Written by Cameron Bray
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On Saturday afternoon, Tyler Bray threw for more yards than anyone who's ever worn a Tennessee uniform. Turns out the Vols needed almost every single one to escape with a 55-48 victory over Troy on Homecoming in Neyland Stadium.

Bray set the record -- eclipsing Peyton Manning's career-high mark of 523 yards -- with a 24-yard completion to Justin Hunter on third down, one play before Marlin Lane's 9-yard touchdown run gave the Vols the lead for good with 1:25 remaining. Bray finished with 530 yards on 29-of-47 passing with five touchdowns. He did not throw an interception.
After falling behind 40-34 in the third quarter after 10 unanswered points by Troy, Tennessee took a 41-40 lead on a 23-yard touchdown pass from Bray to Rajion Neal with 13:38 to go, ending a 90-yard drive. The Vols (4-5) had a chance to add to that lead, but Vincent Dallas dropped what would have been a 42-yard touchdown in the end zone with a little less than five minutes to go. That drive ended in a punt, and Troy (4-5) took possession at the UT 6-yard line with 4:40 remaining. The Trojans needed just three plays to reach the end zone.
Eric Thomas pulled down Cory Robinson's pass with one hand and -- never breaking stride -- raced 67 yards to the end zone to give Troy a 46-41 lead with 3:14 to go.Thomas caught a two-point conversion to give the Trojans a 48-41 advantage. The Vols answered in just 16 seconds, tying the game, when Bray hit Justin Hunter on a crossing route. Michael Palardy's extra point made the score 48-48 with 2:54 remaining. Tennessee's defense made a key stop, forcing the Trojans to go three-and-out on their ensuing possession and paving the way for the Vols' game-winning touchdown drive. While Bray set one of UT's most prestigious records, the Vols' defense set a dubious mark of its own. Troy gained 721 yards of offense, nearly 100 more than the Vols' previous high of 634 yards allowed against Kentucky in 1997.
The Trojans were well on their way to that total during the first half, gaining 358 yards of offense on its way to a one-point deficit after the first two quarters. After Troy scored on its first two possessions of the game, the Vols forced a pair of three-and-outs and opened a 28-10 lead. But the Trojans came right back, thanks to a few big plays. Shawn Southward scored a 1-yard touchdown to end a 12-play, 72-yard drive.
The Vols went three-and-out on their ensuing possession and Troy needed just two plays to close the gap to 28-23 after a missed extra point. Tennessee's next drive ended with a missed field goal from 39 yards out. Troy, though, kept right on moving the football. After a substitution penalty on third-and-11 from the the Troy 20, the Southward took a draw play 39 yards on third-and-16. Four plays later, quarterback Deon Anthony went 28 yards on a designed run and bulled his way across the goal line to give Troy a 30-28 lead with 1:12 remaining in the first half.

Tennessee, though, drove 73 yards in just six plays and took a 31-30 lead into the locker room after Palardy's 21-yard field goal on the final play of the half. Neither team committed a first-half turnover -- and neither defense seemed to have an answer for its opponent. The two teams combined for more than 700 yards of total offense in the first half, 358 for Troy and 364 for Tennessee. The Trojans had 247 of those yards in the second quarter, when they outscored Tennessee 20-10. Bray had 313 yards passing in the first half, breaking his own record, set against Memphis in 2010, for most yards passing a half. Hunter and Cordarrelle Patterson were

the big beneficiaries in the passing game. Patterson had 150 of his 219 yards in the first half -- as well as a few exhilarating catch-and-runs -- while Hunter had 102 yards and two touchdowns, one of which was a nifty, one-handed grab in the end zone. Hunter finished with 181 yards and three touchdowns.

Tennessee hosts Missouri next Saturday at 12:21 p.m. (TV: SEC Network), the first of three SEC games to finish the regular season.

Photo Courtesy: Tyler Bray, Tennessee Athletics