

**BOCA RATON BOWL
UAB VS NORTHERN ILLINOIS**

BOCA RATON, Fla. -- Two seasons after shutting down its football program, UAB closed out the year on an electrifying note.

Tyler Johnston III threw for 373 yards and four touchdowns, three of them to Xavier Ubosi, and UAB beat Northern Illinois 37-13 in the Boca Raton Bowl on Tuesday night.

Ubosi had seven catches for 227 yards for the Conference USA champion Blazers (11-3), who got their first-ever bowl victory in three appearances. UAB played in its second consecutive bowl since the program was reinstated after the self-imposed hiatus.

"I guess in our wildest dreams we dreamed of winning a conference championship and then cap it off with a bowl win, so it's really that sweet," UAB coach Bill Clark said. "I don't think it could have gone any better for us, so I'm very proud."

Northern Illinois (8-6), the Mid-American Conference champion, has lost six consecutive bowl games since beating Arkansas in the 2012 GoDaddy.com Bowl.

"It really comes down to three things. We gave up three touchdowns on three deep balls," NIU coach Rod Carey said. "Old-fashioned go routes. Give those guys credit. They ran by us. They threw it, caught it. That's the difference. If not, it's 16-13. In the fourth quarter, I like our chances.

"We have to own it as coaches. We have to own it as players. We didn't coach good enough. We didn't play good enough. Thirteen points isn't winning football. Bummer."

Johnston, who took over the starting job for the injured A.J. Erdely at midseason, set career highs in passing yards and touchdown passes, and Ubosi's 227 yards were the third-most receiving in a game in school history. Ubosi came into the game ranked second in the country at 21.8 yards per catch, and his TD receptions covered 70, 46 and 66 yards.

"I'm surprised but at the same time you work for it," Ubosi said. "Just practice hard and whatever you do in practice you'll do in the game."

All-American Spencer Brown, who entered with 1,167 rushing yards and a school-record 16 touchdowns, caught a 3-yard shovel pass for a score and had 78 yards on the ground.

UAB's 10th-ranked defense harassed Huskes quarterback Marcus Childers, sacking him five times and forcing two fumbles (one lost). He finished 22 of 29 for 179 yards and had 35 yards rushing on 18 carries. NIU led the nation with 50 sacks, but never got to Johnston.

Johnston hit Ubosi in stride for a 70-yard TD just 18 seconds after the opening kickoff.

"It made it easier for me," Johnston said. "Everyone wants to score on the first play of the game. I trusted (Ubosi). He said, 'Just put it in front of me and I'll go get it.'"

After a penalty on a punt gave the Blazers a fourth-and-1 opportunity that they converted, the duo connected again with 5:11 remaining in the first half for a 24-10 lead.

The Huskies cut it to 27-13 early in the third, but a little over two minutes later, Johnston found Ubosi down the sideline for his third score.

Nick Vogel kicked three field goals for UAB.

"We talk a lot about making history," Clark said. "We talked about it with Tyler and Xavier and we knew we were going to make history. We wanted to finish."

Carey said the loss shouldn't blemish the careers of his senior class.

"It's a reward for a championship team," Carey said. "We want to win. Don't get me wrong. I'm not going to let the narrative be about me. You want to write I'm 0-6 in bowl games, I could take that. I'm a big boy. But that's not what it's about."

| Final | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | T |
|-------|----|----|----|---|----|
| UAB | 10 | 17 | 10 | 0 | 37 |
| NIU | 7 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 13 |

Scoring Summary -----

| | UAB | NIU |
|--|-----|-----|
| FIRST QUARTER | | |
| UAB TD 14:42 Xavier Ubosi 70 Yd pass from Tyler Johnston III (Nick Vogel Kick) 1 play, 70 yards, 0:18 | 7 | 0 |
| UAB FG 8:08 Nick Vogel 25 Yd Field Goal 13 plays, 70 yards, 5:41 | 10 | 0 |
| NIU TD 0:30 Tre Harbison 1 Yd Run (Andrew Gantz Kick) 9 plays, 59 yards, 3:53 | 10 | 7 |
| SECOND QUARTER | | |
| UAB TD 12:08 Spencer Brown 3 Yd pass from Tyler Johnston III (Nick Vogel Kick) 8 plays, 54 yards, 3:22 | 17 | 7 |
| NIU FG 7:41 Andrew Gantz 27 Yd Field Goal 12 plays, 65 yards, 4:27 | 17 | 10 |
| UAB TD 5:11 Xavier Ubosi 46 Yd pass from Tyler Johnston III (Nick Vogel Kick) 7 plays, 75 yards, 2:30 | 24 | 10 |
| UAB FG 0:00 Nick Vogel 35 Yd Field Goal 6 plays, 13 yards, 2:21 | 27 | 10 |
| THIRD QUARTER | | |
| NIU FG 7:38 Andrew Gantz 21 Yd Field Goal 16 plays, 71 yards, 7:22 | 27 | 13 |
| UAB TD 5:15 Xavier Ubosi 66 Yd pass from Tyler Johnston III (Nick Vogel Kick) 6 plays, 87 yards, 2:23 | 34 | 13 |
| UAB FG 0:22 Nick Vogel 42 Yd Field Goal 8 plays, 40 yards, 3:11 | 37 | 13 |

