

Masthead

Published Sun, Jan 03, 2010 02:00 AM

Modified Sun, Jan 03, 2010 04:37 AM

## Missed FGs sink Pirates

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** -- There will be a time down the road when East Carolina looks back on the success of the 2009 season -- the nine wins, the second Conference USA title and the fourth straight bowl trip -- but in the immediate aftermath of Saturday's 20-17 overtime Liberty Bowl loss to Arkansas, none of that mattered to the disconsolate Pirates.

ECU's normally clutch kicker, Ben Hartman, missed two potential winning field goals in the final 63 seconds of regulation.

Then, after East Carolina received the ball first in overtime, he missed a third go-ahead field-goal attempt.

Arkansas kicker Alex Tejada hit a 37-yard field goal to win the game in overtime to allow the Razorbacks (8-5) to capitalize on Hartman's third miss, from 35 yards, and deny ECU its 10th win of the season and keep the SEC unbeaten (4-0) against C-USA in the Liberty Bowl matchup.

"That's the worst way to lose," ECU running back Dominique Lindsay said.

Lindsay rushed for 155 yards and a touchdown and was part of a large statistical advantage in ECU's favor. The Pirates outgained Arkansas 393 yards to 283, had 24 first downs, compared to 10, and held Arkansas to 0-for-13 on third down.

"For us to come and compete against an SEC team, when no one gave us a chance," Lindsay said, "we felt like we should have that game."

Given a second chance to knock off a Southeastern Conference team in the Liberty Bowl, the Pirates (9-5) failed to close the deal in sub-freezing temperatures, and in front of a sea of Razorback Red in the sellout crowd of 62,742, which made Memphis feel more like Moscow.

Just like last year, a heart-breaking loss to Kentucky, ECU took a double-digit lead into the half but couldn't close out the game. A pair of interceptions by senior quarterback Patrick Pinkney led to 10 quick points for Arkansas and set the table for the end-game kicking woes.

Hartman, who had hit six winning field goals in his career, missed a 39-yard field goal off the left upright with 1:03 left and then missed wide right as time expired.

Even after both misses in regulation, ECU coach Skip Holtz said he was still confident in Hartman, the school's career scoring leader.

"He's the one I would have picked," Holtz said. "When Ben Hartman misses one, you figure the odds are in our favor."

The bitter loss left the Pirates short of their preseason goal of avenging last year's bowl loss and becoming only the second team in program history to win 10 games.

Instead of a signature win over a team from a Bowl Championship Series conference, the Pirates were left with their sixth straight loss to a name-brand opponent.

"All we play for is respect," Lindsay said. "We want respect from everybody else. The program is growing and is on the right track."

A strong defensive performance and an epic 99-yard drive posted the Pirates to a 10-0 advantage at the half, but it was wiped out after Pinkney threw interceptions on back-to-back possessions.

After Arkansas safety Tramain Thomas returned Pinkney's second interception 37 yards for the touchdown, Pinkney responded by hitting Dwayne Harris for a 13-yard touchdown on the next drive for a 17-10 lead.

The Razorbacks, who led the SEC in passing and scoring, finally found their offense. Mammoth quarterback Ryan Mallett, who's 6 feet 7, hit receiver Jarius Wright for a 41-yard touchdown on a quick-strike, two-play drive to tie the score at 17.

Mallett finished 15-of-36 for 202 yards.

ECU's offense produced the game's best drive in the first quarter. Starting at their own 1, the Pirates drove 99 yards in 13 plays, capped by Lindsay's 3-yard touchdown run for a 7-0 lead.

Pinkney (17-for-33 for 209 yards passing) was sharp on the drive, hitting all five of his passes for 73 yards, including a 61-yard hook-up with Darryl Freeney to set up Lindsay's touchdown.

It wasn't enough to offset the end-game kicking woes or send the Pirates' 28 seniors out winners.

Arkansas 20, East Carolina 17 (OT)

Arkansas	0	0	17	0	3 -- 20
East Carolina	0	10	7	0	0 -- 17

## SECOND QUARTER

ECU--Lindsay 3 run (Hartman kick), 7:03. ECU--FG Hartman 33, :53.

## THIRD QUARTER

Ark--FG Tejada 25, 10:41. Ark--T.Thomas 37 interception return (Tejada kick), 9:04. ECU--Harris 13 pass from Pinkney (Hartman kick), 5:52. Ark--J.Wright 41 pass from Mallett (Tejada kick), 5:16.

## OVERTIME

Ark--FG Tejada 37..

Ark

ECU

First downs	10	24
Rushes-yards	20-81	55-184
Passing	202	209
Comp-Att-Int	15-36-0	17-33-2
Return Yards	87	6
Punts	7-35.9	6-39.8
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	2-1
Penalties-Yards	4-25	4-10
Time of Possession	22:05	37:55

#### INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING--Arkansas, Green 11-50, Johnson 4-21, Mallett 1-6, K.Davis 2-3, Wingo 2-1. East Carolina, Lindsay 33-151, G.Ruffin 13-44, Rogers 2-9, Pinkney 7-(minus 20).

PASSING--Arkansas, Mallett 15-36-0-202. East Carolina, Pinkney 17-33-2-209.

RECEIVING--Arkansas, J.Wright 4-90, Childs 3-32, Crawford 2-17, Johnson 2-8, Green 1-17, Adams 1-15, D.Williams 1-12, Hamilton 1-11. East Carolina, Freeney 6-94, Harris 4-64, Bodenheimer 2-15, Bowman 2-11, Lindsay 1-13, Gidrey 1-7, Bryant 1-5.

Att.--62,742.

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