**2020 CAMELLIA BOWL**

**Friday, December 25, 2020**

**MARKS LEADS BUFFALO TO CAMELLIA BOWL WIN**

**MONTGOMERY –** Buffalo running back Kevin Marks gave the Camellia Bowl another fantastic finish.

The junior running back set the Camellia Bowl record with 35 rushing attempts and scored the game-winning touchdown with 1:09 left in the game to give Buffalo a 17-10 victory in the seventh annual Camellia Bowl at the historic Cramton Bowl.

All seven Camellia Bowl games have been decided by one score and the 2020 edition was no different. Marks scored the game-winning touchdown on 2-yard run that capped a 13-play, 88 yard drive that ate up almost half of the fourth quarter clock. It was Buffalo’s only points in the second half.

Buffalo (6-1) began the game-winning drive at its own 12-yard line with 7:27 left in the game. The Bulls marched 88 yards, taking advantage of face mask penalty and converting two third downs on the drive. UB quarterback Kyle Vantrease completed 5-of-6 passes for 61 yards on the drive. Marks capped the drive with his 2-yard touchdown run.

Marks finished with 35 carries for 138 yards and one touchdown en route to winning the Bart Staff Most Valuable Player Trophy. He also caught one pass for six yards. He accounted for 36 of the Bulls 70 plays and 144 of the 295 total yards.

He carried the load for the Bulls in the absence of Jaret Patterson, who sat out the game after an injury in the MAC Championship Game last week. Patterson was the MAC leader in rushing yards (1,072), rushing yards per game (178.7) and rushing touchdowns (19).

Buffalo head coach Lance Leipold said the decision to hold Patterson out of the game was an easy one to make.

“His progression was not as good as we would have liked,” Leipold said. “He did some drills on Wednesday. We talked to his family. He and I talked this morning. We had to protect him as well. He did some stuff early in warmups and did not feel any better. I knew when we arrived it was a slim chance he would play.”

Marshall (7-3) had one last chance following the touchdown. The Herd began the drive at its own 35-yard line and marched to the Buffalo 20-yard line with less than 30 seconds left. A pair of sacks by Buffalo senior cornerback Roy Baker and junior defensive end Eric Black forced a turnover on downs and sealed the Bulls win.

Marshall struggled on offense all day but found itself in a tie game in the fourth quarter. The Thundering Herd only had nine possessions, with five punts and the failed fourth down attempt that ended the game.

The Thundering Herd scored on its final possession of the second quarter and first possession of the third quarter to the game at 10-10. The two scoring drives netted 135 yards. The remaining six possessions netted only 105 yards.

“Offensively we didn’t do much,” Marshall head coach Doc Holliday said. “Give Buffalo a lot of credit. It was a defensive battle all along. Buffalo made a couple of more plays than we did and got a couple of sacks on that last drive. Both teams definitely played hard.”

Marshall took the second half kickoff and drove 60 yards in 15 plays for a game-tying field goal. MU ran nine straight times to the Buffalo 18-yard line. A 9-yard completion and seven-yard run put them at the 1-yard line before settling for a 21-yard field goal by Shane Ciucci with 8:48 left in the third quarter.

On its next possession, Marshall moved from its own 33-yard line to the Buffalo 25-yard line before Ciucci missed a 42-yard field goal attempt that would have given the Herd its first lead.

“We had momentum in first quarter but we did not finish drives,” Leipold said. “We kept letting them hang around, They scored right before half and then to start third quarter and got back in the game.”

Buffalo dominated the first half, statistically, but only led 10-7 at halftime. The Bulls outgained the Thundering Herd, 187-112. The Bulls ran 41 offensive plays, while Marshall ran 22 plays. Buffalo ran 34 of its 41 plays in Marshall territory, while the Herd did not cross midfield until the final drive of the half.

Buffalo found the end zone on its third possession of the game. The Bulls drove 80 yards in 11 plays to take a 7-0 lead. Vantrease capped the drive with a 1-yard touchdown run.

The Bulls put together another 10-play drive on its next possession to take a 10-0 lead. Alex McNulty hit a 25-yard field goal with 5:33 left in the first half. Buffalo entered the game as the only FBS team without a made field goal this season. He missed a 34-yard field goal attempt on the opening drive of game. He was 0-for-2 on field goal attempts entering the game.

Marshall, who managed only 32 yards on its first three possessions, put together a 12-play, 75-yard drive just before halftime to cut the deficit to 10-7 at intermission. MU running back Knowledge McDaniel capped the drive with a 2-yard run. Marshall quarterback Grant Wells was 4-for-4 for 54 yards on the drive. Corey Gammage caught three passes, including a 31-yard catch at the Buffalo 3-yard line to set up McDaniel’s run.

Buffalo was led on defense by linebacker James Patterson, who had nine tackles. The Bulls finished with four sacks, including two by Black and one each from Baker and Kadofi Wright.

Marshall’s defense was led by free safety Nazeeh Johnson and linebacker Abraham Beauplan, who combined for 21 tackles, two tackles for loss and one interception. Johnson had a game-high 11 tackles and one interception. Beauplan made 10 stops, including two tackles (-3 yards) for loss.