

Uncharacteristic mistakes end national title dreams

By RICK WEBER
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NEW ORLEANS, La. — Mistakes, penalties, field position problems, lack of execution, specialty team breakdowns... not the kinds of things you would expect from a Penn State football team, especially this year's edition. But they were costly contributors to the 14-7 loss to Alabama that derailed Penn State's seemingly unstoppable national title train.

"We made a lot of mistakes and had some big plays killed by penalties and mental errors — things we didn't do the whole season long," defensive captain Paul Suhey said. "You just can't afford to make those when you're playing a team as good as Alabama."

The initial problem for the Lions was their poor field position. They started their first drive on their own 13-yard line and when they were unable to move the ball, they punted. While Alabama also got stalled on its drives, it was able to pin the Lions near their own goal-line, forcing them to start succeeding drives on the 20, 4, 12 and 20 again. Penn State wasn't executing on offense and the vicious cycle repeated itself over and over again.

Still, the Lions weren't behind. Then, with just 1:11 left in the first half, the Tide took advantage of timeouts called by Joe Paterno and went 40 yards for the go-ahead touchdown.

Some writers questioned the move. Paterno explained that he felt the Lions could stop Alabama, get the ball back, and kick a field goal. In any case, the

Crimson Tide's touchdown was a crushing blow to Penn State.

"You should never let anyone score at a time like that because it's demoralizing to go in at halftime down by seven when you should have been tied," flanker Bob Bassett said.

Bassett said that although the Lions felt confident that the adjustments they made at halftime would get them back into the game, something was missing.

"When we went out the second half, the enthusiasm didn't seem to be there," he said. "I just had a bad feeling going out. You could feel it wasn't there, whatever 'it' is. We walked down and I felt we should be a little more up."

Penalties hurt the Lions badly in the second half. They were penalized five times for 35 yards in the half and most of them were illegal motion penalties. The penalties proved to be even more costly because they sometimes nullified big gains.

Late in the third quarter, the specialty team error surfaced at a most inopportune moment. Penn State had tied the game with a touchdown and was gaining momentum when Alabama's Lou Ikner returned a punt 62 yards to Penn State's 11-yard line, setting up the winning touchdown. The longest punt return against the Lions all season had been just 10 yards.

"The punt return really killed us," Paterno admitted. "We just outkicked the coverage. You can outpunt your coverage and that's what happened."

But if you're looking for the big breakdown, look no further than the

most stunning illustration of Penn State's problems — its inability to bang the ball across the goal-line from the one-yard line on two successive tries with about seven minutes left in the game. Actually, the Lions needed to move the ball just 10 inches on the second try.

