

WEEK 1
UNLV at USC

LOS ANGELES -- Southern California head coach Clay Helton walked up to quarterback JT Daniels, looking into his eyes for confirmation the second freshman to start a season opener in the program's storied history was not overwhelmed by the moment.

"They're either that big," said Helton, holding his hands wide open, "or they're like, 'All right, let's roll.'" "

Daniels was ready, throwing for 282 yards with a 43-yard touchdown pass to Amon-Ra St. Brown to help the No. 15 Trojans overcome a sluggish performance and defeat UNLV 43-21 on Saturday.

Outside of an early gaffe where Daniels turned the wrong way trying to hand the ball off to running back Stephen Carr, forcing the 2017 Gatorade national player of the year to scramble for a 5-yard gain, there were no apparent nerves from the 18-year-old.

Daniels did admit to feeling goosebumps coming down the tunnel for the first time before joining Matt Barkley in 2009 to start in his USC debut.

"It's hard to put in words what it's like to run out there and hear everybody cheering for you and rooting you on. For my first time in the Coliseum, it was really magical," said Daniels, who was 22 of 35 passing.

Daniels began to find a rhythm on his third drive with three consecutive completions to fellow freshman St. Brown. The former Mater Dei High School teammates connected for their first college touchdown on the first play of the fourth quarter, with St. Brown getting a step behind cornerback Jericho Flowers on a post route to give USC a two-possession lead.

"I don't care if you're a four- or five-star guy, I don't care if you're the No. 1 guy in the country. You walk into a place like SC, you get named the starter, you gotta go into the Coliseum and win a football game, that's tough for any kid," UNLV coach Tony Sanchez said. "Overall, I respect the heck out of him and thought he did a good job."

St. Brown had seven receptions for 98 yards, Aca'Cedric Ware rushed for 100 yards and a touchdown, and Vavae Malepeai scored the first of two touchdowns on a 2-yard run late in the second quarter that gave USC a lead it would not relinquish.

Chase McGrath, another Mater Dei product, kicked five field goals to tie a school record.

UNLV used early big plays to hang with the defending Pac-12 champions for three quarters. Lexington Thomas gained 71 of his 138 yards rushing on a touchdown run after faking a reverse to freeze defenders and put UNLV ahead 7-6 late in the first quarter.

Armani Rogers threw a 31-yard touchdown pass to Kendal Keys to go up 14-9 after UNLV extended the drive with a 36-yard run by Evan Austrie on a fake punt.

Rogers was 12 of 27 for 97 yards and two touchdown passes, adding 82 yards rushing despite being sacked five times.

"I know -- myself, our coaches, our kids -- we're now getting on that bus riding home with genuine disappointment in the outcome of the game," Sanchez said. "It does not feel good to play those guys tough for most of the night and walk away with the loss. We feel like we had opportunities to win that football game, and it's been a long time since we've had a team that could actually come out here and do that."

THE TAKEAWAY

UNLV: The Rebels can run the ball. UNLV finished with 308 yards on the ground, and looked like a team more than capable of making a bowl game for the first time since 2013.

USC: The Trojans need to tighten up on defense, and quickly. Bryce Love, the star running back for No. 13 Stanford, will like his chances to boost his Heisman Trophy candidacy next week against a USC defense that continued last season's penchant for allowing explosive gains.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
UNLV	7	7	0	7	21
USC	6	13	0	24	43

