

It Isn't Raining in Tiger Stadium

LSU fans should enjoy this run of success while it lasts

September 12, 2012 by Jeff LeJeune

Twenty nine years ago, on September 24, 1983, the LSU Tigers handed the visiting Washington Huskies a 40-14 beatdown not unlike the 41-3 whipping the 2012 Tigers put on them this past Saturday.

The 1983 victory over the No. 7 Huskies before a then-Tiger Stadium record crowd of 82,390 was not unlike the wins LSU had achieved a year earlier in 1982 when they scored huge victories at No. 4 Florida and No. 8 Alabama and a home contest with No. 7 Florida State.

There was something else less inspiring that all these big victories had in common: LSU would lose the following week.

In 1983 the Tigers went on to lose three in a row to Florida, Tennessee, and Kentucky on their way to a 4-7 season in Jerry Stovall's final season as head coach. In 1982 the Tigers followed the huge victories with a tie against Tennessee and losses to Mississippi St. and Tulane, respectively, on their way to an 8-3-1 season.

"It was frustrating," said Alan Risher, senior quarterback of the 1982 team. "Neither the players or the fans knew how to handle success. We'd achieve these great victories but would erase them the next week because we couldn't handle prosperity."

Perhaps the most notorious example of this fall from grace came in 1997 when the Tigers upset No. 1 Florida at home a week before falling to lowly Ole Miss at an energy-deflated Tiger Stadium.

"I didn't play in that one obviously, but I'm glad I didn't. That had to have been the worst feeling," said Risher.

The script is no longer so frustrating for LSU fans, especially under the guidance of head coach Les Miles. One reason for this is that victories over ranked teams are no longer put under a microscope because LSU is now always ranked, usually much higher than the teams they play.

For the record, Miles has led LSU to a 76-18 overall record in the last eight years, including a 31-14 mark against ranked teams, 12-10 against the Top 10, and an NCAA record 39 consecutive regular season victories over non-conference opponents.

Yelled Miles to his team in the locker room before a game: "Today we play for victory because that's what we do!"

And another: "Tonight we dominate our opponent because we came here to do so!"

It's such simple reasoning for Miles. Such basic cause and effect.

LSU football wins just because.

"It's a totally different mindset, a totally different culture now," said Risher. "The difference is that LSU expects to win now, whereas in the past we were *hoping* to beat those great teams."

Indeed, it has become more of a hope for Tiger fans that they not only achieve great individual victories and put themselves in a position to win championships, but also do it while playing near-flawless football. Much of the message board content nowadays doesn't focus on bad losses because there simply aren't that many to discuss. Instead, the focus is on the negatives and mistakes LSU makes while winning.

Even while winning games like the opener when they destroyed North Texas 41-14.

"We rushed for 300 and threw for close to 200 yards," Miles said after the game. "Not too bad. We put 40 points on a team. It was kind of like offense, defense, and special teams had an opportunity to play dominant at times, but really had some sloppy plays."

Unfortunately, it is the "sloppy plays" that too many Tiger fans focus on, especially when they perceive this LSU team as being inferior to an Alabama team that rocked No. 8 Michigan by the same 41-14 score Saturday night.

Tiger fans, especially young ones, would do well to gain some perspective. First of all, things have been much worse in the past when victories over Oregon and West Virginia weren't followed up by more wins like they were last year. Second of all, it's a single game. Fans need to cut out the ESPN talking head mentality of substituting irresponsible, opinion-driven hyperbole in the place of reality and the fact that on any given Saturday, anything can happen. And that includes the very viable possibility that top-ranked LSU can beat anyone on their schedule, even Alabama.

People lose perspective when a long stretch of success is attained in anything, and many LSU fans feel entitled to the success this program is experiencing. They better start enjoying it more. It is not going to last forever. Rest assured, LSU will have a bad year again. Unfortunately, it may take exactly that to wake people up from this illogical mindset that LSU should win every game and win without flaw.