

OUTBACK BOWL
MINNESOTA VS AUBURN

TAMPA, Fla. -- With the clock winding down on a dominating performance in the Outback Bowl, Minnesota fans broke into a chant of "Row the boat, row the boat, row the boat."

The never-give-up mantra coach P.J. Fleck used to help change the culture of Golden Gophers football continues to inspire a program determined to recapture its glory days.

"We challenged every one of our players: You want to be a blue blood, you've got to beat the blue bloods," Fleck said Wednesday after No. 16 Minnesota beat No. 9 Auburn 31-24 in a game that wasn't as close as the final score.

"We used to be a blue blood back in the '30s, '40s, '50s and '60s," Fleck added. "We've talked about the word of the year is 'restore.' We want to restore that tradition."

Tyler Johnson had 12 receptions for 204 yards and two touchdowns to become the Gophers' career receiving leader, and Minnesota outrushed the Tigers 215 yards to 56 while dominating time of possession to limit Auburn's ability to keep pace.

"We didn't overlook them. I think our guys were ready to play. I think our guys played hard. But they made the plays; we didn't," Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said.

"The second half, it was really a dogfight. Back and forth," Malzahn added. "The bottom line is they made plays. They made the plays to win the game when the game was on the line."

Johnson broke Eric Decker's school record for receiving yards on his second catch of the day and became Minnesota's all-time leader for scoring receptions on a one-handed, 2-yard TD catch that put the Gophers (11-2) up 24-17 at halftime.

The senior's 73-yard catch-and-run put his team ahead for good early in the fourth quarter.

"Coach Fleck says all the time that this program is going up; and as you see today, it's definitely going in the right direction," Johnson said. "Just having the right guys in the locker room is very important and everyone buying in."

Minnesota, which began the season with nine straight victories before losing two of its last three to Big Ten rivals Iowa and Wisconsin, finished with more than 10 wins for the first time since 1904. Auburn (9-4) concluded a season in which all four of its losses came against opponents ranked in the Top 25.

"I feel like we could've played harder and better than what we did. It's just disappointing, especially going out like that in your last game," Auburn senior defensive end Marlon Davidson said. "Even though we had a chance to win, we weren't on our A game. I'm just disappointed."

Minnesota quarterback Tanner Morgan completed 19 of 29 passes for 278 yards, one interception and both of the TDs to Johnson, who finished with 3,305 receiving yards and 33 TD catches in his career. Gophers wide receiver Seth Green tossed a 1-yard touchdown pass to Bryce Witham on fourth-and-inches midway through the second quarter.

Noah Igbinoghene, whose mother and father were Olympic track and field athletes in Nigeria, returned a kickoff 96 yards for Auburn's first touchdown. Bo Nix threw a 37-yard TD pass to Sal Cannella and JaTarvious Whitlow scored 3-yard run that made it 24-24 heading into the fourth quarter.

Morgan broke the tie with his second TD throw to Johnson, who posted the 16th 100-yard game of his career and caught at least one TD pass for the seventh straight game, tying a another school record.

The Gophers dominated on the ground too, with Mohamed Ibrahim running for 140 yards on 20 carries.

Nix was 17-of-26 for 176 yards, with one TD and no interceptions.

THE TAKEAWAY

Auburn: The Tigers finished the season with two victories against teams that entered the bowls in the AP top 10 in Oregon and Alabama and lost to Florida, Georgia and LSU by a combined 21 points.

Minnesota: Playing in a New Year's Day game for just the second time since making back-to-back trips to the Rose Bowl during the 1960 and 1961 seasons, the Gophers showed that their resurgence under Fleck isn't a fluke.