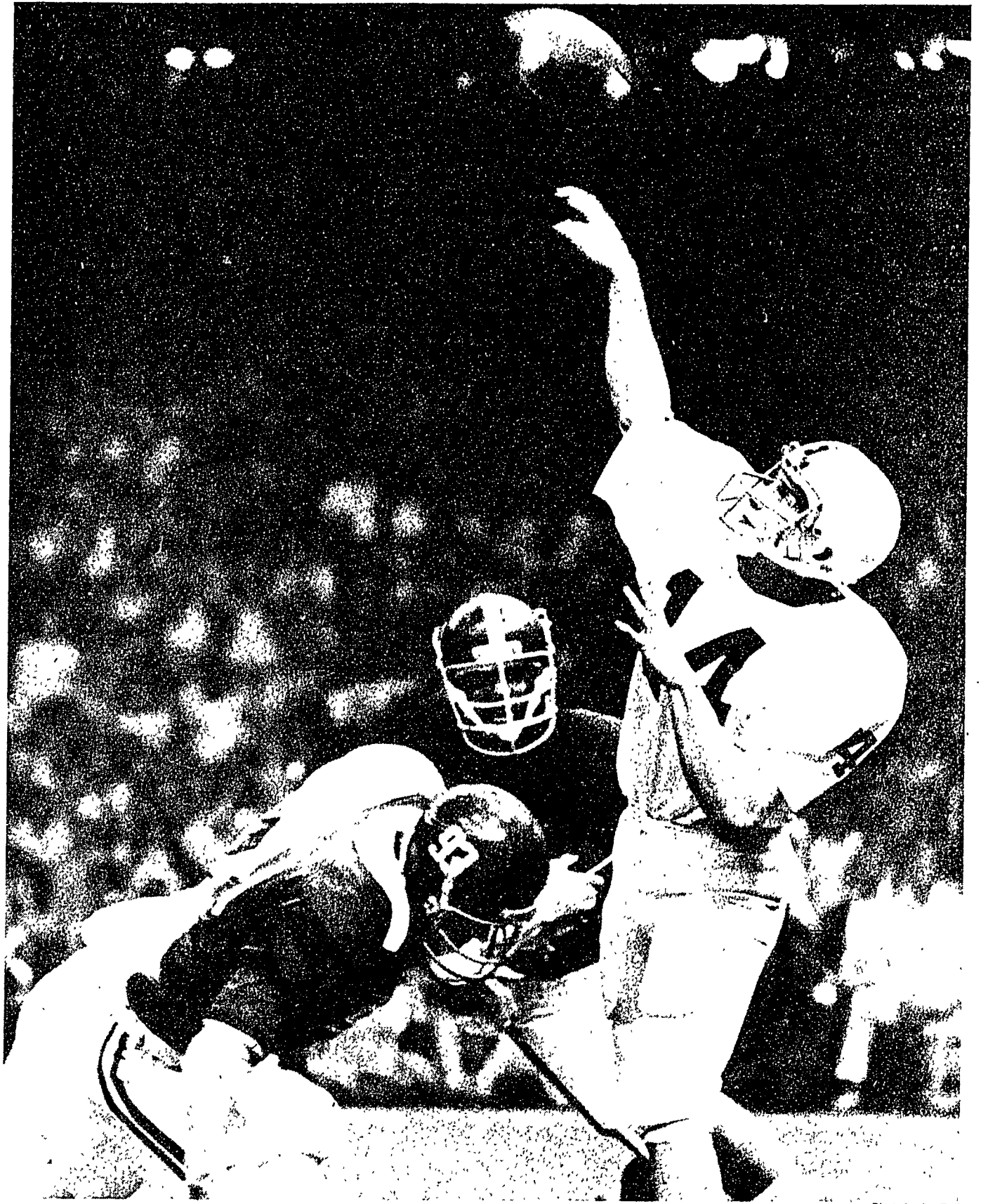
"Alabama just guessed right and pinched everybody in towards the middle, gambling that we would be coming with a dive or a sneak," center Chuck Correia said. "They blew both linebackers up the middle. We just didn't have enough men to block the number of defenders they were sending on those plays."

"I was confident we would do it. I'm always confident when we're that close. But I feel if you can't stymie a defender and blow him back a little bit, you don't deserve to be national champs."

The final error, and maybe the most costly, was a penalty against the Lions for too many men on the field after they had forced Alabama punter Woody Umphrey to shank a punt out of bounds on the Tide 20. The infraction allowed Alabama to keep possession of the ball when State could have had just 20 yards from a touchdown.

That was the culmination of a day of mistakes that were so uncharacteristic of Penn State. A team that had lived by playing flawlessly died by doing the opposite.

"We just didn't play our game," Correia said. "It's just too bad that those things had to happen for us in a game where all the marbles were riding on it."



The usually accurate arm of quarterback Chuck Fusina threw four interceptions. It was illustrative of the Sugar Bowl game where mistakes cost Penn State the national title. Photo by Joe Tori

USC No. 1 in UPI poll; Lions fourth

NEW YORK (UPI) — Southern California is No. 1. Alabama topped previously top ranked Penn State 14-7 in the Sugar Bowl game that was billed as the battle for the championship because the Nittany Lions went into the game ranked No. 1 and Alabama was rated No. 2. The Crimson Tide registered the same number of first place votes as USC — 15 — but failed to achieve as much second place support while drawing 491 points.

Heralded by their own coach, John Robinson, as "one of the greatest teams in USC history," the Trojans edged Alabama by only five points Tuesday in balloting by the UPI board of coaches to capture the national football championship in the closest race staged for the title in 12 years.

By beating Michigan 17-10 in the New Year's Day Rose Bowl, USC

collected 496 points from the 35 coaches, despite a controversial touchdown by running back Charles White, who television showed fumbling the ball just before he went in for the score.

Robinson was proclaiming the national title for USC after the Trojans beat Michigan on the basis of a victory over Alabama earlier this season.

Oklahoma, a 31-24 Orange Bowl winner over Big Eight Conference rival Nebraska, received the other five place votes and 467 points for third place. Penn State not only had a 19-game winning streak halted by Alabama, but slipped to fourth place with 424 points.

Four weeks ago when the regular season ended the teams ranked 1 through 4 were Penn State, Alabama, USC and Oklahoma.

"We're very pleased, obviously," said Robinson when he learned that UPI had picked USC as the national champion for the fifth time. The Trojans previously won in 1962, 1967, 1972 and 1974.

