

NO. 7 UTAH 35, ARIZONA 7

VICTORY AGAIN OUT OF REACH



Arizona linebacker Anthony Pandey goes all out but can't bring down Utah quarterback Tyler Huntley in the first quarter Saturday. Utah won 35-7 to drop the Wildcats to 4-7 on the season. PHOTOS BY KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Cats drop sixth straight, eliminated from bowl contention

By Michael Lev
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Senior night at Arizona Stadium did not feature any last-home-game heroics. It did not feature any #Pacl2AfterDark magic. Just another lopsided loss for the staggering Arizona Wildcats.

Arizona was a heavy underdog against No. 7 Utah on Saturday, and the game went according to form in just about every way. The Utes dominated the Wildcats from start to finish, winning 35-7 in front of an announced crowd of 35,911. The building was practically empty by the time the game ended at 11:18 p.m.

The loss was Arizona's sixth in a row, dropping the Wildcats to 4-7, 2-6 in the Pac-12 after a 4-1, 2-0 start. Arizona will not participate in a bowl game for the second time in as many seasons under Kevin Sumlin.

The best the Wildcats can hope for now is a season-ending victory at Arizona State. Stranger things have happened in the Territorial Cup rivalry.

It won't be easy. ASU upset No. 6 Oregon earlier Saturday. The Sun Devils ended their four-game losing streak, clinched a bowl bid and knocked the Ducks out of the race for the College Football Playoff.

Utah (10-1, 7-1) is the last remaining CFP hope for the Pac-12.



Arizona linebacker Tony Fields II gets away with a hand to the facemask as he brings down Utah wide receiver Demari Simpkins in the third quarter. The Utes outgained Arizona 517-196 and held the ball for over 39 minutes.

The Utes need to beat Colorado next week to clinch the South Division and secure a berth in the conference title game. Oregon will represent the North.

The Utes looked the part of a championship contender, winning their seventh in a row. Only one of those wins came by fewer than 18 points.

Arizona lost by at least 18 points for the third straight game. The Wildcats also suffered their fourth consecutive loss in the series after winning the previous four meetings.

Arizona had no answer for Utah's one-two punch of Tyler Huntley and Zack Moss. Huntley completed 19 of 23 passes for 211

yards with one touchdown and one interception. Moss rushed for 26 times for 203 yards and a score in three quarters of work.

Utes tight end Brant Kuithe caught four passes for 81 yards and scored twice on jet sweeps. In a somewhat surprising move, freshman Grant Gunnell got his second straight start at quarter-

UP NEXT

- **Who:** Arizona (4-7, 2-6) at Arizona State (6-5, 3-5)
- **When:** 8 p.m. Saturday
- **TV:** ESPN
- **Radio:** 1290-AM, 107.5-FM

back for the Wildcats. All signs during pregame warmups pointed to Khalil Tate getting the nod; he was the first QB up in 7-on-7 and 11-on-11 drills. But after getting a rousing ovation during senior-night introductions, Tate began the game on the sideline.

Tate entered the game on Arizona's fourth series, following the same pattern as last week. On third-and-2 from the UA 32, freshman receiver Jalen Johnson came open in the middle of the field. There wasn't a defender within 5 yards of Johnson, who dropped the pass.

Neither quarterback could move the ball against the No. 1 defense in the Pac-12. Gunnell's 7-yard touchdown run with 1:50 remaining averted a shutout as Arizona narrowly avoided going two straight games without a TD.

The Wildcats managed just 196 yards of offense. The Utes had 517.

Utah led 14-0 at halftime — a score that did not fully reflect the

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UA faces its 'no mas' moment in ugly loss

It was 52 degrees at halftime Saturday night and Utah coach Kyle Whittingham had not made any adjustments. He wore a muscle-accentuating short-sleeve black shirt fitting his team's tough-guy identity.

It seemed to be Whittingham's way of saying "bring it!" Arizona could not.

The Utes' vanilla game plan was to hand the ball to tailback Zack Moss and let him run between the tackles. It was football from the 1960s. Moss would gain eight yards, then six, then seven, then five, then eight again. Arizona could do nothing but backpedal.

Whittingham knew it. Moss knew it. The few remaining UA fans scattered around Arizona Stadium knew it. For Utah it was Moss, Moss, Moss.

For Arizona it was "no mas." The Utes won 35-7 and when the game ended at 11:18 p.m., Whittingham wore neither a smile nor a jacket. The coach and his football team were all business. They left the shivering to the Arizona football constituency, which knows all too well what it feels like to be left out in the cold.



