

Fort Riley Sports

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Wildcat Quarterback Eli Roberson dives over the goal line at the Fiesta Bowl, making a 14-yard touchdown. It was his 39th rushing touchdown of his career and the 14th of the season.

Buckeyes take party out of Fiesta Bowl

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In addition to ham, cranberries and pumpkin pie, many enjoyed pigskin and turf this holiday season.

Thousands tuned into the 2003 football season's Bowl Championship Series to watch the Orange Bowl, Rose Bowl, Fiesta Bowl and Sugar Bowl Jan. 1-4.

Of those thousands, approximately 37,000 K-State fans attended the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Ariz., as the No. 8 K-State Wildcats battled the defending champions, No. 7 Ohio State Buckeyes, Jan. 2.

The Cats earned their place in the bowl after defeating No. 1 Oklahoma (35-7) and winning the Big 12 Conference Title for the first time in conference history.

Prior to kickoff, opposing fans united, chanting "U-S-A, U-S-A" as the Air Force's Wings of Blue parachute team jumped into Sun Devil Stadium, carrying the U.S. and team flags; and as families of the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy polished the field.

To enhance the patriotic unity, a 100-yard U.S. flag engulfed the field as pictures of soldiers killed in action from Kansas, Ohio and Arizona gleamed from the big screen. Fort Riley's Sgt. Jacob Butler and Joseph Lister were among those honored.

When the flag left the field and fight songs began to play, unity was quickly divided as fans' chants changed from "U-S-A" to "O-H-I-O" and "K-S-U."

The coin was tossed, OSU deferred and K-State began its first BCS bowl game in school history.

With a mixture of boos and cheers, Wildcat Quarterback Eli Roberson and his offensive line took to the field.

Despite an interception by Wildcat Cedrick Williams, it took nearly ten minutes for either team to score during the first quarter.

The first points on the board were by OSU's defensive line, as Buckeye John Hollins recovered Jared Brite's blocked fourth down punt and ran it in seven yards for a touchdown.

The Buckeye Defense didn't stop there. During the first quarter, they held K-State's offense to 8 yards. OSU led at the end of the quarter 14-0.

Chants from KSU fans began to dwindle as OSU brought the score to 21-0 in the second quarter.

The Buckeyes attempted to keep Wildcat Receiver Darren Sproles out of the game by punting short at kickoff, but Sproles got his hands on

the ball with three minutes left in the half and scored the Wildcat's first touchdown. The Cats entered the locker room with a score of 21-7.

It appeared that the tables were going to turn at the start of the second half, as Roberson flew over the goal line tightening the gap against OSU (21-14), but OSU responded with two unanswered touchdowns.

Something sparked the Wildcat offense in the fourth quarter as Ayo Saba and Roberson collected two more touchdowns for the Cats, bringing the score to 35-28.

Although Roberson threw for 294 yards on the day with a career-high 51 passing attempts, the Cats couldn't complete a final pass, and the Buckeyes clenched their second Fiesta Bowl victory.

The Cats end the season 11-4 with a bowl record of 6-6.