Michigan was picked fifth in the final rankings with 330 points, a sixth place tie was created between Notre Dame and Clemson as each drew 285 points, Nebraska was voted into the No. 8 position on 223 points, Texas was made No. 9 with 200 points and Arkansas was a shade back in 10th place with 199 points.

Houston was picked No. 11 by the coaches as the Cougars headed the second 10 with 145 points, followed by UCLA (106), Purdue (97), Missouri (92), Georgia (61), Stanford (59), Navy (23), Texas A&M (21) and a 19th placed tie at 16 points between North Carolina State and Arizona State.

Trojans tops according to formula

ATLANTA (AP) — Southern California has been selected by The Atlanta Journal to receive the newspaper's first award honoring the top football team in the nation picked by a specially devised formula.

The formula was developed by Dr. John F. Stegeman, an Athens, Ga.,

physician, and it considers point totals, won-lost records, as well as the strength of the schedules and results from news service polls.

Called the Stegeman Cup, it is given in the name of Stegeman's late father, H.J. Stegeman, a former head

coach and athletic director at the University of Georgia.

Second choice was Alabama, followed by Oklahoma and Penn State.

The newspaper said the cup will be presented to Southern California later this month.

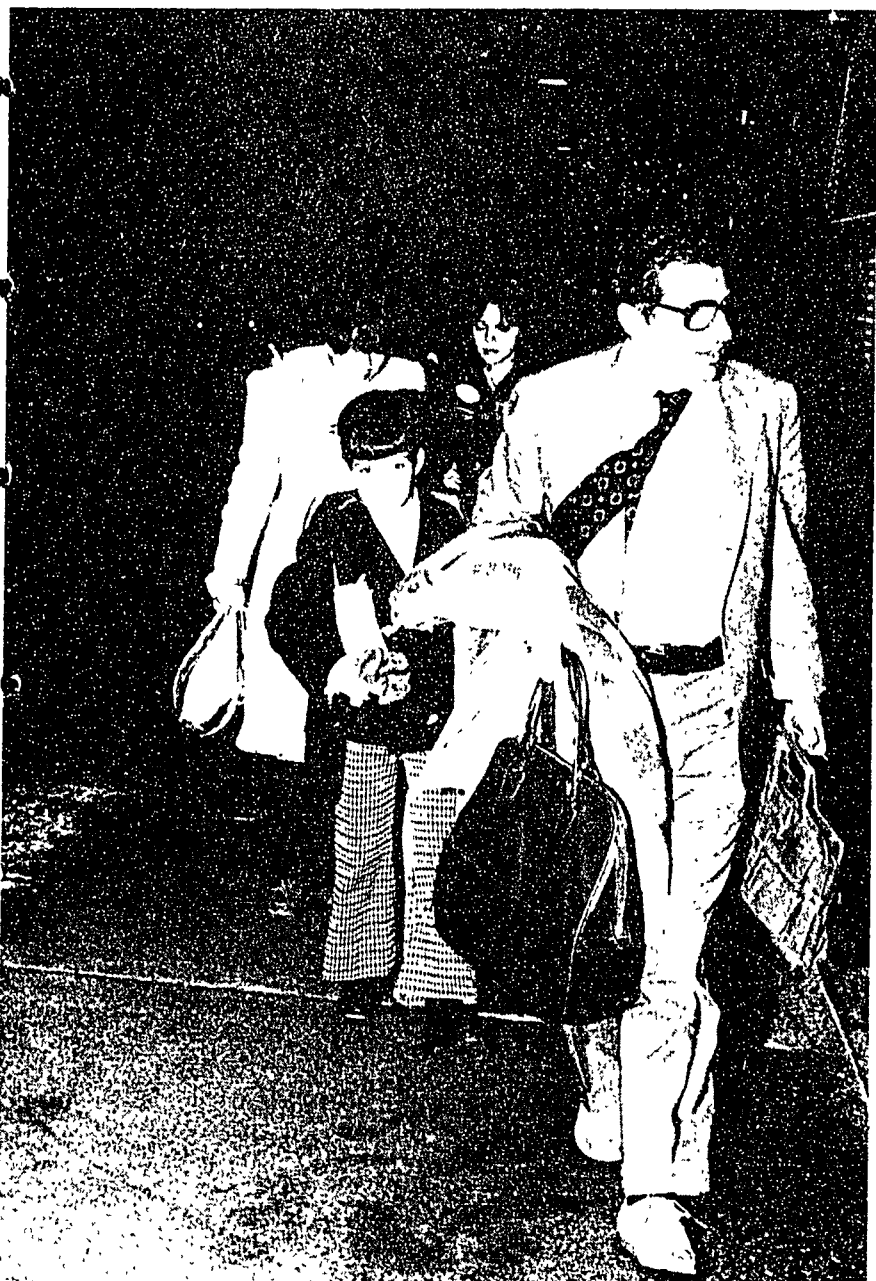
Lions compile only 19 yards rushing

Sugar Bowl stats tell the story

Penn State		Alabama	
First Downs	12	12	
Yards Rushing (att.-yards)	38-19	60-208	
Yards Passing	163	91	
Total Offense	182	229	
Return Yardage	68	146	
Passes (att.-comp.-int.)	30-15-4	15-8-2	
Punts-Average	10-38.7	10-38.8	
Fumbles-Lost	2-0	2-1	
Penalties-Yards	8-51	11-75	
Possession Time	27:00	33:00	
Third Down Conversions	4-17	6-21	

Yards Rushing	
Penn State — Suhey 10 carries for 48 yards; Guman 9 for 22; Moore 9 for 6; Fusina 7 for 64; Torrey 2 for 7; Donovan 1 for 0	for 7; G. Harris 1 and 0 for 1; Ragucci 1 and 0 for 1; Gilsean 2 and 0 for 2; Suhey 1 and 3 for 4; P. Harris 1 and 1 for 4; Jones 2 and 1 for 3; Bradley 2 and 0 for 2; Guman 1 and 0 for 1; Fusina 1 and 0 for 1; Wisniewski 1 and 1 for 1
