

Down to the Wire

Snow College uses late surge, turnovers to top Blinn

YUMA, Ariz. – Turnovers fueled the sixth-ranked Snow College Badgers (10-1 overall) in a comeback win over the 10th-ranked Blinn College Buccaneers (6-4 overall) in the 2017 El Toro Bowl. Snow ripped off 24 points in the fourth quarter to win 43-41 in a game that went down to the wire.

Entering the fourth quarter, Snow trailed 35-19. Snow's Kekoa Sasaoka kicked a 35-yard field goal early in the quarter to trim the deficit to 35-22. Snow forced Blinn to turn the ball over on downs, and running back Jaylen Warren raced to the end zone on a 37-yard touchdown run for a quick score that cut the lead to 35-29 with 8:37 to play. Warren led Snow with 138 yards and three touchdowns on 16 carries.

Blinn quarterback Devin Williams was picked off by Daymon Murray, and Murray took it to the house for a 24-yard touchdown. Sasaoka drilled the extra point to put Snow up 36-35 with 6:46 to play.

Once Blinn got the ball back, Williams threw another interception. Jalen Powell picked it off and returned it to the 12-yard line to set up a short field for Snow.

D'Arman Notoa ran the ball home from four yards out to put Snow up 43-35 with 4:28 to go. Notoa ran for 101 yards and that touchdown on 22 carries.

Williams led Blinn right down the field, and he took it in himself on first and goal from the eight to cut the lead to 43-41 with 22 seconds left. Williams lofted a fade in the end zone for a two-point conversion, but it fell incomplete. After Snow recovered an attempted onside kick, quarterback Shane Johnson kneeled it once to end the game.

Snow took an early 3-0 lead on a Sasaoka field goal, but then Blinn kicked things into high gear. Williams ran in a one-yard touchdown for a 7-3 lead with 4:05 to go in the first quarter.

The two sides traded punts until Snow drove into field goal range early in the second quarter. Blinn blocked Sasaoka's 47-yard field goal, and Keith Watson scooped the ball up and returned it 81 yards for a touchdown and a 14-3 lead.

After forcing a Snow punt, Williams and Sicory Smith powered Blinn's next drive down the field. Williams completed two passes to Smith for a combined 55 yards including the 10-yard touchdown that put Blinn up 21-3 with 10:50 left in the first half.

Snow answered with a quick four-play drive for a touchdown. Warren punched the ball home from two yards away to cut the lead to 21-10 with 9:32 to play.

Blinn went three-and-out, and Snow blocked the punt in the end zone. Blinn fell on the football, but it was a safety that trimmed the lead to 21-12.

After halftime, Snow struck first. After Blinn turned the ball over on downs, Snow had the ball at the 18. Warren raced to pay dirt for an 18-yard touchdown to make it 21-19.

Smith responded by returning the following kickoff 55-yard to the Snow 34 yard line. Williams connected with Smith for a 34-yard score and a 28-19 lead. Smith had seven receptions for 147 yards and two touchdowns.

Notoa fumbled for Snow, and Blinn took advantage. Williams capped a nine-play, 50-yard drive with a touchdown pass to Donovan Banks for a 35-19 lead with 3:14 to play in the third quarter. Williams went 14-31 for 286 yards with three touchdowns and three interceptions. He also added 42 rushing yards on seven carries with a pair of touchdowns.

The El Toro Bowl is one of the top junior college bowl games in the nation. The game has consistently featured top junior college talent and has been the NJCAA Football Championship game twice in the last seven years.