

## LSU Downs Buckeyes 38 - 24, Wins BCS Crown

January 8, 2008

**NEW ORLEANS (AP)** - Well past midnight, Les Miles wanted to make one more stop.

So when the LSU coach left the Superdome, he made a beeline for Bourbon Street. With his wife, he climbed onto a crowded hotel balcony, hoisted a glittering trophy and gave it a kiss.

Let others claim they could've won the crystal football that goes to the BCS national champion. No matter, it belongs to his Tigers.

Matt Flynn threw four touchdown passes and LSU made it look easy Monday night with a 38-24 win over No. 1 Ohio State, turning the title game into a horrible replay for the Buckeyes.

Now the debate begins: Is LSU tops?

"Certainly there will be some argument as to who's the best team. But I think the national champion has been crowned tonight," Miles said. "I have to give great credit to some divine intervention that allows us to be in this position."

In a season of surprises, this was hardly an upset: Ohio State again fell apart in college football's biggest game, having lost 41-14 to Florida last year in the Arizona desert.

But this was unprecedented. Playing at their home-away-from-home in the Big Easy, the Tigers (12-2) became the first two-loss team to compete for the title.

Still, LSU was a runaway No. 1 in the final Associated Press poll. The Tigers received 60 of 65 first-place votes from a national media panel. Georgia, Southern California, Missouri and Ohio State rounded out the top five. Georgia had three first-place votes while Southern California and No. 7 Kansas each had one.

The top six teams in the final AP poll all had two losses and Kansas had one.

Miles received a phone call from President Bush on Tuesday morning, then went to a hotel ballroom to accept

LSU's trophies.

"It's nice that there's no indecision," he said. "It's one national champion."

And it was one wild ride on Bourbon Street several hours earlier, when bunches of reveling fans were surprised to see Miles on a second-floor balcony around 1 a.m.

"There was a time when I thought, as a young man, that would be a great crowd to be in. Right now, I'm glad I was out of the crowd."

At the outset Monday, it looked as if the night might belong to Ohio State (11-2).

LSU rallied from an early 10-0 deficit, taking a 24-10 lead at halftime lead that held up. Two key plays on special teams helped shift the game - Ricky Jean-Francois blocked a field goal, and the Tigers took advantage of a roughing-the-kicker penalty.

Boosted by big plays, the Tigers enjoyed the evening with impromptu mini-celebrations all over the field. Early Doucet and Flynn jumped high to mark one touchdown and Brandon LaFell and Demetrius Byrd did the same after another score. When the game ended, cannons shot purple-and-gold confetti in the air.

Shouts of "SEC! SEC!" reverberated around the dome as the Tigers won their second BCS crown in five seasons. They are the first school to win a second title since BCS rankings began with the 1998 season.

"My team is the No. 1 team in the land," said All-American defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey, who passed up the NFL draft to return for his senior season.

Shortly after it was over, Miles unleashed an ear-piercing whoop, then leaned back and exhaled as if he had been holding his breath all night.

"I just had to do that," he said.

Ohio State had little to cheer after Chris "Beanie" Wells broke loose for a 65-yard TD run on the fourth play of the game. He put on quite a performance, piling up 146 yards and an impressive stiff arm.

"It's unbelievable to know you've failed two years in a row," Wells said.

Jacob Hester bulled for a short touchdown, Doucet wiggled loose for a score that made it 31-10 and Dorsey led a unit that outplayed the top-ranked defense in the nation.

"We just didn't do the things you need to do to win a ballgame of this nature. We're very aware that LSU's a deserving champion," Ohio State coach Jim Tressel said.

LSU, whose two losses both came in triple overtime, became just the fourth favorite to win in 10 BCS championship games. The Tigers added to the crown they won in 2003 under Nick Saban - their other national championship came in 1958.

Miles probably got a little extra satisfaction, too. A month after turning down a chance to return home to Michigan, he did something his alma mater hasn't done recently - beat the Buckeyes.

The loss left Ohio State at 0-9 overall in bowl games against teams from the Southeastern Conference. The SEC delights in whipping Big Ten teams in a rivalry that steams up fans on both sides.

"I can tell you this, the SEC is a very competitive league. It's not a league where you're just going to go into the league and have dominant games week after week after week," Miles said.

Ohio State was trying to win its second BCS title in six years, and add to the one Tressel captured by upsetting Miami 31-24 in double overtime for the 2002 championship.

For sure, the Buckeyes were perhaps the most-maligned No. 1 team in recent memory, with critics attacking them all season. Tressel gave his players a 10-minute DVD filled with insults hurled at them by television and radio announcers, hoping it would motivate his team.

"To have the opportunity - whether we deserved it or not - to come back to the national championship game is always an honor," Ohio State wide receiver Brian Hartline said.

The Buckeyes will face a tough hurdle in making it back next season. Early in the season, they play USC.

Flynn finished 19-for-27 for 174 yards and was picked the game's most outstanding offensive player. LSU quarterbacks spend a lot of time with an Xbox, playing a custom-made video game to read defenses. Apparently, what worked on the screen did even better on the field.

"We had a chance early and a chance later," All-American linebacker James Laurinaitis said. LSU just made too many plays."