

Bison make FCS history, winning seventh national championship

Courtesy The Forum

FRISCO, Texas -- North Dakota State now has seven NCAA Division I FCS championship crowns and is the king of the Football Championship Subdivision.

The Bison powered their way to a 38-24 victory against Eastern Washington on Saturday to repeat as national champions before 17,902 fans at Toyota Stadium.

NDSU's seven titles are the most in FCS history, surpassing Georgia Southern, which has six. The Bison (15-0) capped a perfect season, winning their seventh national crown in eight seasons. They have a 112-8 record during that run.

"There are some crazy expectations at this program and we wouldn't want it any other way," said Bison senior quarterback Easton Stick.

"It speaks to the tradition and culture that's been established here at North Dakota State," said Bison senior linebacker Levi Jordheim. "That didn't start in 2011. It started way back."

Stick finished his career with a 49-3 record as a starter to set the record for most QB wins in FCS history.

He surpassed former Bison quarterback Brock Jensen (2010-2013) who had 48 during his career. Stick said setting the mark is hard to believe in some respects.

"A little bit, and then the other half of me says we would like to be 52-0," Stick said. "That's just the expectation around here. It's a monster that we've built."

Stick iced the outcome Saturday with a 46-yard touchdown run that gave the Bison a 38-24 lead with 1 minute, 16 seconds to play. That came moments after Eastern Washington had cut the lead to seven points and tried an unsuccessful inside kick.

"This was the way it was supposed to end," Stick said.

The Bison have won 21 consecutive

games, becoming the fifth FCS team to go undefeated en route to a national championship. The 2013 Bison are the last team to post a perfect season and win an FCS title.

"It's been like a movie and there's no better way to go out on top with these guys, these seniors, I love these guys," said Bison senior receiver Darrius Shepherd, who was voted the game's most valuable player. "I'm going to miss this place."

Stick got hot with his arm after throwing an interception early in the third quarter. It was an explosive, turnover-filled start to the second half by both teams. Stick, while scrambling, lofted a perfect pass to

78-yard toss and it was 31-17 with 10:44 to play in the third quarter. Shepherd finished with five catches for 125 yards and two scores.

"I don't think there's a bad thing about Mr. Stick," Eastern Washington head coach Aaron Best said. "And we knew it. And great teams are and great players are hard to stop even when you know what's going to go on."

In the fourth quarter, the Bison put the game away with a patented, time-consuming drive that started at their own 6-yard line with 13:31 remaining, NDSU chewed up 88 yards and more than 10 minutes on 19 plays and ended with a 24-yard missed field goal.

NDSU converted on third down four straight times starting with a 5-yard pass to senior tight end Nate Jensen on third-and-5 and an 11-yard pass to Shepherd erased a third-and-7. Senior running back Lance Dunn gained two yards on third-and-1. Dunn added a 4-yard run on a third-and-4 moving the ball to the Eagles 14.

By the time the Eagles got the ball back, 3:21 remained. The number of plays and 10:10 time of possession were season longs for NDSU.

Eastern Washington wasn't finished, scoring moments after NDSU's missed field goal. Eagles quarterback Eric Barriere capped a four-play drive that covered 80 yards with a 5-yard touchdown run that cut the Bison lead to 31-24 with 2:19 remaining.

The Bison recovered the ensuing onside. Three plays later, Stick was bolting to the end zone to secure the victory and his place in FCS history.

"This is the loudest venue I've ever played at," McPherson said. "It was just a blast honestly and the NDSU fans are

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Shepherd that gave the Bison a 24-10 lead with 11 minutes, 52 seconds to play in the third quarter. That third-and-8 touchdown pass came three play after Bison senior defensive end Stanley Jones had a strip sack and fumble recovery that gave NDSU the ball at the Eastern Washington 25-yard line.

"That kind of hurt us, but we battled back good," said Eastern Washington senior running back Sam McPherson, who rushed for 158 yards on 18 attempts.

It took Eastern Washington one play to cut that deficit in half. McPherson scored virtually untouched on a 75-yard run up the middle.

Not to be outdone with the long scoring play, Stick connected with Shepherd on a

(Continued on page 287)