

CHEEZ-IT BOWL
WASHINGTON ST vs AIR FORCE

Air Force tops Washington State 31-21 at Cheez-It Bowl

PHOENIX -- Air Force clung to a three-point lead, the clock showing plenty of time left for one of the nation's most prolific offenses.

A field goal was not going to be good enough. The Falcons needed a touchdown to leave Washington State no chance.

Going for it on fourth down was the only option -- and it worked.

Kadin Remsberg ran for 178 yards and stretched to the pylon for a 3-yard touchdown on a late fourth down, lifting No. 24 Air Force to a 31-21 victory over Washington State in the Cheez-It Bowl on Friday night.

"A tad bit was a gut feeling, but you're also thinking situationally," Air Force coach Troy Calhoun said. "You see it as was an opportunity to make it a two-score game and Kade made a big-time play."

The Falcons (11-2) had their triple option working to near perfection, grinding out 371 yards rushing while setting a Cheez-It Bowl time of possession record of 43:24.

Donald Hammond III scored two touchdowns and Air Force carried a 10-point lead into the fourth quarter, yet couldn't shake the high-scoring Cougars.

Anthony Gordon, the FBS passing leader, kept Washington State within reach, throwing for 351 yards and three touchdowns. He hit Brandon Arconado on a 13-yard TD to pull Washington State (6-7) within 24-21 late in the fourth quarter, giving the Cougars a shot at the comeback finish.

Air Force methodically worked the ball down to Washington State's 4-yard line, but failed to punch the ball into the end zone on three tries. After a timeout, Hammond ran an option left and pitched the ball to Remsberg, who got the edge and reached the ball to the pylon with a defender draping him. The touchdown was upheld on review.

"I knew I had to score and I was going to do everything I could to get into the end zone," Remsberg said. "I felt like I had the touchdown."
The 2018 game was dubbed the Cheez-INT Bowl after TCU and California combined for nine interceptions.

A year later, Air Force and Washington State brought philosophical differences to the desert. The Falcons like to stay grounded, running 57 times a game while finishing third in the FBS at 292.5 yards per game.

The Cougars love to fly, putting it up 56 times a game to lead the nation with nearly 450 yards a game.

Washington State started the Cheez-It Bowl quickly, racing down the field with a series of completions, only to get stuffed by an Air Force goal-line stand.

The Falcons' opening drive was a yard-churning, clock-winding grind, covering 98 yards in 20 plays and 12:23. Hammond capped it with a 1-yard TD run.

Air Force's next two drives took less time combined than the first, ending in Jake Koehnke's 28-yard field goal and Taven Birdow's 3-yard run after Gordon lost a fumble at Washington State's 23.

"We just couldn't get off the field," Washington State coach Mike Leach said.

The Cougars had two more quick-hitting drives to pull within 17-14 at halftime on Gordon's two TD passes.

Air Force went right back to the ground to open the second half; 13 plays, 75 yards, capped by Hammond's 7-yard TD run.

Washington State had another fourth-down failure, this one at Air Force's 5-yard line, but bounced back quickly with Gordon's TD pass to Arconado.

The Cougars just couldn't stop Air Force and Remsberg's diving TD run capped another long scoring drive to seal it.

"Our whole goal for the defensive front was to collapse the middle to make them bounce it out," Washington State defensive lineman Misiona Aiolutopea-Pei said. "We were unable to to keep our pads low and make plays."

THE TAKEAWAY

Air Force won the line of scrimmage and its 11th game of the season, second only to 12-win seasons in 1985 and 1998.

Washington State was hurt by the two failed fourth downs and its inability to decipher Air Force's triple option.

FOURTH-DOWN DECISIONS

Leach has been known as a gambler on fourth downs, often preferring to go for it over punting or kicking field goals. He stuck by his decisions at the Cheez-It Bowl, even though neither worked.

"I believed we'd get it. We have all year, for the most part," he said. "I know Air Force goes for it a lot, but there's those who think we invented going for it."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
AFA	0	17	7	7	31
WSU	0	14	0	7	21

Scoring Summary -----

SECOND QUARTER	AFA	WSU
AFA TD 14:52 Donald Hammond III 1 Yd Run (Jake Koehnke Kick)		
20 plays, 98 yards, 12:23	7	0
WSU TD 10:43 Dezmon Patmon 2 Yd pass from Anthony Gordon (Blake Mazza Kick)		
11 plays, 74 yards, 4:09	7	7
AFA FG 3:39 Jake Koehnke 28 Yd Field Goal		
15 plays, 65 yards, 7:04	10	7
AFA TD 1:19 Taven Birdow 3 Yd Run (Jake Koehnke Kick)		
4 plays, 23 yards, 2:08	17	7
WSU TD 0:24 Max Borghi 5 Yd pass from Anthony Gordon (Blake Mazza Kick)		
5 plays, 75 yards, 0:55	17	14
third Quarter	AFA	WSU
AFA TD 8:19 Donald Hammond III 7 Yd Run (Jake Koehnke Kick)		
13 plays, 75 yards, 6:41	24	14
fourth Quarter	AFA	WSU
WSU TD 9:59 Brandon Arconado 13 Yd pass from Anthony Gordon (Blake Mazza Kick)		
4 plays, 31 yards, 1:16	24	21
AFA TD 3:50 Kadin Remsberg 3 Yd Run (Jake Koehnke Kick)		
10 plays, 60 yards, 6:09	31	21

Team Stats	AFA	WSU
First Downs	28	15
Passes for First	0	14
Rushes for First	27	1
Penalties for First	1	0
Third Down Efficiency	4-11	3-9
Fourth Down Efficiency	3-3	2-5
Total Yards	401	366
Total Plays	81	50
Avg Gain Per Play	5.0	7.3
Net Yards Rushing	371	15
Rushes	69	8
Yards Per Rush	5.4	1.9
Net Yards Passing	30	351
Comp-Att	4-12	28-42
Yards Per Pass	2.5	8.4
Times Sacked	0	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-15
Interceptions	1	0
Punts	2	1
Punt Average	38.0	46.0
Penalties	2	3
Penalty Yards	20	45
Fumbles	2	1
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Time of Poss	43:24	16:36

Individual Stats

RUSHING

AIR FORCE	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Kadin Remsberg	26	178	6.8	1	22
Taven Birdow	20	108	5.4	1	13
Donald Hammond III	15	62	4.1	2	9
Christian Mallard	5	17	3.4	0	6
Nolan Eriksen	1	8	8.0	0	8
Team	2	-2	-1.0	0	0
WASHINGTON ST	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Max Borghi	6	27	4.5	0	17
Anthony Gordon	2	-12	-6.0	0	0

PASSING

AIR FORCE	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Donald Hammond	4	12	30	2.5	0	1	49.0
WASHINGTON ST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Anthony Gordon	28	42	351	8.4	3	0	80.7

RECEIVING

AIR FORCE	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Benjamin Waters	2	12	6.0	0	10
Geraud Sanders	1	10	10.0	0	10
Ben Peterson	1	8	8.0	0	8
WASHINGTON ST	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Brandon Arconado	11	167	15.2	1	30
Davontavean Martin	1	58	58.0	0	58
Easop Winston Jr.	5	43	8.6	0	13
Max Borghi	5	31	6.2	1	10
Renard Bell	2	27	13.5	0	23
Dezmon Patmon	3	22	7.3	1	16
Travell Harris	1	3	3.0	0	3