



Florida Thwarts East Carolina Comeback To Win Birmingham Bowl, 28-20

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. ---- Florida cornerback Vernon Hargreaves III intercepted an East Carolina pass in the endzone with just over a minute to play, halting a Pirate drive to help preserve a 28-20 victory in the 2015 Birmingham Bowl at Legion Field.

The Pirates, who also played in the inaugural Birmingham Bowl in 2006, were driving for potential game-tying touchdown and two-point conversion, when Hargreaves picked off a Shane Carden pass with 1:20 to go. ECU had all of its timeouts remaining, but the Gators, faced with a third-and-four from their 26-yard line, were able to seal the victory when quarterback Jeff Driskel converted a first-down on a run off a bootleg play.

Driskel began the season as Florida's starting signal-caller but was replaced by Treon Harris midseason as the offense struggled. After Harris was injured in the third quarter of the Birmingham Bowl, Driskel took over as the Florida quarterback.

The Pirates grabbed an early 7-0 lead when Carden connected with wide receiver standout Justin Hardy on a 3-yard touchdown pass with 7:06 left in the opening quarter. Florida tied the game moments later when Brian Poole intercepted a Carden pass and returned it 29 yards for a touchdown.

Just four seconds into the second quarter, Gator running back Adam Lane scored on a 2-yard touchdown run and Florida never trailed again in the game. Lane would finish with 109 rushing yards on 16 carries with one score.

He was named the recipient of the Fred Sington Outstanding Player of the Game award following the eight-point Florida victory. Lane, a redshirt freshman, had entered the game with only eight rushing attempts on the season.

The Gators also struck with an 86-yard touchdown pass play from Harris to Ahmad Fullwood in the third quarter, the longest pass play in Birmingham Bowl history.

East Carolina came into the game averaging 37.2 points per games but was able to score only a pair of touchdowns and had to settled for just a field goal in the fourth quarter.

Carden, who passed for more than 12,000 yards in his Pirate career, finished with 427 passing yards as he hit 34 completions on a school record 66 attempts. Hardy, his favorite target, registered 11 receptions for 160 yards and one touchdown.