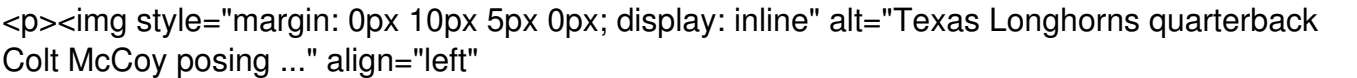


Written by Allan Besselink
Friday, 08 January 2010 23:10

Five plays. That was the sum total of playing time for [Colt McCoy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colt_McCoy "Colt McCoy") during the national championship game. Instead of watching McCoy, the University of Texas senior quarterback, battle Alabama's defense for 60 minutes, his college football career ended abruptly on the fifth play of the first Longhorn drive of the game. Sadly, he was forced to watch his final college game from the sidelines as his team lost to Alabama 37 - 21. It was hard to imagine, almost surreal, that the all-time win leader in college football would end up with this type of career finish. Here is a young man that has given everything to his team and to this program. He had prepared for 4 years to play on the game's biggest stage. Watching his post-game interview was just plain sad.

I can't imagine how Colt is feeling right now, but I do have a few words for him. First of all, a personal thank you for all of the memories. From the first moment you took the field in the void left by Vince Young through each and every one of those 45 wins you have exhibited the highest level of class and sportsmanship while representing the University of Texas. You've brought great joy to all of the fans like myself that have followed you and the Longhorns. Though I have no doubt that this is a very difficult time for you, I know that many good things lie ahead for you. We remember you not for those five plays tonight, but for times like the photo above.

As an aside - yes, there was a game last night. At halftime, the Longhorns staggered into the dressing room down 24 - 6. But they came back to win the second half, 15 - 13 (15 - 7 if you don't count Saban's rub-it-in-your-face-at-the-end-of-the-game TD. More on that later). And for that we can thank the Texas defense, which showed some real toughness and made some big defensive stands. The defense kept the wheels on the cart for the better part of the game. And there was [Jordan Shipley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_Shipley "Jordan Shipley"), quietly collecting 10 catches for 122 yards even after dropping a few.

We did get to take a peek at the future and the future has a name: Garrett Gilbert. The freshman quarterback was pressed into action on the first offensive drive when McCoy was injured. I simply cannot imagine an 18 year-old true freshman, who hasn't even played a full quarter of college football, being asked to step in during the first quarter of the national championship game, against what is one of the best defenses in the country. Holy wet behind the ears, Batman! His first half almost-TD pass to Malcolm Williams (who apparently forgot that if you can get both hands on the ball you really should catch it three times in fact) was right on the money. But in the second half, we got to see what the future holds for the Longhorns offense. And we are in great hands. His 44 yard touchdown pass to Jordan Shipley was epic. And even though most of his receivers let him down all night, Gilbert still kept us in the game. After scoring a couple of touchdowns, the game was 24 - 21. The Longhorn Nation started to think that maybe there was some hope.

Sadly, it was not to be.

What else did we get to see tonight? The national champion accounted for 263 yards Texas, 276 with a freshman quarterback. Speaking of quarterbacks, [Greg McElroy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greg_McElroy "Greg McElroy") had some stunning numbers - 6 of 11 for an awe-inspiring 58 yards. And the Texas freshman quarterback? Gilbert accounted for 186 yards on his own. We also got to witness Nick Saban's true colors again. Alabama gets an interception with 1:45 remaining in the game, up by 10

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points. So what does Saban do? He doesn't have Greg McElroy take a few consecutive kneel-downs to run out the clock. No, that would be the classy thing to do, especially given the storming comeback by the freshman Garrett. No, he punches the ball into the end zone with 0:45 left. None of this surprises me though as Saban has a history of this type of thing. Hey Bama, how long before Saban jumps ship for the next great thing? I give it less than 2 years. So the final score of 37 - 21 really didn't reflect the actual game. And Alabama was, well, far from the level of impressive I would expect from a national champion.

We also got to see the referees side with Bama yet again. This Big East officiating crew apparently needs some review of what exactly constitutes pass interference. At last count, they missed three against Alabama that effectively killed Texas drives. How many times did we see the refs save the Crimson Tide this season? Yes, I know, you can't count that high on two hands.

Nonetheless, congratulations to the Crimson Tide for a solid effort. Would they be the best team in the country if they were in a playoff? Somehow, I just don't think so. Based on what I saw during bowl season, both Florida and Boise State would beat them on any given day - hell, Texas almost did with a true freshman at the helm! Alabama scored a TD off a silly interception of a shovel pass before half, an end-of-game TD that padded the score, and one big 49 yard run up the gut for a TD. Take those away and suddenly, the Crimson Tide look average - much like they have all year. I'll write more on this in an upcoming post when we look at the results of the 2009-2010 December Delirium National Championship.

Nonetheless, and perhaps more importantly, congratulations to Colt McCoy for a tremendous career and so many great memories - and to Garrett Gilbert for stepping up in absolutely incredible circumstances and giving us a sneak peek of the great things that are ahead for the Longhorns. Hook'em!

Photo credit: http://commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Colt_McCoy_-_Fiesta_Bowl_-_Jan_5_2009.jpg

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