

HAWAII BOWL
HAWAII VS LOUISIANA TECH

HONOLULU -- Skip Holtz felt the need to refocus his players after they spent the better part of a week in paradise.

The sixth-year Louisiana Tech coach dressed down his team one night before the bowl game and it certainly appeared to pay off.

J'Mar Smith threw a touchdown pass and ran for another score in a big third quarter to lead Louisiana Tech to a 31-14 win over Hawaii in the Hawaii Bowl on Saturday night.

The Bulldogs (8-5) rallied from a 7-3 halftime deficit to secure their fifth bowl victory in as many seasons, a program first.

"I got a little bit upset (Friday) night, got a little emotional last night because I felt like we were here for vacation and the bowl game, not for the win, and I was wrong. These guys flipped the switch, they went out there and they played their tails off," Holtz said.

Defensive end Jaylon Ferguson, who had 2 1/2 sacks to become the NCAA's career leader, said Holtz's fiery talk ignited the Bulldogs.

"We thought it was just a typical meeting but he turned it up on us. He turned it all the way around on us," Ferguson said. "Being in Hawaii and waking up to the ocean view is relaxing, to be honest, and it felt like everybody was a little too relaxed. But after last night we were all dialed up. Me and my roommate, we stayed up and talked about it all night. We all knew Coach was upset. We know we came here to win. We know he wants to win, and everything that was said wasn't negative at all, it was to encourage us."

Smith threw for 285 yards on 19-of-31 passing with an interception. He tossed a 58-yard touchdown to Jaqwis Dancy and scored on a 4-yard run that was part of a 21-point third quarter.

Louisiana Tech took the lead for good on Israel Tucker's 5-yard TD run with 10:27 left in the third.

"In the first half I thought our defense played their tails off. Our offense had three turnovers, we shot ourselves in the foot, we had a number of foolish penalties, we just kept kind of shooting ourselves in the foot. But we came out in the second half, we kept banging that rock and the defense played 60 minutes. I'm proud of these guys, the way they came in, the way they competed," Holtz said.

Ferguson set the sacks record when he dropped Hawaii quarterback Chevan Cordeiro for a 2-yard loss late in the third quarter.

"The play that it happened on wasn't by me, but created by the effort on the back end," said Ferguson, who finished the season with 17 1/2 sacks.

His 45 career sacks broke the previous mark set by Arizona State's Terrell Suggs.

"Coming into the game, that wasn't my goal. The goal was to win the game in Hawaii. I could have had zero sacks tonight as long as we won the game," said Ferguson, selected MVP of the game along with Hawaii defensive end Kendall Hune.

Hawaii played without wide receiver John Ursua, who leads the nation with 16 touchdown catches. Ursua, sidelined with an undisclosed injury, was ruled out just minutes before the start of the game.

The Bulldogs had a Hawaii Bowl-record nine sacks, four by Willie Baker. Amik Robertson had two of their three interceptions.

It was the most sacks allowed in a game by Hawaii.

"They're really good," Hawaii coach Nick Rolovich said of Louisiana Tech's defensive line. "I think that's the best defensive front we've seen. They can get home with three (pass rushers), they can get home with four, they're an extremely talented group and I think they were motivated today."

The Rainbow Warriors (8-6) were just 2 of 14 on third down and got penalized 12 times for 140 yards.

Hawaii is 6-6 in bowl games and 4-4 in the Hawaii Bowl. The Rainbow Warriors lead the series against Louisiana Tech 8-3.

THE TAKEAWAY

Louisiana Tech: The Bulldogs entered with the 28th-best pass defense in the country, allowing just 193.6 yards per game. They held Hawaii's ninth-ranked passing offense to 168 yards, well below its average of 321.2 yards. Three of four starters in the secondary will be back for Louisiana Tech next season.

Hawaii: While the Rainbow Warriors were denied their second Hawaii Bowl victory in three seasons, they still improved by five wins from last year's 3-9 record and finished with the program's first winning season since 2010. All but three of 22 starters are expected to return next year.

"I think eight wins is a very encouraging step for this program, but we don't feel very good right now," Rolovich said. "When you take a step back and think about what this team has done, I think that there's a lot of positives."