Greg Hansen

When Utah took a 21-0 lead, Moss had gained 198 yards. That would be more than Arizona gained the entire game (196).

This wasn't unexpected. Utah missed Arizona State 21-3, UCLA 49-3 and Cal 35-0.

What was unexpected was the way Arizona retreated on Senior Night, almost lifeless. Hello? Anyone home? Anyone care?

A lot of that might've been triggered by UA coach Kevin Sumlin's decision to start freshman Grant Gunnell at quarterback rather than senior Khalil Tate.

It was a bad look, disrespectful, as if to blow off Tate after a career of service, some of it so exceptional that it will never be forgotten in Tucson.

Gunnell has the next three years to be Arizona's quarterback of record, and Saturday night should've been dedicated to



UA wide receiver Jamarye Joiner gets rocked after a catch by UA defensive back Jaylon Johnson in the third quarter Saturday night. PHOTOS BY KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Tate. I mean, what was there to gain starting Gunnell? Arizona wouldn't beat Utah if the teams played 10 more times. It wouldn't come close.

It has been under Sumlin's system that Tate morphed into a dink-and-dump-off QB, squeezed into a system rather than using his athletic skills and

improvisation to make something out of nothing.

Called upon in relief Saturday, hopelessly behind, Tate rushed once for four yards. It was sad.

As it turns out, Sumlin and his coaching staff got basically nothing of Tate's senior season except victories over a few fellow bottom-feeders. The program

gave up on Tate, and there's a lot of that going around at Arizona Stadium.

A few weeks ago, Arizona athletic director Dave Heeke emailed a lengthy survey to UA season ticket holders asking them, among other things, why they don't attend more football games. Only 35,911 attended Saturday.

Heeke listed 23 possible reasons why fans have dropped away. He wanted to know if this year's worst average attendance (39,538) since 1975 is because:

- The deteriorating condition of Arizona Stadium
- The cost of tickets
- Start times
- Lack of game-day atmosphere
- Length of games
- Preference to watch on TV
- Team performance

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. The only variable Heeke didn't include was the team's lack of engagement with the community.

That starts with Sumlin, whose two seasons at Arizona have at times appeared as if he's the guest coach.

He's been as vanilla as Utah's offense was Saturday night.

See HANSEN, B12

ARIZONA FOOTBALL

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SEEN AND HEARD AT ARIZONA STADIUM

Senior moments

Several Wildcats took the field at Arizona Stadium on Saturday night for the last time. UA running back J.J. Taylor is a redshirt junior, but will enter his name in the 2020 NFL Draft. He participated in Senior Night festivities before the game. Cornerback Lorenzo Burns is a redshirt junior and was a part of Senior Night, but still plans on returning to Arizona in 2020. Senior quarterback Khalil Tate, cornerback Jace Whittaker, safety Chaco Ulloa, linebacker Lee Anderson, punter Matt Aragon, defensive end Justin Belknap, defensive tackle Finton Connolly, safety Tristan Cooper, offensive lineman Cody Creason, cornerback Malcolm Holland, wide receiver Terence Johnson, linebacker Richard Merritt, wide receiver Cedric Peterson and long snapper Donald Reiter were also recognized before the game.

Recruits visiting

Saturday marked the final opportunity for Arizona to showcase a game-day atmosphere to recruits in 2019. Coaches made sure to focus on the defensive side of the ball. Arizona hosted three-star linebackers Mason Cobb and Jamoi Hodge along with three-star defensive ends Regan Terry and DeVere Levelston.

Four-star Phoenix-area defensive end Jason Harris, brother of current UA edge rusher Jalen Harris and son of "Desert Swarm" linebacker Sean Harris, also stood on the sidelines.

Cobb is a 6-foot-1-inch, 220-pound linebacker from Provo, Utah, who is expected to choose between Arizona, Oklahoma State and Utah State, among other schools. Hodge and Levelston are both junior college prospects, which checks off the size and experience boxes that has been a priority for Kevin Sumlin's staff over the last two seasons.

The 6-2, 225-pound Hodge is rated as the third-best JuCo outside linebacker, per 247sports.com. He plays at Independence, the college featured in two seasons of "Last Chance U" on Netflix.

Levelston is a 6-4, 255-pound edge rusher from DeSoto, Texas; he plays at Tyler College. He's considering the UA, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia Tech, Minnesota and Nebraska. Arizona faces some challenges with Terry considering his father, Reggie Terry, is a director of football operations at Boston College and Iona Uagalele, who was fired as the UA's defensive line coach this week, was Terry's primary recruiter. Colorado and Texas A&M have made late pushes to recruit Harris.