Alabama — Nathan 21 carries for 127 yards; Whitman 11 for 51; Ogilvie 14 for 40; Jackson 4 for 4; Ikner 1 for 9; Rutledge 1 for 17; Shealy 1 for 6	Alabama — Briggs 4 unassisted and 3 assisted for 7; Gilman 5 and 4 for 9; Hamilton 3 and 4 for 7; Kravsky 4 and 2 for 8; Legg 4 and 2 for 6; McGraw 1 and 0 for 1; Boyd 1 and 2 for 3; Lyons 3 and 1 for 4; B. Smith 1 and 1 for 2; Ogilvie 1 and 0 for 1; J. Jones 1 and 0 for 1; Mauro 1 and 0 for 1; Junior 1 and 1 for 5; McNeal 1 and 0 for 4; Crumley 2 and 0 for 2; Denceo 0 and 2 for 2; Lyles 1 and 0 for 1; Mannah 1 and 1 for 1; Wingo 1 and 0 for 3; Harris 1 and 1 for 2
Penn State — Fusina 15 of 30 for 163 yards (one touchdown)	Alabama — Rutledge 8 of 15 for 91 yards (one touchdown)
Penn State — Bassett 2 for 26 yards; Torrey 1 for 10; Suhey 1 for 2; Pankey 1 for 5; Guman 5 for 59; Fitzkee 3 for 38; Scoville 2 for 21	Penn State — Mehl 2 for 36 yards; Lally 2 for 1; Clark 2 for 10; Ragucci 1 for 4; Millen 1 for 6; Alabama — Hamilton 2 for 17; Bragg 2 for 36; Junior 4 for 10; Legg 1 for 11; Mauro 1 for 9
Alabama — Bolton 2 for 46 yards; Whitman 2 for 27; Ikner 2 for 5; Nathan 1 for 5; Neal 1 for 8	Tackles Intercepted
Penn State — Fitzkee 17 pass from Fusina (Bahr kick)	Penn State — Milot 1 for 55 yards; P. Harris 1 for 0; Alabama — J. Harris 1 for 0; Legg 1 for 0; McNeal 1 for 0; Clements 1 for 42
Alabama — Ogilvie 8 run (McElroy kick)	

Lions return with heads held high



Joe Paterno and his Nittany Lions returned home last night without a Sugar Bowl victory or a national title. But a small gathering of fans were on hand to congratulate the Lions for their 11-1 season and to show them they still loved them. Photo by Bob Fisher

By HARRY GLENN
Daily Collegian Sports Writer

Joe Paterno stepped off the bus in front of the Ice Pavilion, smiling as usual, even though Monday the Nittany Lions lost what had been called the biggest game in his 13 years here.

"We didn't win all the marbles," Joe told a small cheering crowd outside the team's locker room, "but we'll be back up there again."

The team returned to town shortly after the United Press International coach's poll was released. The poll listed the University of Southern California first, Alabama second, Oklahoma third and Penn State fourth. The Associated Press poll of sportswriters will be released this morning.

Paterno said the results of the poll didn't surprise him.

"I'm never surprised with the polls," he said. "I can never figure them out."

Because he says he does not believe in the polls, Paterno does not cast a vote for UPI.

