

= 1968 Liberty Bowl =

The 1968 Liberty Bowl was a post @-@ season American college football bowl game between the Virginia Tech Hokies and the Ole Miss Rebels from the University of Mississippi at Memphis Memorial Stadium in Memphis , Tennessee on December 14 , 1968 . The game was the final contest of the 1968 college football season for both teams , and ended in a 34 @-@ 17 victory for Mississippi .

Two years after a previous trip to the Liberty Bowl , Virginia Tech was again asked to travel to Memphis to play in a post @-@ season bowl game . This time , the opponent was Mississippi , which had amassed a 6 ? 3 ? 1 record during the regular season . The Hokies came into the game with a 7 ? 3 record that included a loss to Tech 's previous Liberty Bowl opponent , Miami .

The 1968 Liberty Bowl kicked off on December 14 , 1968 . As in the Hokies ' previous appearance in the Liberty Bowl , Virginia Tech got off to a fast start . On the game 's second play , Tech ran 58 yards for a touchdown , courtesy of a trick play . After Mississippi fumbled , Tech recovered and scored another quick touchdown . At the end of the first quarter , Tech added a field goal to the two touchdowns it had already earned , making the score 17 ? 0 at the end of one quarter . From that point onward , however , almost nothing would go in Virginia Tech 's favor . Tech attempted an onside kick following the field goal , but were unable to successfully recover the ball . With good field position following the kick , Mississippi quarterback Archie Manning orchestrated a 49 @-@ yard drive for the Rebels ' first points of the game .

Mississippi scored another touchdown before halftime , and the Hokies clung to a 17 ? 14 lead at the beginning of the second half . That three @-@ point lead quickly evaporated , however , as 21 seconds into the third quarter , Mississippi 's Steve Hindman ran for 79 yards and a touchdown to give Mississippi a 21 ? 17 lead . Ole Miss added 13 more points before the game ended and earned the victory , 34 ? 17 .

= = Pregame buildup = =

= = = Virginia Tech = = =

The Virginia Tech Hokies , led by head coach Jerry Claibourne , amassed a 7 ? 3 record during the regular season prior to the Liberty Bowl . The Hokies came into the 1968 season with high expectations . From 1963 to 1967 , Virginia Tech was the 12th winningest major college football program , recording 36 wins , 13 losses , and one tie ? putting the Hokies just behind Notre Dame in winning percentage . During the regular season , linebacker Mike Widger emerged as a major threat on defense for Tech . In the Hokies ' win over No. 18 Florida State in 1968 , Widger intercepted two passes . Shortly after Liberty Bowl committee chairman Bud Dudley selected the Hokies to play in the Liberty Bowl , Widger was named a first @-@ team Associated Press All @-@ American , marking him as one of the best players at his position in the country .

= = = Mississippi = = =

The Ole Miss Rebels , led by head coach John Vaught , earned a regular @-@ season record of 6 ? 3 ? 1 prior to the Liberty Bowl . Vaught remains the all @-@ time leader in wins at Ole Miss , and at the time of Mississippi 's selection for the 1968 Liberty Bowl , he had already led the Rebels to three national championships and six Southeastern Conference championships , the most recent of each coming in 1962 . On the field , Ole Miss featured star quarterback Archie Manning , who despite being just a sophomore , was already making a name for himself and would later go on to set records for passing yardage and passing touchdowns for Ole Miss , en route to becoming one of the greatest quarterbacks in Mississippi history .

= = Game summary = =

The 1968 Liberty bowl kicked off on a cold and blustery day in front of 46 @, @ 206 fans at Memphis Memorial Stadium in Memphis , Tennessee on December 14 , 1968 . The record crowd ( it was the largest in the 10 @-@ year history of the bowl to that point ) consumed 20 @, @ 000 hot dogs ? so many that the stadium ran out by the third quarter .

In the first quarter of the game , it appeared that Virginia Tech would run away with an overwhelming victory . Tech received the ball to begin the game , and on the game 's second play , Virginia Tech 's Ken Edwards ran 58 yards on a trick play for the game 's first touchdown . Mississippi fumbled the ball on its first offensive play and Virginia Tech recovered the turnover . Three plays later , Tech scored another touchdown on a seven @-@ yard run by Terry Smoot . After stopping the Rebels with their defense , Tech appeared to have another chance to score when the Hokies ' Ron Davidson returned an Ole Miss punt to the Rebels ' 42 @-@ yard line . Despite the excellent field position , Tech was unable to score after Hokie quarterback Al Kinkaid was sacked for a 19 @-@ yard loss . Despite the setback , Tech was able to keep Ole Miss from scoring in the first quarter and tacked on a 29 @-@ yard field goal by kicker Jack Simcsak before time came to an end in the quarter . At the end of the quarter , Tech led 17 ? 0 .

In the second quarter , Mississippi came storming back . Following the field goal , Tech head coach Jerry Claiborne ordered an onside kick in an effort to gain another chance on offense and potentially build an insurmountable lead . Onside kicks , unlike an ordinary free kick , can be recovered by the kicking team ? but only after the ball has traveled 10 yards . If the kicking team touches the ball before it has traveled 10 yards , the receiving team takes possession at the place the ball was touched . Unfortunately for Virginia Tech , Simsak 's onside kick ? though it surprised Ole Miss ? did not travel the requisite 10 yards . Mississippi took over at the Virginia Tech 49 @-@ yard line , and many of the Ole Miss players were angered by what they considered to be an insult .

Mississippi quarterback Archie Manning used the good field position and his inspired offense proficiently following the kick , driving the Rebels down the field and connecting with Hank Shows on a 21 @-@ yard touchdown pass for Mississippi 's first points just 30 seconds into the second quarter . By halftime , Manning had connected on another touchdown pass , this one a 23 @-@ yard strike to Leon Felts . Tech still held a 17 ? 14 lead , but Mississippi had the momentum and would receive the ball to begin the second half .

Ole Miss wasted no time in scoring , as Steve Hindman turned the first play of the second half into a 79 @-@ yard for a touchdown . The Rebels now held a 21 ? 17 lead , and Virginia Tech never threatened afterward . Ole Miss defender Bob Bailey intercepted a Virginia Tech pass at the beginning of the fourth quarter and returned it 70 yards for another Mississippi touchdown . The Rebels also added a pair of field goals to their score , and rolled to a 34 ? 17 victory over Virginia Tech .

= = Statistical summary = =

Mississippi 's Steve Hindman was named the game 's most valuable player after he rushed the ball for 121 yards and a touchdown in addition to catching three passes for 32 yards . Ole Miss quarterback Archie Manning finished the game with 141 passing yards and two touchdowns . Virginia Tech was led on offense by Ken Edwards , who finished with 119 rushing yards and a touchdown , and Terry Smoot , who finished with 91 rushing yards and a touchdown . Tech turned the ball over five times , committing three fumbles and throwing two interceptions to the Mississippi defense . Despite Tech 's relative offensive success on the ground , the Hokies were completely inept through the air , completing just one pass for two net passing yards . Both marks remain Liberty Bowl records for the fewest passes and fewest passing yards gained by a team .

Although the Hokies had success on defense during the first quarter , Mississippi dominated the Hokies defensively for the rest of the game . Such was the defensive dominance of Mississippi in the last three quarters of the game that after Tech 's field goal in the first quarter , the Hokies had 11 offensive possessions and crossed into Ole Miss territory just once .

In addition to Steve Hindman 's selection as the game 's MVP , Mississippi had two other players

recognized for their achievements in the game : Robert Bailey was named the game 's most outstanding defensive back and offensive tackle Worthy McClure was named the game 's most outstanding offensive lineman .