Three-star Detroit offensive tackle Jeremy Flax and Gilbert High School quarterback Will Plummer, who has committed to Arizona, was also in attendance for UA-Utah.

Jase or Jace?

During Senior Night ceremonies, the video board at Arizona misspelled Whittaker's entire name, which read "Jase Whittaker."

We all need a copy editor sometimes.

Military Appreciation Night

The Wildcats celebrated Military Appreciation Night by wearing Operation Hat Trick decals on their helmets. All week long, the UA bookstore sold olive green Arizona merchandise, with all the proceeds helping veterans.

The UA coaching staff wore camouflage shirts on the sidelines.

Pac-12's disaster scenario takes shape

The Pac-12 was this close to having a showdown between two top-10 teams, Oregon and Utah, in the conference title game with the winner having a legitimate shot at making the College Football Playoff.

That won't happen now. No. 6 Oregon's nine-game win streak came to a screeching halt Saturday night in Tempe, as ASU pulled off a stunner by a final of 31-28. The Ducks will still make the conference title game to represent the North division, but it appears their playoff chances are slim to none.

Utah likely remains the Pac-12's lone hope of getting a team to the CFP for the first time since Washington made it in 2016-17.

Can these guys still play defense

A few former UA defensive players made their way back to Arizona Stadium on Saturday. Earl Mitchell, Ricky Elmore and Brooks Reed were introduced on the sidelines during a TV timeout.



Utah quarterback Tyler Huntley is tackled by Arizona safety Tristan Cooper, right, and defensive end Tony Fields II but not before picking up a first down in the third quarter Saturday night. UA has dropped six straight games since starting the season 4-1. The Wildcats visit ASU next week.

WILDCATS

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degree to which the Utes controlled the action. Utah had a 291-56 advantage in yards and a 16-9 edge in first downs.

The Utes could have had a bigger lead going into the half, but Trevon Mason stuffed Moss on fourth-and-goal from the 1 on the final play of the second quarter. "But after this, ASU, you can feel the energy around the whole building kind of start to pick up, because you know what's coming."

Arizona appeared to have stopped Utah on its first possession of the game. On third-and-9 from the UA 42, linebacker Colin Schooler fought through a block to sack Huntley.

But fellow linebacker Tony Fields II incurred a penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct after

out of bounds. Next Saturday's game in Tempe will represent Tate's last chance to beat the Sun Devils — and the Wildcats' final opportunity to create some optimism heading into 2020.

"Obviously, you don't want to look past this week, because this week's always the most important week," senior offensive lineman Cody Creason said during the runup to Saturday's game. "But after this, ASU, you can feel the energy around the whole building kind of start to pick up, because you know what's coming."

Arizona appeared to have stopped Utah on its first possession of the game. On third-and-9 from the UA 42, linebacker Colin Schooler fought through a block to sack Huntley.

But fellow linebacker Tony Fields II incurred a penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct after

the play, giving the Utes a first down. Three plays later, Huntley hit Kuithe for 29 yards. Kuithe finished the drive with a 3-yard run to give Utah a 7-0 lead.

After a three-and-out, Utah marched for another touchdown. Kuithe, who was tied for the team lead in receptions entering Saturday, again made the big play on third down — a 22-yard reception to the UA 32. This time it was Demari Simpkins who finished the drive, scoring easily from the 3 on a bubble screen to make it 14-0 with 37 seconds left in the first quarter.

Fields somewhat made up for his earlier mistake by coming up with a fourth-down stop in the second quarter. On fourth-and-1 from the UA 23, Huntley faked a pitch and ran to his left. Fields made an ankle tackle, tripping up Huntley just short of the line to gain.

Extra points

Gunnell and Tate worked behind a completely reconfigured offensive line. The starters, from left to right: **Donovan Lale, Bryson Cain, Robert Congel, Josh Donovan and Jon Jacobs.** Not a single lineman started in the same spot as last week. Donovan, a junior-college transfer, made the first start of his UA career.

Linemen **Creason, Josh McCauley, Jordan Morgan** and **Patton Fears** did not dress. Creason, McCauley and Morgan were known to be hurt.

Fears was a late add to the injury list. Creason (ankle) missed his fifth straight game, McCauley (knee) his second.

Ten offensive linemen dressed, including freshman **Jamari Williams** and redshirt freshman **David Watson.** Neither has appeared in a game for Arizona.



Utah defensive end Mika Tafua, left, and defensive end Bradlee Anae drag down Arizona quarterback Grant Gunnell for a sack in the fourth quarter.

