

Long time no newsletter, apologies everyone. This one is also shaping up to be a bit on the late side, despite excellent contributions from Martyn and Paul, so further apologies in advance. Congratulations to Martyn on winning the inaugural A8 championship, his full report is below, and commiserations to Paul who's Fighting Irish lost out narrowly to the rapidly improving Tigers (we'll be on the charge this year!), his report also appears later on. Also in this issue is Martyn's preview of the upcoming season.

## Huskies Strike Gold

And so the inaugural Gold Bowl for NCAA8 saw the seemingly unstoppable wing three attack of the Washington Huskies, led by freshman QB Warren Moon, take on the somewhat surprising Miami Hurricanes, who had come from nowhere to put together a four game win streak that included a semi-final win over the team with the league's best record, the Penn State Nittany Lions.

### 1st Quarter

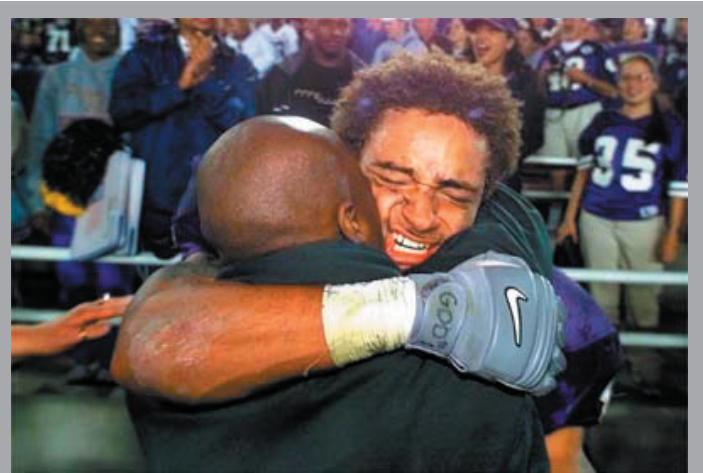
The Hurricanes carried their impressive recent form straight into the Gold Bowl, as on only the sixth play of the game sophomore HB Willis McGahee hit the hole fast on a trap block and out paced the entire Huskies secondary for a 52 yard TD run, and a 7-0 Hurricanes lead. A lead that lasted for precisely 30 seconds, as following a 35 yard kick return Warren Moon hit WR Paul Skansi on a 51 yard option pass to even

the scores at 7 each. The Huskies D then came up with one of the big plays they became famous for during the regular season, RCB Nesby Glasgow batting the ball straight into the hands of FS

Ray Horton, giving the Huskies possession at the Hurricanes 41. One play later and the Huskies were 14-7 up as Moon hit Skansi on a 6 yard in pattern that he broke open for a 41 yard TD. The Hurricanes were forced to punt on their next possession but their D came up big five plays into the next Huskies drive, as Moon tried forcing a ball into tight man coverage only to see it knocked down and intercepted by SS Bobby Harden. This was Miami's chance to draw level, but on 3rd and 7 at the Huskies 37 a wayward Jim Kelly pass was picked off by Huskies LB Joe Kelly. That proved to be a very costly mistake by the Hurricanes QB as two plays later Moon rolled out strongside before hitting Skansi for his third TD of the quarter, a 52 yard option pass. The quarter ended with the Hurricanes being pushed back to a 4th and 14 at their 80, with a poor 25 yard punt being returned to 13 yards, giving the Huskies possession at the 'Cane's 32 yard line.

### 2nd Quarter

Two plays into the quarter



Washington are the champions

the Huskies took what would prove to be an unassailable lead as Moon hit RB Greg Lewis for a 9 yard TD strike, making the score 28-7. Defences pretty much dominated the rest of the quarter as with the only scoring coming on a 49 yard field goal by Hurricanes kicker Carlos Huerta, making the half time score 28-10 to the Washington Huskies.

