



2017 AUTONATION CURE BOWL

RECAP

Georgia State Posts 27-17 Over Western Kentucky in AutoNation Cure Bowl

GSU quarterback Manning named MVP after totaling 276 yards and one touchdown.

ORLANDO, Fla. (CureBowl.com) - The Georgia State Panthers won the 2017 AutoNation Cure Bowl benefitting the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF), their first bowl game in school history, by defeating the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers, 27-17, on Dec. 16 at Camping World Stadium. GSU senior quarterback Conner Manning was named the Most Valuable Player following the victory.

Playing in their second AutoNation Cure Bowl in three years, the Panthers (7-5, 5-3) relied on their steady defense to stymie the Hilltoppers (6-7, 4-4) and their passing offense that ranked ninth in the nation.

The Panthers came into the game with a defense that had already broken school-records earlier in the season, but they managed to out-do themselves, holding Western Kentucky to a net of negative-two rushing yards.

The defense also combined for six sacks, eight tackles for loss, two forced fumbles and two interceptions on the day, including one that stopped a late drive by the Hilltoppers to seal the win with 38 seconds remaining. The final pass of the game was intercepted by Chase Middleton, a junior linebacker who had a sack, a fumble recovery and six total tackles to go along with the game-ending interception.

Combining with their steady defense, the Panthers utilized a balanced offensive attack. Manning threw for 276 yards and a touchdown on 20 completions. Five Panthers had at least 27 receiving yards, including three who had over 50. Glenn Smith carried the running game with 73 yards on 23 carries, but Demarcus Kirk and Manning also contributed with 59 rushing yards combined.

After seeing little offensive action in the first half from either side, Georgia State got off to a hot start in the third quarter. Already leading 13-10 at the break, the Panthers utilized a trick play that resulted in a 42-yard touchdown pass from Manning to freshman tight end Roger Carter, increasing their lead to 10.

With the momentum on their side, the Panthers' defense stood strong, not allowing Western Kentucky to cross midfield a single time in the third quarter. On the first play of the fourth quarter, the Panthers snuffed out a trick-play attempt from the Hilltoppers, picking off a deep pass from wide receiver Nacarius Fant.

On the ensuing drive, Georgia State put the game away, bleeding off 9:01 on the clock in the fourth quarter as Kyler Neal's one-yard touchdown run capped off a 16-play, 74-yard drive for a 27-10 margin.

The Western Kentucky offense attempted to come to life in the fourth quarter, though, with senior quarterback Mike White leading an 87-yard touchdown drive to bring his team back to within 10 points with just over two and a half minutes to play. After a three-and-out stop by the Hilltoppers defense, the



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offense came back out to the field with a minute and a half to play. Despite the slim chances of making a comeback, White passionately led his offense right back down the field, picking up 55 yards on three plays before throwing the game-ending interception that sealed the deal for Georgia State.

In his first-year as head coach, GSU's Shawn Elliott was able to lead his team to its first bowl victory in just its fourth year of full eligibility in the FBS.

BRINGING TEAM TOGETHER TO FIND A CURE FOR CANCER

- After the first quarter, the AutoNation Cure Bowl presented its annual donation of game proceeds to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) – matching the 2015 record it broke for the largest single donation ever made by a bowl game to a charitable cause.
- Now in its third year, the AutoNation Cure Bowl has donated a total of \$3.3M to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF).
- At halftime, more than 200 associates from AutoNation each contributed a 12-inch fabric square decorated to honor a loved one touched by cancer. Each square was incorporated into a 20-foot quilt, which was carried onto the field by several breast cancer survivors.
- AutoNation Cure Bowl CEO Alan Gooch and members of the Orlando Sports Foundation, which organizes the AutoNation Cure Bowl, were recognized for breast cancer research fundraising efforts during halftime over the last three years by Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs – proclaiming December 16, 2017 as AutoNation Cure Bowl Day in Orange County.

PANTHERS PROWLING ON DEFENSE

- Georgia State totaled six sacks, eight tackles for loss, two forced fumbles and two interceptions.
- In the first half alone, the Panthers had four sacks, two tackles for loss and two forced fumbles.
- The Panthers held the Western Kentucky running game to negative-four yards in the first half, and negative-two yards in the game overall.
- With two sacks against the Hilltoppers, senior defensive end Mackendy Cheridor brought his career number of sacks to 10.5, setting a school record.
- The Georgia State defense was led by coach Eric Fuqua, who was nominated for the 2017 Broyles Award, which is given to the top assistant coach in the nation.

ROAD WARRIORS

- Of Georgia State's seven wins on the year, six came away from home. The Panthers are now on a six-game winning streak on the road.
- At one point in the season, the Panthers went 51 days between home games from Aug. 31 to Oct. 21.
- The Panthers were the only team in the FBS to play four consecutive road games, and also to win three consecutive road games with no home games in between.



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DOING IT WRIGHT

- Kicker Brandon Wright scored nine points for the Panthers on two field goals and three extra points.
- Wright hit a 42-yarder and a 37-yarder on the day.
- Wright's 42-yard field goal was the second longest in AutoNation Cure Bowl history. Matthew Wright of UCF kicked a 45-yard field goal in 2016.
- Only three of Wright's six kickoffs were returned, none of which got past the 22-yard line.

HILLTOPPING THE CHARTS

- Mike White set Western Kentucky's single-season record for most consecutive pass attempts without an interception, increasing the number to 161. The streak started at Marshall on Nov. 11th. The previous longest streak was set by Jeff Cesarone in 1985 with 132 pass attempts in a row without an interception.
- White surpassed 11,000 career passing yards, bringing his total to 11,262. That's good enough to move into the top 60 on the all-time NCAA career passing yards list, finishing up at No. 53 on the list.
- White now has the most completions and passing yards in AutoNation Cure Bowl history. He threw for 351 yards on 26 completions against Georgia State.
- White has now thrown for more than 300 yards in eight consecutive games.
- With 112 receiving yards against Georgia State, Deon Yelder had the second most receiving yards in AutoNation Cure Bowl history. Kendall Sanders of Arkansas State had 127 in the Cure Bowl in 2016.