| Team Stats | UAB | NIU |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| First Downs | 20 | 21 |
| Total Yards | 476 | 287 |
| Total Plays | 65 | 73 |
| Avg Gain Per Play | 7.3 | 3.9 |
| Net Yards Rushing | 103 | 108 |
| Rushes | 36 | 44 |
| Yards Per Rush | 2.9 | 2.5 |
| Net Yards Passing | 373 | 179 |
| Comp-Att | 17-29 | 22-29 |
| Yards Per Pass | 12.9 | 6.2 |
| Times Sacked | 0 | 5 |
| Yds Lost To Sacks | 0 | -27 |
| Interceptions | 1 | 0 |
| Punts | 2 | 3 |
| Punt Average | 32.0 | 47.0 |
| Penalties | 10 | 4 |
| Penalty Yards | 79 | 25 |
| Fumbles | 0 | 3 |
| Fumbles Lost | 0 | 2 |
| Possession | 28:08 | 31:52 |

Individual Stats

RUSHING

| UAB | Rush | Yds | Avg | Long | TD |
|-----------------------|------|-----|------|------|----|
| 28 Spencer Brown | 25 | 78 | 3.1 | 11 | 0 |
| 17 Tyler Johnston III | 10 | 28 | 2.8 | 10 | 0 |
| 16 Werlean Pollock | 1 | -3 | -3.0 | 0 | 0 |

| NIU | Rush | Yds | Avg | Long | TD |
|--------------------|------|-----|-----|------|----|
| 22 Tre Harbison | 18 | 49 | 2.7 | 12 | 1 |
| 15 Marcus Childers | 18 | 35 | 1.9 | 19 | 0 |
| 5 Jaden Huff | 3 | 15 | 5.0 | 9 | 0 |
| 21 Marcus Jones | 2 | 4 | 2.0 | 3 | 0 |
| 9 Jauan Wesley | 1 | 2 | 2.0 | 2 | 0 |
| 28 Jordan Nettles | 1 | 2 | 2.0 | 1 | 0 |
| 10 D.J. Brown | 1 | 1 | 1.0 | 1 | 0 |

PASSING

| UAB | Comp | Att | Yds | Y/A | TD | Int | QBRat |
|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|------|----|-----|-------|
| 17 Tyler Johnston III | 17 | 29 | 373 | 12.9 | 4 | 1 | 205.3 |
| NIU | Comp | Att | Yds | Y/A | TD | Int | QBRat |
| 15 Marcus Childers | 22 | 29 | 179 | 6.2 | 0 | 0 | 127.7 |

RECEIVING

| UAB | Rec | Yds | Avg | Long | TD |
|-------------------|-----|-----|------|------|----|
| 7 Xavier Ubosi | 7 | 227 | 32.4 | 70 | 3 |
| 13 Collin Lisa | 4 | 64 | 16.0 | 28 | 0 |
| 3 Andre Wilson | 2 | 43 | 21.5 | 31 | 0 |
| 38 Hayden Pittman | 1 | 19 | 19.0 | 19 | 0 |
| 18 Kailon Carter | 1 | 14 | 14.0 | 14 | 0 |
| 5 Jarrion Street | 1 | 3 | 3.0 | 3 | 0 |
| 28 Spencer Brown | 1 | 3 | 3.0 | 3 | 1 |

| NIU | Rec | Yds | Avg | Long | TD |
|--------------------|-----|-----|------|------|----|
| 14 Spencer Tears | 6 | 50 | 8.3 | 18 | 0 |
| 84 Ty Harmston | 3 | 36 | 12.0 | 15 | 0 |
| 9 Jauan Wesley | 5 | 34 | 6.8 | 11 | 0 |
| 18 Cole Tucker | 2 | 22 | 11.0 | 17 | 0 |
| 10 D.J. Brown | 2 | 12 | 6.0 | 9 | 0 |
| 17 Dennis Robinson | 1 | 11 | 11.0 | 11 | 0 |
| 28 Jordan Nettles | 2 | 10 | 5.0 | 8 | 0 |
| 21 Marcus Jones | 1 | 4 | 4.0 | 4 | 0 |