

Flowers-to-McCants propels No. 23 USF past Texas Tech 38-34

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- [Quinton Flowers](#) did it again at the Birmingham Bowl, launching another winning touchdown throw with a game against a Power 5 team on the line.

Flowers threw a 26-yard touchdown pass to [Tyre McCants](#) with 16 seconds left to give No. 23 South Florida a 38-34 victory over Texas Tech in the Birmingham Bowl on Saturday.

Flowers led the Bulls (10-2) to a second straight dramatic victory in the bowl game at Legion Field, throwing for a pair of touchdowns in the final 4:26 after struggling in the first half.

"I was telling myself, I've got to hit my guys in the chest," Flowers said. "I've got to put the ball in their chest and just give them a chance. I just went out there and my coach called the play that I wanted and thank God Tyre did what he was supposed to do and I did what I was supposed to do and we came out with the victory."

The Bulls, who are 21-4 the past two seasons, won last year's Birmingham Bowl on Flowers' 25-yard touchdown pass in overtime against South Carolina.

The Red Raiders (6-7) had taken the lead back with [Nic Shimonek](#)'s 25-yard touchdown pass to a wide-open [T.J. Vasher](#) in the end zone with 1:31 remaining. That left Flowers with plenty of time to work, it turns out.

He ran 13 and 21 yards for first downs, the latter coming on a third-and-10 play. Then he found McCants on their second scoring connection.

The senior passed for 311 yards and four touchdowns. He also ran 14 times for 106 yards and a fifth score. [Marquez Valdes-Scantling](#) gained 133 yards on three catches.

Shimonek took Texas Tech across midfield in the final seconds but his desperation pass on the run was completed well short of the end zone.

Shimonek, who had led a fourth-quarter comeback in the regular-season finale against Texas, completed 32 of 59 passes for 416 yards. This time the Red Raiders couldn't seal the deal.

"That's really exactly what was going through my mind," Shimonek said. "It was almost the same exact type scenario (as Texas)."

He threw for three touchdowns and was intercepted twice on deflected balls.

[Keke Coutee](#) had 11 catches for 187 yards and a touchdown while [Justin Stockton](#) ran for 103 yards.

The Red Raiders set up two touchdowns in the third quarter off fumble recoveries, taking a 24-17 lead. The defense helped preserve the lead with a pair of fourth down stops, including a goal line stand. [Quentin Yontz](#) stuffed [Darius Tice](#) from inside the 1 early in the fourth, but Flowers wound up getting the ball back across midfield.

He cashed in this time with a 5-yard touchdown run to tie it with 9:30 left.

"Defensively, it was stop after stop that we had to go get," first-year South Florida coach Charlie Strong said.

"And even for our offense, they had two turnovers and then they had two big fourth-down stops and our offense just continued to play."

THE TAKEAWAY

Texas Tech: The Red Raiders couldn't translate a 249-130 edge in first-half yards into an advantage on the scoreboard. They converted 10 of 19 third downs.

South Florida: Flowers had a terrific second half after going 4-of-14 passing for 52 yards in the first. He concluded it on a 21-yard touchdown pass to McCants with 51 seconds left to tie it, 10-all. ... Defensive tackle [Deadrin Senat](#) had three first-half sacks for South Florida, matching his season total coming into the bowl.

FLOWERS' RECORDS

Flowers became the American Athletic Conference's career leader in total offense with a 21-yard touchdown pass late in the first half. He broke the mark of 11,431 yards held by Temple's Phillip Walker. Flowers also set school records for career touchdown passes and rushing yards, finishing with 34 school or conference marks.

PENALTIES GALORE: Both teams were penalized 10 times, with Texas Tech flagged for 107 yards and South Florida for 100.

UP NEXT

Texas Tech: Shimonek and leading rusher Stockton are seniors, while all but two defensive starters have eligibility remaining. Coutee is a junior who said he hasn't made a decision on whether to enter the NFL draft.

South Florida: The Bulls must replace Flowers, plus leading receiver Valdes-Scantling and tailback [D'Ernest Johnson](#) on offense and eight starters on defense. Leading tackler [Auggie Sanchez](#) leaves a big hole to fill.