

1/10/06

How 'Bout Them 'Eers?

by
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Folks, if you'll allow me a little nostalgia and a whole lot of bragging I'd like to gush just a little bit on a subject dear to my heart....**How 'bout them 'Eers????** It took six years to do it but the West Virginia Mountaineer football team finally showed their detractors: They weren't going to be pushed around anymore... They're more than paper tigers... They can win a bowl game. All year long West Virginia, who was picked to finish anywhere from 4th to 6th place in the Big East Conference, has surprised everyone who watched them enter into each football game, destined to lose yet coming out a winner. However, the team that was supposed to finish so low on the totem pole ended up with all the marbles, winning the Big East Conference outright with a record of 10-1 and then shocking the world by beating the "obviously superior" Georgia Bulldogs in the 2006 BCS Nokia Sugar Bowl in Atlanta. Ahhh, if only all football games would be so wonderful.

West Virginia has deserved much of the scorn pertaining to bowl games having won only one of their last twelve bowl appearances and sporting a 9-15 overall record for all their bowl games. Their last victory prior to this year's Sugar Bowl was the December, 2000 Music City Bowl, 49-38 win, over Ole' Miss University. It was also the final game of their much loved coach, Don Nehlen who had spent 21 successful years as the Mountaineers most winning coach.

Coach Rich Rodriguez came on the scene in 2001 and after an expected disappointing first season has taken the 'Eers to a bowl game every year since. Unfortunately, it wasn't until this year that we could claim a win. Judy and I attended the last two Gator Bowl games in Jacksonville, FL, and while we enjoyed the trip and all the hoopla and excitement surrounding a Bowl appearance, WV came up short. We decided not to go to this game, not wanting to jinx the team, and stayed home and watched the game on TV. And, what a game it was. Led by an inexperienced red-shirt freshman quarterback, a true freshman running back, both of whom hadn't started until the 5th game of the season, and a freshman/sophomore loaded offensive and defensive line, WV took the field with a true shock and awe attitude scoring 4 touchdowns to Georgia's zippo before Georgia knew what happened to them.

Of course a team as talented and experienced as Georgia could not be held down forever and they began their move late in the 2nd quarter. They brought their team to within 3 points of West Virginia twice only to have the Mountaineers stubbornly and adroitly score yet again. And with less than two minutes to go in the game, with WV's pass defense seemingly non-existent, Georgia looked to get the ball back one more time, with no time-outs left, and only down 3 points. WV was 4th and 10 near mid-field and lined up in punt formation. Brady, the punter took the snap, faked the punt and ran 12 yards for a first down, and the rest, as they say is history.

West Virginia won 38-35 over an 8th ranked, perennial championship team... a truly great feat and our many fans in the stands and at home, rose as one with a shout heard 'round the world, praising our players and daring anyone to call our team a loser. They had done it... against all logic...David had taken on Goliath and knocked him to the ground... a victor against supposedly overwhelming odds.

So, could this be the beginning of something different for Mountaineer fans in years to come? Let's hope so. With the present team consisting of so few seniors and having a plethora of freshmen and sophomores coming back we should be okay. Yea or nay we can walk tall at least for the next 7 months until the 2006 season begins. Fans everywhere, especially in Florida... Go 'Eeers!

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