

#23 Utah Defeats Cal 37-27 in SDCCU Poinsettia Bowl

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The Utes were led by freshman quarterback Jordan Wynn, a graduate of Oceanside High School. Wynn lit up the Cal defense most of the night as he completed 26 of 36 passes for 338 yards and three touchdowns earning him the game's Offensive MVP trophy.

After two early first quarter scores by the Bears, the Utes came roaring back as they scored 27 unanswered points to take the lead for good. The Utes took their first lead of the game on a 15-yard touchdown pass to Kendrick Moeai, his second TD reception of the night.

The Utes extended their nation-best bowl game winning streak to nine games with their victory over the Bears. The Bears had their four-game bowl winning streak snapped tonight.

The Utah defense wreaked havoc in the Cal backfield all night, as they sacked Kevin Riley five times, intercepted him twice and forced a fumble.

Midway through the fourth quarter, Cal made one last attempt to bring themselves within one score of the Utes, but their hopes died when Utah linebacker Stevenson Sylvester intercepted Kevin Riley at the 27-yard line and returned it for a touchdown to extend the Utes lead to 37-21 with 5:27 left on the clock. Sylvester finished as the game's Defensive MVP.

The Golden Bears got on the scoreboard first, scoring touchdowns on offense and defense on back-to-back plays midway through the first quarter. Shane Vereen capped a five play, 54-yard drive with a 36-yard touchdown for the game's first score. On the very next Utah play from scrimmage, Cal's Eddie Young intercepted a pass by Wynn and returned it 31-yards for a touchdown.

But Utah didn't wait any longer to get on the scoreboard. After kick returner Shaky Smithson gave Utah great field position after a 61-yard kickoff return, the Utah offense put together a quick 30-yard scoring drive, capped off by a Jordan Wynn 6-yard pass to Kendrick Moeai.

In their first possession of the second quarter, Utah engineered a nine play, 65-yard drive to the Cal 11-yard line before place kicker Joe Phillips kicked a 28-yard field goal to bring the Utes within four points, 14-10. On their very next possession, Utah took advantage of good field position as Wynn led them on a quick eight play, 56-yard drive ending

with Moeai's touchdown in the back of the endzone.

Utah's defense stepped up in the second quarter, as they forced consecutive three-and-outs by the Bears' offense. With the Utah offense out on the field once again, Wynn wasted no time as he completed a 29-yard pass to WR Eddie Wide, and then followed that up with a 21-yard touchdown pass to Jereme Brooks to extend the Utes lead to 24-14.

After a high-scoring first half, both teams relied on their defenses to begin the second half. The Utes and Bears traded possessions without scoring until the Utes kicked a field goal with just over four minutes left in the quarter after Cal quarterback Kevin Riley fumbled as he was sacked at his own 14-yard line.

Cal responded quickly as Riley completed passes of 30, 19, and 11 yards on their next possession to set up a 1-yard touchdown run by Shane Vereen. The touchdown cut the Utes' lead to 27-21 going into the fourth quarter.

The Utes extended their lead to 30-21 early in the fourth quarter on Joe Phillips' 25-yard field goal, his third of the game. The kick came after another long pass play from Wynn, this one a 39-yard strike to David Reed deep into Cal territory.

After pinning the Bears in their own endzone, the Utes defense stepped up as they sacked Riley for a loss two plays before Sylvester intercepted him and returned it for the clinching touchdown.