About 50 people were there to cheer for the returning team. Most stood in the rapidly declining temperatures for an hour waiting for a brief look at the players. A crowd also greeted the players in Harrisburg following their return flight from New Orleans.

Most of the Lions smiled as they quickly filed passed the onlookers. But they expressed appreciation for those who did come out.

"This shows that people still believe in you," Mike Guman said. "It's great and really makes you feel good."

"It was nice of them to come out and see us," Tom Bradley said. "We really have great fans."

"It seems like the whole season was lost for a lot of people," Rich Milot said. "The people here show that not everybody feels that way."

The crowd gathered slowly after a local radio station urged listeners to come out and meet the team. Most of the crowd was students, but there were

some town residents there with blue and white shakers, and children with signs and autograph books.

One student supporter said she came even though she is not a football fan.

"I've never been to a game before," Liz Kukielka (13th-film) said. "I just felt the team needed support."

Brian Dell (8th-vocational industrial education) said the team still had a good season even with the loss.

"You're behind them when they win," he said, "so you've got to be behind them when they lose."

It was a quiet trip back from New Orleans as few players said.

"Everybody is in a thinking frame of mind," Bradley said. Most of us are pretty down. It was a very quiet trip."

"Everybody is trying to keep things in perspective," Milot said.

Millen agreed saying, "We lost, but everyone realizes the sun will rise again tomorrow. We still had a tremendous season."

The two hour flight to Harrisburg and the two hour bus ride to State College gave many of the players time to replay the game in their minds.

"Alabama has a fine team," Bradley said, "but we have a better team."

"If we had played a decent game, we would have beat them," Gene Gladys said.

As far as the polls, none of the players were surprised at Penn State's fourth place finish. But most agreed that Alabama should have been voted No. 1.

"I think Alabama should be the national champions," Millen said. "They beat us and we were the best team."

Several players still have some college all star games to play. Chuck Fusina and Scott Fitzkee left yesterday from New Orleans for the Hula Bowl in Hawaii.

For the rest of the team the season is over. For the seniors, college careers are over. But for the underclassmen, there is always next year.

"Tomorrow we begin practice for next year," Millen said.

Few see comeback win by Notre Dame

DALLAS (AP) — It was as though the football gods had decided to reward anyone who had the courage to brave the worst ice storm in three decades and survive a minus eight-degree wind chill factor while sitting on frozen seats.

The 43rd annual Cotton Bowl Classic was a classic.

And the greatest spectator game in its history was witnessed by maybe 10,000 diehard fans at the final gun, clustered like Eskimos in the old 72,000-seat stadium. This was one game when it took spartan soul to just be a spectator.

When Joe Unis kicked the second extra point — it took two because Notre Dame was penalized the first time — to hand the Fighting Irish a 35-34 victory over dazed Houston, it climaxed the most incredible comeback in Cotton Bowl annals.

And the Cotton Bowl, beset by bad weather and a head-on collision with the Sugar Bowl, needed a miracle finish.

Most of the media attention was on the Alabama-Penn State game.

The ice played havoc with the Cotton Bowl parade. For the game itself, there were some 40,000 no-shows, a record for a major bowl. Ice was scraped off the field and dusted with salt.

Then came the bizarre start. Notre Dame won the toss and took the wind. Houston elected to kick.

Then the referees gave the ball to Houston to kick WITH the wind. Notre Dame captain Bob Gogic got that matter straightened out.

Houston jumped to a 34-12 lead and Cotton Bowl officials could hear television sets clicking off not to mention the band of nomads drifting away from the stadium to their cars.

Notre Dame blocked a punt for a touchdown and quarterback Joe Montana ran for another.

Houston Coach Bill Yeoman decided to go for it on fourth-and-one from the Cougars' 29 — and failed — in the final 30 seconds.

Twenty-three points in just over seven minutes — climaxed by Montana's 8-yard touchdown pass to Kris Haines with 0:00 showing on the clock — gave the Irish and the Cotton Bowl an official football miracle.

"The greatest comeback in Notre Dame history," said Athletic Director Moose Krause.

"The greatest comeback in Cotton Bowl history," said Jim Brock of the Cotton Bowl Athletic Association.

Banks leads Duke to big win

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Forward Gene Banks scored 18 points and got seven rebounds Tuesday night, leading top-ranked Duke to a 77-59 victory over Davidson in a non-conference college basketball game.

Banks made nine of his 12 field goal attempts and center Mike Gminski added 13 points and nine rebounds. Jim Sparnackel contributed 15 points for Duke.

Davidson was led by guard John Gerdy with 28 points, the country's third-highest scorer, and center Jamie Hall with 11.

Davidson tried to slow down the game but trailed by 26-19 at the half.