### 3rd Quarter

Both offences struggled at the beginning of the second half, going three and out, but the Huskies got a promising start to their second drive with another poor Hurricanes punt giving them the ball at midfield. However after quickly moving down to the Canes 22 Skansi fumbled a reverse, giving Miami the ball back but with 82 yards to go to the endzone. A good mix of running and passing from the Spread formation kept the Huskies D off balance though and Jim Kelly finally threw a TD pass, hitting WR Ryan Moore for 25 yards. A failed two point conversion left the Hurricanes trailing 28-16. The 3rd quarter ended with the



Husky fans are delighted

Huskies facing 3rd and 1 at their own 41.

4th Quarter

5 plays into the final quarter and the Huskies reasserted their dominance on the game with a 6 yard toss from Moon to Lewis turning into a 29 yard TD pass, a missed PAT making the score 34-16 to the Huskies. The Hurricanes hit back immediately though, putting together a 69 yard drive in 4 ½ minutes, McGahee crashing over the line from 4 yards out, but a second failed two point conversion left the score at Huskies 34 Hurricanes 22. with 6 minutes remaining the Canes needed a big play fast, but a 35 yard kick return gave Moon the ball at midfield. A slow methodical drive brought the Huskies to 1st and Goal at the Canes 6, with 1:49 remaining on the clock. Moon finally showed his lack of experience as he went for the killer TD

but saw his pass picked off in the endzone by LB Joe Kohlbrand, who returned it to the Hurricanes 14. So, a minute thirteen on the clock and two scores needed - could the Canes do the impossible? Well, unsurprisingly no as Jim Kelly was unceremoniously sacked for the fourth time by Senior Huskies NT Ron Holmes, and with his final desperation pass being batted away the Washington Huskies won the game 34-22, and were crowned NCAA8 Gold Bowl Champions.

Gold Bowl MVP was of course Huskies QB Warren Moon, who capped an amazing freshman season by recording passing stats of 20-28-2-298-5 and rushed 6 times for 41 yards in the big game. Coach Williams was ecstatic after the game, stating that "Now I've won a Gold Bowl as well

as a Super Bowl I can die a happy man, having proved myself at the highest level in the Pros and College. I've had an amazing first season in charge here at Washington and the aim now is to keep this University at the forefront of NCAA8. We are the National Champions and if anyone else wants that title they've got a fight on their hands"

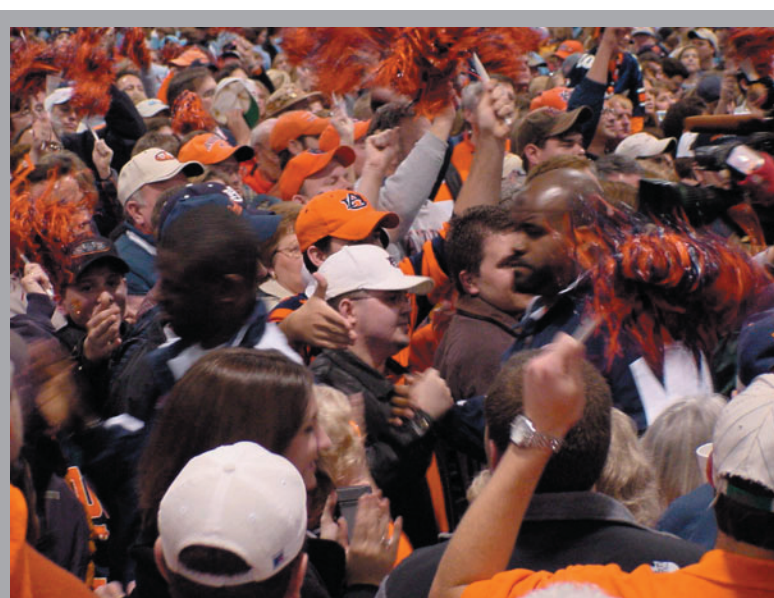
## Silver Tigers

The first NCAA8 Silver Bowl was contested between the teams ranked second and fourth in the Silver Bowl rankings and it turned out to be a cracker. The Fighting Irish waved goodbye to Mark Bavaro and Mike Stonebreaker as they headed off to the pros and RB Michael Owens from the Tigers went off to pastures new as these players finished off their senior year with a Bowl appearance.

It could not have got off better for the Tigers with the opening kickoff returned all the way back to the Notre Dame 12 in total a return of 73 yards after a short kick off - two plays later Campbell connected with Willis for a 7-0 lead.