A HAPPY RETURN

While it was the Bulldogs' first appearance in the Hawaii Bowl, it was Holtz's second win in two trips to the postseason game. He previously coached East Carolina to a 41-38 victory over Boise State in the 2007 Hawaii Bowl.

"I had the opportunity to bring one other team out here and I said to these players that this is a once-in-a-lifetime trip and we have the opportunity to make this trip and it will be a lifetime of memories," Holtz said.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
HAW	0	7	0	7	14
LT	3	0	21	7	31

Scoring Summary -----

FIRST QUARTER		HAW	LT
LT	FG 1:08		
Bailey Hale 24 Yd Field Goal			
9	plays, 44 yards, 3:04	0	3
SECOND QUARTER		HAW	LT
HAW	TD 8:20		
Jason-Matthew Sharsh 24 Yd pass from Chevan Cordeiro (Ryan Meskell Kick)			
7	plays, 71 yards, 3:21	7	3
THIRD QUARTER		HAW	LT
LT	TD 10:27		
Israel Tucker 5 Yd Run (Bailey Hale Kick)			
3	plays, 51 yards, 0:32	7	10
LT	TD 4:44		
Jaqwis Dancy 58 Yd pass from J'Mar Smith (Bailey Hale Kick)			
7	plays, 92 yards, 2:55	7	17
LT	TD 0:55		
J'Mar Smith 4 Yd Run (Bailey Hale Kick)			
4	plays, 65 yards, 2:05	7	24
FOURTH QUARTER		HAW	LT
HAW	TD 6:14		
Marcus Armstrong-Brown 7 Yd pass from Cole McDonald (Ryan Meskell Kick)			
7	plays, 38 yards, 2:39	14	24
LT	TD 3:45		
Kam McKnight 39 Yd Run (Bailey Hale Kick)			
6	plays, 65 yards, 2:29	14	31

Team Stats	HAW	LT
First Downs	21	17
Total Yards	453	226
Total Plays	69	66
Avg Gain Per Play	6.6	3.4
Net Yards Rushing	168	58
Rushes	38	32
Yards Per Rush	4.4	1.8
Net Yards Passing	285	168
Comp-Att	19-31	17-34
Yards Per Pass	9.2	4.9
Times Sacked	3	9
Yds Lost To Sacks	-17	-46
Interceptions	1	3
Punts	4	9
Punt Average	31.8	39.9
Penalties	9	12
Penalty Yards	99	140
Fumbles	2	1
Fumbles Lost	2	0
Possession	29:23	30:37

Individual Stats

RUSHING

HAW	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
23 Jaqwis Dancy	15	57	3.8	13	0
22 Israel Tucker	10	44	4.4	9	1
15 Kam McKnight	2	38	19.0	39	1
8 J'mar Smith	7	21	3.0	25	1
4 Alfred Smith	1	16	16.0	16	0
14 Praise Okorie	1	-5	-5.0	0	0
LT	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
21 Fred Holly III	9	57	6.3	21	0
7 Dayton Furuta	3	9	3.0	7	0
29 Genta Ito	2	8	4.0	5	0
26 Miles Reed	1	4	4.0	4	0
12 Chevan Cordeiro	7	-9	-1.3	14	0
13 Cole McDonald	10	-11	-1.1	5	0

PASSING

HAW	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
8 J'mar Smith	19	31	285	9.2	1	1	142.7
LT	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
13 Cole McDonald	10	20	85	4.3	1	2	82.2
12 Chevan Cordeiro	7	14	83	5.9	1	1	109.1

RECEIVING

HAW	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
9 Teddy Veal	8	107	13.4	41	0
6 Adrian Hardy	6	93	15.5	54	0
23 Jaqwis Dancy	2	63	31.5	58	1
4 Alfred Smith	2	14	7.0	9	0
22 Israel Tucker	1	8	8.0	8	0
LT	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
89 Jason-Matthew Sharsh	5	67	13.4	24	1
85 Marcus Armstrong-Brown	7	59	8.4	16	1
6 Cedric Byrd	3	31	10.3	22	0
29 Genta Ito	1	6	6.0	6	0
7 Dayton Furuta	1	5	5.0	5	0