Scoring Summary -----

	UNLV	USC
first Quarter		
USC FG 14:07 Chase McGrath 46 Yd Field Goal	0	3
4 plays, 1 yard, 0:00		
USC FG 3:18 Chase McGrath 38 Yd Field Goal	0	6
10 plays, 60 yards, 4:49		
UNLV TD 2:37 Lexington Thomas 71 Yd Run (Evan Pantels Kick)	7	6
2 plays, 75 yards, 0:00		
second Quarter		
USC FG 13:12 Chase McGrath 29 Yd Field Goal	7	9
12 plays, 81 yards, 4:17		
UNLV TD 10:32 Kendal Keys 31 Yd pass from Armani Rogers (Evan Pantels Kick) 7 plays, 75 yards, 2:40	14	9
USC FG 9:19 Chase McGrath 47 Yd Field Goal	14	12
4 plays, -6 yards, 1:02		
USC TD 1:04 Vavae Malepeai 2 Yd Run (Chase McGrath Kick)	14	19
8 plays, 79 yards, 2:17		
fourth Quarter		
USC TD 14:52 Amon-Ra St. Brown 43 Yd pass from JT Daniels (Chase McGrath Kick) 4 plays, 69 yards, 1:19	14	26
USC TD 12:39 Aca'Cedric Ware 15 Yd Run (Chase McGrath Kick)	14	33
4 plays, 59 yards, 1:19		
UNLV TD 8:06 Giovanni Fauolo 5 Yd pass from Armani Rogers (Evan Pantels Kick) 10 plays, 75 yards, 4:33	21	33
USC FG 4:39 Chase McGrath 36 Yd Field Goal	21	36
8 plays, 57 yards, 3:27		
USC TD 1:38 Vavae Malepeai 20 Yd Run (Chase McGrath Kick)	21	43
5 plays, 43 yards, 1:41		

Team Stats	UNLV	USC
First Downs	17	23
Total Yards	405	501
Total Plays	70	73
Avg Gain Per Play	5.8	6.9
Net Yards Rushing	308	219
Rushes	43	38
Yards Per Rush	7.2	5.8
Net Yards Passing	97	282
Comp-Att	12-27	22-35
Yards Per Pass	3.6	8.1
Times Sacked	2	5
Yds Lost To Sacks	-15	-21
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	7	4
Punt Average	40.9	28.8
Penalties	4	6
Penalty Yards	35	58
Fumbles	2	0
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Possession	28:54	31:06

Individual Stats

Rushing					
UNLV	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Lexington Thomas	14	136	9.7	71	1
Armani Rogers	18	82	4.6	34	0
Evan Austrie	1	36	36.0	36	0
Xzaviar Campbell	4	24	6.0	16	0
Evan Owens	4	18	4.5	8	0
Charles Williams	1	15	15.0	15	0
Tyleek Collins	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
USC	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Aca'Cedric Ware	10	100	10.0	22	1
Stephen Carr	9	54	6.0	40	0
Vavae Malepeai	8	47	5.9	20	2
Amon-Ra St. Brown	1	12	12.0	12	0
Velus Jones Jr.	2	10	5.0	8	0
JT Daniels	5	-1	-0.2	5	0
Matt Fink	2	-2	-1.0	1	0

PASSING								
UNLV	Comp	Att	Pct	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Armani Rogers	12	27	44.4	97	3.6	2	0	99.1
USC	Comp	Att	Pct	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
JT Daniels	22	35	62.9	282	8.1	1	0	140.0
Matt Fink	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	-

RECEIVING					
UNLV	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Kendal Keys	1	31	31.0	31	1
Tyleek Collins	2	23	11.5	14	0
Mekhi Stevenson	3	21	7.0	9	0
Giovanni Fauolo	2	8	4.0	5	1
Lexington Thomas	1	7	7.0	7	0
Brandon Presley	1	4	4.0	4	0
Cody Scherff	1	3	3.0	3	0
Charles Williams	1	0	0.0	0	0
USC	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Amon-Ra St. Brown	7	98	14.0	43	1
Trevon Sidney	3	72	24.0	41	0
Tyler Vaughns	4	37	9.3	13	0
Michael Pittman Jr.	1	36	36.0	36	0
Velus Jones Jr.	2	16	8.0	9	0
Aca'Cedric Ware	2	15	7.5	9	0
Vavae Malepeai	2	6	3.0	9	0
Erik Krommenhoek	1	2	2.0	2	0