

**CURE BOWL
LIBERTY VS GA SOUTHERN**

ORLANDO, Fla. -- Liberty coach Hugh Freeze went from coaching from a hospital bed at the start of the season to standing with a bowl championship trophy.

Frankie Hickson picked up 120 yards rushing on 22 carries, Stephen Calvert went 16 of 35 passing for 270 yards and two touchdowns, and Liberty beat Georgia Southern 23-16 in the Cure Bowl on Saturday.

Freeze began his first season coaching at the school from a hospital bed in the press box for the season opener against Syracuse following back surgery two weeks earlier on Aug. 16.

"I actually look back on that and think I was stupid for trying it," Freeze said. "I wasn't very much help that night. I was pretty worthless. I didn't add much value to it."

Freeze missed 24 practices, coached another game from the press box in a medical chair, and four more on an elevated platform on the sidelines before returning to a traditional standing position on Oct. 19.

"I do think the kids saw it as, look, this guys is nuts or he's really committed to us, probably a little of both," Freeze said. "And they know I'll never quit. I'm just thankful right now that I'm sitting in this spot."

Liberty (8-5) joined Georgia Southern and Appalachian State as the only teams to move from FCS to FBS and win a bowl game in its first season of eligibility.

"We accomplished our goal." Calvert said.

Calvert, a senior making his 43rd start, topped 12,000 yards in career passing yards.

Hickson became the first Liberty running back since Rashad Jennings (2006-08) to have back to back seasons of 1,000-yards rushing.

Shai Werts completed 10 of 19 passes for 95 yards and gained 57 yards on 22 carries for Georgia Southern (7-6). Wesley Kennedy III had 104 yards on nine rushing attempts.

"Got beat," Georgia Southern coach Chad Lunsford said. "They wanted it more than us and they got it."

Calvert threw a 57-yard old touchdown pass to Johnny Huntley late in the first quarter and Joshua Mack scored on a three-run yard during the second as Liberty took a 16-7 halftime lead.

Kennedy had a 10-yard TD dash in the second for Georgia Southern, which was out gained 264-115 in the first half and 402-289 overall.

"They were flying to the football" Werts said. "They shut us down."

Antonio Gandy-Golden caught a 14-yard scoring strike from Calvert in the third. He had five receptions for 63 yards and set a school single-season record with 1,396 yards.

The Liberty defense limited Georgia Southern to three field goals in the second half.

THE TAKEAWAY

Liberty: Earlier this month, Freeze signed a multiyear contract extension. The 50-year-old had been out of coaching for two years before accepting the job at Liberty. He resigned his position at Mississippi in July 2017 under a cloud of NCAA sanctions and questionable personal conduct.

Georgia Southern: Werts said "absolutely" that he will return for his senior season in 2020.

SLOW START

Georgia Southern went three-and-out on its first three possessions, gaining a combined 12 yards. Liberty had four yards over its initial two possessions.

RARE MISCUE

Werts had his school-record streak of 230 consecutive passes without an interception end when Javon Scruggs picked off his pass late in the second. The turnover resulted on a 46-yard field goal by Alex Probert.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
LIB	7	9	7	0	23
GASO	0	7	6	3	16

Scoring Summary -----

	LIB	GASO
FIRST QUARTER		
LIB TD 3:31		
Johnny Huntley 57 Yd pass from Stephen Calvert (Alex Probert Kick)	7	0
6 plays, 88 yards, 1:48		
SECOND QUARTER		
GASO TD 14:53		
Wesley Kennedy III 10 Yd Run (Tyler Bass Kick)		7
7 plays, 79 yards, 3:38		
LIB TD 13:22		
Joshua Mack 3 Yd Run (Alex Probert PAT failed)	13	7
6 plays, 75 yards, 1:31		
LIB FG 1:02		
Alex Probert 46 Yd Field Goal		7
5 plays, 32 yards, 0:34		
THIRD QUARTER		
LIB TD 12:01		
Antonio Gandy-Golden 14 Yd pass from Stephen Calvert (Alex Probert Kick)		7
6 plays, 75 yards, 2:59		
GASO FG 6:20		
Tyler Bass 28 Yd Field Goal		10
6 plays, 59 yards, 3:29		
GASO FG 2:49		
Tyler Bass 30 Yd Field Goal		13
5 plays, 64 yards, 2:28		
FOURTH QUARTER		
GASO FG 1:44		
Tyler Bass 35 Yd Field Goal		16
17 plays, 0 yards, 4:51		

Team Stats	LIB	GASO
First Downs	19	13
Passes for First	12	4
Rushes for First	3	6
Penalties for First	4	3
Third Down Efficiency	5-16	4-17
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-2	0-0
Total Yards	402	249
Total Plays	72	65
Avg Gain Per Play	5.6	3.8
Net Yards Rushing	132	154
Rushes	37	46
Yards Per Rush	3.6	3.3
Stat Name		
Net Yards Passing	270	95
Comp-Att	16-35	10-19
Yards Per Pass	7.7	5.0
Times Sacked	1	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-4	-21
Interceptions	2	1
Punts	6	9
Punt Average	36.5	48.8
Penalties	4	10
Penalty Yards	45	101
Fumbles	1	0
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Possession	28:11	31:49

Individual Stats

RUSHING

LIB	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Frankie Hickson	22	120	5.5	0	35
Joshua Mack	11	25	2.3	1	5
Stephen Calvert	3	-1	-0.3	0	3
Team	1	-12	-12.0	0	0
GASO	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Wesley Kennedy III	9	104	11.6	1	40
Shai Werts	22	57	2.6	0	13
J.D. King	10	28	2.8	0	8
Matt LaRoche	3	7	2.3	0	4
Justin Tomlin	1	3	3.0	0	3
Malik Murray	1	-5	-5.0	0	0

PASSING

LIB	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Stephen Calvert	16	35	270	7.7	2	2	63.7
GASO	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Shai Werts	10	19	95	5.0	0	1	18.8

RECEIVING

LIB	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Johnny Huntley	2	90	45.0	1	57
Antonio Gandy-Golden	5	63	12.6	1	19
Noah Frith	2	49	24.5	0	30
Demario Douglas	2	25	12.5	0	18
Joshua Mack	2	16	8.0	0	18
DJ Stubbs	1	15	15.0	0	15
Kevin Shaa	2	12	6.0	0	7
GASO	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Mark Michaud	2	53	26.5	0	45
Wesley Kennedy III	3	20	6.7	0	12
Malik Murray	4	19	4.8	0	8
Khaleb Hood	1	3	3.0	0	3