Irish's response was immediate going 89 yards behind the arm of Montana surprisingly but finished off by Green from 8 yards, the PAT missed an Achilles heel of the Irish all year. The Tigers then showed their metal with a long drive but were stopped on third down and they converted the field goal for a 10-6 first quarter lead.

The second quar-



Tigers fans finally have something to cheer about after a difficult season

ter ended 30-20! The Tigers took advantage of two Montana interceptions on two drives to score 14 points but the Irish fought back with an interception of their own and scored last to make it 30-20 and everything to play for.

Advantage then fell to the Irish as the opening drive of the 3rd quarter last 3 plays and 74 yards and the lead was 30-27 Auburn, the Irish defence stood firm then Rodney Culver led Notre Dame downfield to take the lead running in from 12 yards out and a 33-30 lead. Auburn struck back immediately though Campbell connecting with Daniels from 42 yards and the lead again Auburn led 37-33.

Another turnover really sealed Notre Dame's fate as on 3rd and 2 Culver fumbled and on the ensuing drive Yost hit from 42 yards and a 40-33 lead for the Tigers. The Irish could only manage a field goal on the next drive to cut the lead to 4 but Auburn put the final nail in the coffin with a 83 yard 5 play drive with Campbell again connecting for the touchdown this time from 37 yards. Final Auburn 47 Notre Dame 36 and Jason Campbell voted MVP with 415 yards passing and 6 touchdowns - a real bright future for this QB at Auburn.

## Season Preview

So who will become NCAA8 National Champions in 2002? Coach Williams, head coach of the current National Champion Washington Huskies, cast his eye over the rosters and coaches of his rivals, threw his own squad into the mix and came up with the following.

1. Colorado Buffaloes, 18 points senior, 14 points junior - 2001 record: 9-2, Con-

solation Gold runners up. If Coach Gamble doesn't win the Gold Bowl with the amount of talent at his disposal this season, it will be unforgivable. No senior graduations has left the Buffaloes with one of the largest, and undoubtedly the most experienced squad in NCAA8. There is a senior player at every position bar wide receiver, where they aren't exactly struggling with two junior players, so couple this with Mark's obvious coaching talent and no one should come close to them this season - Top two finish.

2. Penn State Nittany Lions, 8 points senior, 14 points junior - 2001 record: 9-1-1, Consolation Gold winners. For many it was a major shock that Penn State didn't make the Gold Bowl last season after finishing with the leagues best record, and they will be looking to make amends this year. With an excellent OL QB Graham should have plenty of time to find his talented receivers, and the D will be led by senior NT Bruce Clark - Top three finish.

3. Washington Huskies, 7 points senior, 13 points junior - 2001 record: 9-2, Gold Bowl Champions. In many ways this squad is better than the Championship team of last season, but two key graduations will hurt - the loss of FB Rick Fenney and NT Ron Holmes. A passing team with a sophomore QB wouldn't normally be ranked so high, but Warren Moon is no ordinary QB, as he proved last season, and with an experienced OL and Paul Skansi in his senior year at receiver the Huskies passing game should flourish once again. However, a little variation may be needed this season to fool opposing D's that have already seen the wing three attack. This is where freshman FB Rich Alexis will have to step up. Defensively the

team has the best set of DB's in the league, but they will have to rely on Moon and Co getting the team up early if they are to see much action - Top four finish.

4. Notre Dame Fighting Irish, 13 points senior, 14 points junior - 2001 record 5-5-1, Silver Bowl runners up. This team lost its way rather at the end of last season, losing the last two games to fall out of the Gold Bowl positions. An experienced squad should see the Irish improve on last seasons record, the running game especially looks strong, and with good coaching they could surprise a few people - Top six finish.

5. Auburn Tigers, 7 points senior, 15 points junior - 2001 record 4-7, Silver Bowl Champions - No senior graduations enables Coach Crowther to field the leagues largest squad of outfield players, but they still lack a little in experience. The passing game looks strong and there is little concern at LB or DB, but a weak DL will cost them some games - Top six finish.

