest may have come on the defensive side of the ball. OSU drove to the Ole Miss 30 with 4:03 remaining in the half.

On fourth down, the Cowboys passed on the 47-yard field goal attempt. Instead, OSU went for the first down, but Ole Miss defensive end Josh Cooper put an end to the Cowboys' scoring threat by sacking Fields for an 8-yard loss.

Cooper was chosen the Classic's Outstanding Defensive Player after being credited with two key tackles resulting in 11 yards in losses, including his fourth-down sack on Fields. That stop helped the Rebels gain a 17-14 halftime edge when Jonathan Nichols, the Lou Groza award winner, kicked a 33-yard field goal with :15 seconds remaining in the second quarter. After Nichols' kick, the Rebels never looked back.

Ole Miss, making its first SBC Cotton Bowl Classic appearance since 1962, held a 31-14 lead after Manning's one-yard touchdown sneak with 12:32 to play in the game. The Rebels burned slightly over five minutes in clock time to drive 97 yards in 13 plays for what seemed to be a comfortable lead.

The Cowboys were not about to give the game to Ole Miss without a fight. OSU turned to it's most potent weapon that had carried the Cowboys all the way to the SBC Cotton Bowl – the combination of Fields to Woods.

OSU pulled within a touchdown with 4:38 to play after Fields floated the ball just over the reach of an Ole Miss defender and into the hands of Woods for a 17-yard score.

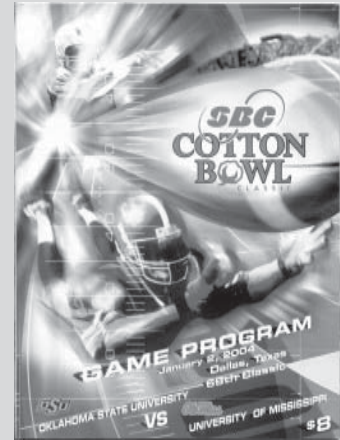
Woods' presence was felt in the Ole Miss defensive backfield all day. The senior wide out collected 11 catches for a Cotton Bowl record 223 yards.

Oklahoma State's defense had to come up with a stop to give the offense one last shot to tie up the game. Ole Miss had other thoughts.

Mississippi's offense converted on three separate third-down conversions on a drive that lasted 10 plays and covered 65 yards. More importantly, OSU could not stop the clock and time ran out on the Cowboys' comeback attempt. The Rebels had won their second Cotton Bowl trophy and the school's first since 1956.

The first-ever meeting between OSU and Ole Miss will forever be remembered not only as the warmest Cotton Bowl in history with a 74-degree temperature at kickoff, but also for the scorching play by two high-octane offenses.

GAME SUMMARY



First Quarter:

Mississippi-Tremaine Turner 16 pass from Eli Manning (Jonathan Nichols kick), 4:55, 75 yards on 7 plays following missed field goal
OSU-Vernand Morency 4 run (Phillips kick), 1:17, 69 yards on 10 plays following kickoff

Second Quarter:

OSU-Tatum Bell 3 run (Phillips kick), 11:30, 44 yards in 8 plays following interception
Mississippi-Mike Espy 25 pass from Manning (Nichols kick), 8:14, 80 yards in 7 plays following kickoff
Mississippi-Nichols 33 FG, :15, 47 yards in 9 plays following turnover on downs

Third Quarter:

Mississippi-Turner 2 run (Nichols kick), 7:35, 58 yards in 9 plays following punt

Fourth Quarter:

Mississippi-Manning 1 run (Nichols kick), 12:32, 97 yards in 13 plays following punt
OSU-Morency 1 run, 8:50, 72 yards in 10 plays following kickoff
OSU-Rashaun Wood 17 pass from Josh Fields, 4:38, 78 yards on 5 plays following punt

OUTSTANDING PLAYERS

Eli Manning, Mississippi
Josh Cooper, Mississippi

COACHES

Les Miles, Oklahoma State
David Cutcliffe, Mississippi

WEATHER

Mostly Cloudy, Ideal, 74 degrees

GAME STATISTICS

RUSHING

OSU - Morency 15-59, Bell 14-46, Willis 3-18, Rylant 1-4, Team 1-(-2), Fields 3-(-15).

Mississippi - Turner 20-133, Pearson 12-42, Jacobs 2-8, Razzano 2-6, Manning 1-1.

PASSING

OSU - Fields 21-33-0, 307 yards.
Mississippi - Manning 22-31-1, 259 yards.

RECEIVING

OSU - R. Woods 11-223, D. Woods 4-51, Bell 2-14, Bajema 1-7, Lindsay 1-7, Morency 1-5, Willis 1-0.

Mississippi - Collins 8-75, Johnson 3-53, Espy 2-47, Lilly 2-30, Turner 2-19, Flowers 2-11, Pearson 1-9, Townsend 1-8, Biddle 1-7.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PUNTING

OSU - Farden 3-37.7.

Mississippi - Ridgeway 3-38.0.