"It's huge for our program," Morgan said. "Coach said it last night: That's what he's going to think about when he thinks about the senior class -- guys who did a bunch of things that were never accomplished here. Things that didn't happen since 1904, since Teddy Roosevelt was president of the United States."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
MINN	10	14	0	7	31
AUB	10	7	7	0	24

Scoring Summary -----

FIRST QUARTER	MINN	AUB
AUB FG 12:17		
Anders Carlson 24 Yd Field Goal		
4 plays, 6 yards, 1:13	0	3
MINN FG 6:36		
Michael Lantz 40 Yd Field Goal		
10 plays, 53 yards, 5:41	3	3
AUB TD 6:23		
Noah Igbinoghene 96 Yd Kickoff Return (Anders Carlson Kick)		
0 plays, 0 yards, 0:13	3	10
MINN TD 4:05		
Mohamed Ibrahim 16 Yd Run (Michael Lantz Kick)		
3 plays, 40 yards, 1:14	10	10
SECOND QUARTER	MINN	AUB
MINN TD 7:09		
Bryce Witham 1 Yd pass from Seth Green (Michael Lantz Kick)		
12 plays, 92 yards, 5:52	17	10
AUB TD 4:15		
Sal Cannella 37 Yd pass from Bo Nix (Anders Carlson Kick)		
7 plays, 64 yards, 2:54	17	17
MINN TD 0:32		
Tyler Johnson 2 Yd pass from Tanner Morgan (Michael Lantz Kick)		
9 plays, 75 yards, 3:43	24	17
THIRD QUARTER	MINN	AUB
AUB TD 5:04		
JaTarvious Whitlow 3 Yd Run (Anders Carlson Kick)		
13 plays, 86 yards, 5:15	24	24
FOURTH QUARTER	MINN	AUB
MINN TD 10:26		
Tyler Johnson 73 Yd pass from Tanner Morgan (Michael Lantz Kick)		
1 play, 73 yards, 0:11	31	24

Team Stats

	MINN	AUB
First Downs	23	13
Passes for First	11	9
Rushes for First	12	3
Penalties for First	0	1
Third Down Efficiency	4-14	3-11
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	1-2
Total Yards	494	232
Total Plays	75	53
Avg Gain Per Play	6.6	4.4
Net Yards Rushing	215	56
Rushes	45	26
Yards Per Rush	4.8	2.2
Stat Name		
Net Yards Passing	279	176
Comp-Att	20-30	17-27
Yards Per Pass	9.3	6.5
Times Sacked	0	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-14
Interceptions	1	0
Punts	4	5
Punt Average	40.8	43.0
Penalties	5	3
Penalty Yards	41	20
Fumbles	1	2
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Possession	37:35	22:25

Individual Stats

RUSHING

MINN	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Mohamed Ibrahim	20	140	7.0	1	20
Rodney Smith	16	69	4.3	0	31
Seth Green	3	7	2.3	0	6
Tanner Morgan	3	2	0.7	0	1
Team	3	-3	-1.0	0	0
AUB	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
JaTarvious Whitlow	9	24	2.7	1	8
D.J. Williams	5	13	2.6	0	5
Bo Nix	6	12	2.0	0	16
Shaun Shivers	3	9	3.0	0	3
Spencer Nigh	1	2	2.0	0	2
Kam Martin	1	1	1.0	0	1
Harold Joiner	1	-5	-5.0	0	0

PASSING

MINN	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Tanner Morgan	19	29	278	9.6	2	1	66.1
Seth Green	1	1	1	1.0	1	0	100.0
AUB	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Bo Nix	17	26	176	6.8	1	0	65.8
Arryn Siposs	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

RECEIVING

MINN	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Tyler Johnson	12	204	17.0	2	73
Rashod Bateman	3	49	16.3	0	34
Bryce Witham	2	12	6.0	1	11
Rodney Smith	1	8	8.0	0	8
Chris Autman-Bell	1	7	7.0	0	7
Brevyn Spann-Ford	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
AUB	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Anthony Schwartz	6	49	8.2	0	16
Sal Cannella	1	37	37.0	1	37
Seth Williams	4	29	7.3	0	15
Spencer Nigh	1	24	24.0	0	24
Will Hastings	2	14	7.0	0	8
Jay Jay Wilson	2	12	6.0	0	9
Eli Stove	1	11	11.0	0	11