6. Michigan Wolverines, 9 points senior, 14 points junior - 2001 record 4-7, Bronze Bowl Champions - Coach Ware seemed to struggle slightly to make the transition from Pro to College coaching last season, and will be looking to improve the Wolverines this time out. The squad looks capable of winning games, and if freshman QB Tom Brady is the next Warren Moon then this team could go far with the receiving talent at his disposal - top seven finish.

7. UCLA Bruins, 14 points senior, 6 points junior - 2001 record 5-6, Consolation Silver winners - Running the ball shouldn't be a problem for the Bruins and defensively the squad looks

sound with senior leadership at each position. QB Cory Paus doesn't have much to aim at though after junior WR Ryan Smith, so this team will struggle if it has to play catch up - top eight finish.

8. Miami Hurricanes, 13 points senior, 15 points junior - 2001 record 7-4, Gold Bowl runners up - This team looked all set to build on its great finish to last season and take the next step up to National Champion status this year - and then Coach Flesfader left to take up a head coaching post in NCAA9, which leaves a talented group of players leaderless as the season kicks off. A team with this much talent will still win games, but a Silver Bowl place is the most the Hurricanes can expect without a coach - bottom 6 finish (top six if new coach comes on board).

9. Pittsburgh Panthers, 15 points senior, 10 points junior - 2001 record 1-10, Consolation Bronze winners. On paper the Panthers have the talent to make a Gold Bowl push, there is no glaring weakness on this team - even the kicking game looks good! All it needs is for Coach Douse to get some consistent performances from his D and this team should improve significantly on last seasons poor record. The fortunes of Pittsburgh are firmly in the hands of their coach - bottom 6 finish.

10. Alabama Crimson Tide, 4 points senior, 12 points junior - 2001 record 4-7, Bronze Bowl runners up - Coach Coleman failed to bring his undoubted coaching ability from the Pro game across into the college ranks in NCAA8's inaugural season, the highlight of the year being a shock defeat of the eventual Gold Bowl winning Washington Huskies. This season's squad is

My name is Rob Crowther, coach of the Auburn Tigers, and I can be contacted at this address:

35a Dukes Avenue  
Finchley  
London  
N3 2DE

Or by email at 'gameplan@crowther.info'. If you are interested in talking about Gameplan then you should also check out the Yahoo! Gameplan Group:

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/gameplan/>

the smallest in the league, lacks experience, has a QB seemingly more suited to playing HB, and has minimal pass defence. Which all perhaps points towards the pre season 60-6 defeat to the Huskies being a better indicator of the Tides fortunes this season than many might think. However, Coach Coleman knows how to coach football and if it all goes to pot at least he knows he pretty much has a win guaranteed in week 2... - bottom four finish.

11. Ohio State University, 0 points senior, 15 points junior - 2001 record 6-4-1, Consolation Silver runners up. This is a team in trouble - no senior leadership, a coach gone AWOL and a virtually non existent defence mean that Ohio have no hope of improving on last years record, and will need near perfect offensive performances to even win a game this season - loads of points but a bottom four finish.

12. Nebraska Cornhuskers, 6 points senior, 14 points junior - 2001 record 1-9-1, Consolation Bronze runners up - This team has potential, but as long as Coach Stone insists on no variation from the J formation they will struggle to win games. A switch to the A or I formations could well reap benefits, this team doesn't need a strong passing game

but it does need a passing threat that single WR formations simply don't give - bottom four finish.

## Pre-Season Review

Early favourites Colorado had a less than impressive start as Miami shredded their defense for three touchdowns in the first quarter and the Buffaloes never recovered.

Notre Dame got into a shootout with (suprise, suprise) OSU but it all petered out a bit in the second half as neither team was able to assert themselves.

Auburn struggled more than many expected to put away Nebraska, but saw off a big third quarter comeback and then held on to win.

Pittsburgh showed signs of perhaps a better season to come as they came from behind to beat Michigan.

Thoughts of Washington relaxing now they've won the National Championship were banished in Alabama as the Tide went out by a 54 point margin.

Penn State bounced back from their Gold Bowl semi disappointment to post impressive numbers, if not an impressive margin of victory, in Los Angeles.