HANSEN

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Sumlin's contract stipulates that the school would have to pay him \$10 million if he is fired this season, and while that might not be too much for a school like Oregon or USC, it seems like such an unworkable figure that Heeke's survey probably isn't going to have much meaning.

Instead, it has allowed Sumlin to fire three assistant coaches over the last few weeks — assistant coaches he hired two years ago. It's the surest sign of dysfunction within the program.

As such, the future of football at Arizona is as grim as at any time since the mid 1950s. Others from the middle class of Power 5 conference football are hanging tough. Iowa State is 7-4. Wake Forest 7-3. Even Indiana and Illinois — the equivalent of Arizona in the Big Ten — are 7-4 and 6-5, respectively.

But Arizona? It hasn't hit bot-

tom yet. That will come when it plays at Arizona State in Saturday's Territorial Cup game.

An hour before Saturday's game, former Arizona starting defensive lineman Reggie Gaddis stood next to the Button Salmon monument outside the Lowell-Stevens Football Facility. Gaddis was a four-star recruit from Los Angeles in 1985, part of what was one of the top recruiting classes in the UA's Pac-10 years, one that featured the Singleton twins, Derek Hill, Stan Matale, Danny Lockett, Galen Allen, Ruben Rodriguez, David Eldridge and a lot of guys who helped Arizona continue The Streak over ASU, go 9-3 in 1986 and help Dick Tomey's first winning seasons of 1988 and 1989.

Gaddis wore his old navy blue UA jersey and said he doesn't regret a moment of his UA career. "I'm still here," he said, "I'm still behind them, I'm not quitting."

Sadly, he's one of the few who isn't.

UTAH
35

ARIZONA
7

GAME SUMMARY

Utah 14 0 14 7-35 12:50. Drive: 6 plays, 75 yards, 2:10
 Arizona 0 0 0 7-7 12:47. Drive: 4 plays, 18 yards, 1:57

FIRST QUARTER
 • Utah: Kuithe 3 run (Redding kick), 7:39. Drive: 11 plays, 75 yards, 5:56
 Utah 7, Arizona 0

• Utah: Simpkins 3 pass from Huntley (Redding kick), 0:37. Drive: 10 plays, 72 yards, 5:12
 Utah 14, Arizona 0

THIRD QUARTER
 • Utah: Moss 41 run (Redding kick). Utah 35, Arizona 7

FOURTH QUARTER
 • Utah: Green 1 run (Redding kick), 12:47. Drive: 4 plays, 18 yards, 1:57
 Utah 35, Arizona 0
 • Arizona: Gunnell 7 run (Havrisk kick), 1:50. Drive: 12 plays, 85 yards, 5:00
 Utah 35, Arizona 7

GAME STATISTICS

TEAM STATISTICS	Utah	Arizona	KICKING	FG	LG	XP	Pts	
28	11	0-0	0-0	—	5-5	5		
NET YARDS	220	135	KICK RETURNS	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Comp-Att.	20-24	14-27	None					
Yards per attempt	9.2	5.0	PUNT RETURNS	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Yards per completion	11.0	9.6	Simpkins	2	56	28.0	39	0
Yards per drop	1	0	None					
Total offensive plays	74	52	PUNTING	No	Yds	Long	TD	
Yards per play	7.0	3.8	Larson	1	31	31.0	31	0
Third-down conversions	6-11	2-12	ARIZONA	Comp-Att	Yds	TD	Int	
Fourth-down conversions	4	0	Gunnell	4	63	0	31	15.8
Penalties-yards	11-10	4-60	Tate	6-11	39	0	0	
Fumbles lost	0	0	Wiley	2	7	0	4	3.5
Time of possession	39:32	20:28	Tilford	6	6	0	5	1.0
			Gunnell	4	6	1	7	1.3
			Brightwell	1	5	0	5	5.0
			Tate	1	4	0	4	4.0
			Smith	1	1	0	1	1.0
			RECEIVING	No	Yds	TD	Long	Avg
			Gunnell	4	63	0	31	15.8
			Peterson	1	21	0	21	21.0
			Curry	1	20	0	20	20.0
			Cunningham	3	14	0	8	4.7
			Taylor	3	10	0	5	3.3
			Walms	1	4	0	4	4.0
			Casted	1	3	0	3	3.0
			KICKING	FG	LG	XP	Pts	
			Havrisk	0-0	—	—	11	1
			KICK RETURNS	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
			Taylor	4	41	10.3	41	0
			Queningham	2	29	14.5	25	0
			PUNT RETURNS	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
			None					
			PUNTING	No	Yds	Long	TD	
			Ostendorp	3	139	46.3	53	0
			Aragon	3	117	39.0	45	0