



AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP POSTGAME NOTES

Cincinnati 27, Tulsa 24

Saturday, December 19, 2020

Nippert Stadium

Most Outstanding Player: Desmond Ridder, Quarterback, Cincinnati

Cincinnati won its first American Athletic Conference Championship Game and American football title overall.

Cincinnati finished the season 7-0 at Nippert Stadium, capping a third straight undefeated season at home (6-0 in both 2018 and 2019).

Cincinnati is the fourth home team to win in The American Championship. Houston won the 2015 title, UCF won the 2017 and 2018 titles and Memphis won in 2019 as the host team. Home teams are 5-1 all-time in the championship.

Luke Fickell improved his overall record at Cincinnati to 35-13. The Bearcats are now 31-5 overall since the start of the 2018 campaign and are 13-1 as a national top-10 team.

Cincinnati improved to 7-0 when scoring first this season after logging a 42-yard rushing touchdown on its second offensive series of the game.

Cincinnati moved to 9-0 when leading at the half thus far this season after taking a 17-10 advantage to the break. The Bearcats were the first American champion to lead at halftime since Temple (24-3 against Navy) in 2016.

Tulsa stuffed a fourth-and-2 attempt for Cincinnati at the 5-yard line in the fourth quarter, marking just the fourth time all season the Bearcats were unsuccessful on a fourth-down conversion. Cincinnati entered the game 9-for-12 on fourth down.

Cincinnati K Cole Smith hit a pair of field goals on the night, one from 25 yards out on the final play from scrimmage in the first quarter and a 34-yard game-winner as time expired.

Tulsa was just the fourth team to gain more than 300 yards from scrimmage against the Cincinnati defense this season, racking up 332 yards on 67 plays. The Golden Hurricane netted 166 yards both rushing and passing in the contest.

Cincinnati QB Desmond Ridder accounted for 352 yards of total offense, throwing for a touchdown and rushing for an additional score. On top of his 269 yards passing on 19-of-29 attempts, Ridder gained a team-high 83 yards on 16 carries on the ground to earn championship game Most Outstanding Player honors.

Tulsa won the coin toss and deferred possession to the second half. The Golden Hurricane forced Cincinnati into a three-and-out on the game's first offensive series.

Cincinnati LB Jarell White intercepted Tulsa QB Zach Smith on 1st-and-10 from the Cincinnati 45-yard line in the first quarter. It was White's second interception of the season.

Cincinnati marched down the field on its second drive of the game, going 75 yards on just four plays before Bearcats RB Jerome Ford rumbled 42 yards for a score at 8:56 of the first quarter. It was Ford's seventh rushing touchdown on the year and his second longest rush of the season (48 yards against Memphis on Oct. 31).

Tulsa got on the scoreboard thanks to a 43-yard field goal from K Zack Long with 11:08 remaining in the second quarter. Long has now hit 10-of-13 field goals in 2020.

Tulsa RB Corey Taylor II tied the game at 10 at 8:36 of the second quarter on a 10-yard scoring rush. It was Taylor's third rushing touchdown of the season, capping a five-play, 28-yard drive following a Golden Hurricane takeaway.

Tulsa secured its first takeaway on a strip sack by DE Cullen Wick and a recovery by DT Jaxon Player in the second quarter. The play upped Wick’s sack total to 2.5 on the season and was his first forced fumble, while Player recovered his first fumble of the season.

Tulsa LB Treyvon Reeves stuffed a Cincinnati drive in the middle of the second quarter, dropping Ridder for a nine-yard loss on a third-down sack. The stop upped Reeves’ season sack total to 2.5 and closed the second straight empty possession for Cincinnati.

Tulsa DB Cristian Williams later forced a fumble (first of the season) from Cincinnati WR Tre Tucker that was scooped up by LB Justin Wright (first recovery) in the second quarter.

Ridder broke a 10-all tie by connecting with WR Alec Pierce over the top on a 36-yard touchdown pass with 3:17 remaining in the first half, pushing Cincinnati back into the lead. Pierce closed the opening half with 126 receiving yards on four receptions and his second receiving score of the year, part of his five-catch, 146-yard effort for the game.

Cincinnati DT Curtis Brooks stalled the first Tulsa drive of the third quarter by wrestling Smith down for a loss of six yards on a third-down solo sack. Brooks’ season sack total rose to 2.5 for the season.

Tulsa RB Deneric Prince tied the game once more at 10:05 of the third quarter, scampering in from eight yards to square the score at 17-17. It was Prince’s third rushing score of the season and first since the USF game on Oct. 23.

Ridder raced to pylon for a 10-yard touchdown run to vault Cincinnati back ahead at 7:14 of the third quarter. Ridder’s 12th rushing score of the year closed a six-play, 65-yard march for the Bearcats.

Cincinnati DE Myjai Sanders got loose for a crucial sack to cost Tulsa eight yards in plus territory in the third quarter. LB Darrian Beavers ultimately intercepted Smith on the next play from scrimmage. Sanders added a sack of Smith on the first Tulsa drive of the fourth quarter to equal the championship game sack record of 2.0 set by UCF’s Shaquem Griffin against Memphis in 2017.

Tulsa WR JuanCarlos Santana capped a seven-play, 80-yard drive with 3:41 left in regulation by hauling in a 13-yard touchdown toss from Smith on third-and-8. It was Santana’s fourth receiving touchdown of the season.

Championship Records Set/Tied

Interceptions	1	Jarell White, Cincinnati; Darrian Beavers, Cincinnati
Sacks	2	Myjai Sanders, Cincinnati

Miscellany

Kickoff time was 8:14 p.m. ET/7:14 p.m. CT, and the game ended at 11:46 p.m. ET/10:46 p.m. CT. Game time temperature was 40 degrees, with winds from the south at 5 mph and a light rain. Tulsa won the coin toss and elected to defer to the second half.

#AmericanPow6r#