

Carolina Holds On To Top Miami

Written by Staff Reports

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Two years ago, a first quarter red-zone turnover cost North Carolina seven points and the early momentum in a 33-10 road loss at Miami. Saturday at Sun Life Stadium, Carolina weathered a similar miscue and rode tailback Giovani

Bernard's 177 rushing yards to a 18-14 win over the Hurricanes. Bernard had first-half scoring runs of 10 and 17 yards and gained 105 of his 177 yards after halftime for the Tar Heels, who have won four straight and two in a row against Atlantic Coast Conference Coastal Division opponents. The Tar Heels (5-2, 2-1 ACC) overcame another penalty-riddled performance and a pair of missed field goals to get their first road win under first-year head coach Larry Fedora. One week after committing 15 penalties for 126 yards in a 48-34 win over Virginia Tech, Carolina was flagged 15 times for 140 yards against the Hurricanes.

Bryn Renner finished 25 of 40 for 214 yards and an interception, his first game this season without a passing touchdown. After forcing a quick Miami punt, Carolina went 61 yards on just seven plays for the game's opening score. Bernard accounted for 45 yards on the drive that culminated in a 10-yard touchdown run, his ninth of the season.

The next Hurricane drive was cut short by Shakeel Rashad's first career interception, but the Tar Heels were unable to capitalize. After a pair of long completions to Eric Ebron and a Romar Morris run and horse-collar penalty got UNC back in the red zone, Renner was intercepted at the goal line by Eddie Johnson to end the threat.

Carolina stopped Miami (4-3, 3-1 ACC) on downs to open the second quarter but again came away with nothing when Casey Barth missed wide left from 33 yards. The Hurricanes took advantage of the missed opportunity and marched 80 yards on 12 plays to tie the game at 7 on Mike James' 1-yard touchdown run.

The game would remain tied for less than three minutes, however, as Renner orchestrated his best passing drive of the day and Bernard punctuated it with a 17-yard touchdown scamper. Renner completed 4-of-6 passes for 58 yards on the drive, none bigger than a 16-yard connection with Bernard on fourth and 6 at the Miami 33. Bernard made a lunging shoestring catch to pick up the first down and then scored his second rushing TD of the day one play later. Ebron made it 15-7 with a two-point catch from punter Tommy Hibbard. On the field as the holder, Hibbard took a shotgun snap and threw to Ebron split out left for UNC's first two-point conversion of the season. Tre Boston's second interception of the season ended Miami's final drive of the half and Carolina took a 15-7 lead into the locker room.

The teams traded empty possessions to open the third quarter before the Hurricanes pulled within a point. After Carolina downed a Hibbard punt inside the Miami 10, quarterback Stephen Morris led the hosts on a 12-play, 94-yard drive that ended with Morris scoring on a 5-yard run. UM lined up to go for 2 but was whistled for a delay of game penalty and chose to take the single point and make it 15-14.

Thanks to Bernard and some timely defensive stops, that was as close as Miami would get. Barth connected on a 48-yard field goal late in the third quarter and Carolina stopped the Hurricanes on downs twice late in the fourth to preserve the win. UNC ran a season-high 84 plays from scrimmage and amassed 486 yards of total offense, coming just shy of gaining 500 yards for the third week in a row.

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Photo Courtesy: Giovanni Bernard, UNC Athletics