

= 2005 Sugar Bowl =

The 2005 Sugar Bowl was a postseason American college football bowl game between the Virginia Tech Hokies and the Auburn Tigers at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans , Louisiana , on January 3 , 2005 . It was the 71st edition of the annual Sugar Bowl football contest . Virginia Tech represented the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) in the contest , while Auburn represented the Southeastern Conference (SEC) . In a defensive struggle , Auburn earned a 16 ? 13 victory despite a late @-@ game rally by Virginia Tech .

Virginia Tech was selected as a participant in the game after winning the ACC football championship during the team 's first year in the conference . Tech , which finished 10 ? 2 in the regular season prior to the Sugar Bowl , defeated 16th @-@ ranked Virginia and ninth @-@ ranked Miami en route to the game . Auburn finished the regular season undefeated at 12 ? 0 . The Tigers defeated fourth @-@ ranked LSU and fifth @-@ ranked Georgia during the course of the season , and were one of five teams to finish the regular season undefeated ; the others were Southern California , Oklahoma , Utah , and Boise State , with USC and Oklahoma being selected to play in the Bowl Championship Series national championship game . Auburn , by virtue of its lower ranking in the BCS poll , was left out of the national championship and was selected to play in the Sugar Bowl .

Pre @-@ game media coverage of the game focused on Auburn being left out of the national championship game , a point of controversy for Auburn fans in the weeks leading up to the game . Much was made of that and the success of Auburn running backs Carnell Williams and Ronnie Brown , each of whom was considered among the best at his position . On the Virginia Tech side , senior quarterback Bryan Randall had a record @-@ breaking season . Both teams also had high @-@ ranked defenses , and Tech 's appearance in the 2000 Sugar Bowl also was mentioned in the run @-@ up to the game .

The 2005 Sugar Bowl kicked off on January 3 , 2005 , at 8 : 00 p.m. EST . Early in the first quarter , the Tigers took a 3 ? 0 lead . Following an interception by the Auburn defense , the Tigers were extended their lead to 6 ? 0 . In the second quarter , another field goal resulted in three points for the Tigers . At halftime , Auburn led , 9 ? 0 . Auburn opened the second half with its only touchdown drive of the game , giving Auburn a 16 ? 0 lead , which it held into the fourth quarter . In that quarter , Tech scored its first touchdown of the game but did not convert the two @-@ point try , making the score 16 ? 6 . Late in the quarter , Tech quarterback Bryan Randall cut Auburn 's lead to 16 ? 13 on an 80 @-@ yard pass that resulted in another touchdown . With almost no time remaining in the game , Virginia Tech attempted an onside kick to have another chance on offense . When Auburn recovered the kick , the Tigers ran out the clock and secured the win . In recognition of his game @-@ winning performance , Auburn quarterback Jason Campbell was named the game 's most valuable player .

Despite Auburn 's victory and undefeated season , they were not named national champions . That honor went to the University of Southern California , which defeated Oklahoma in the 2005 national championship game , 55 ? 19 . Three voters in the final Associated Press poll of the season voted Auburn the number one team in the country , but their votes were not enough to deny USC a national championship , as voted by members of the Associated Press and Coaches ' polls . Several players from each team were selected in the 2005 NFL Draft and went on to careers in the National Football League .

= = Team selection = =

Virginia Tech and Auburn each earned automatic spots in a BCS bowl game due to their status as conference champions , and were selected by the 2005 Sugar Bowl . Virginia Tech finished the season 10 ? 2 and was named ACC football champion its first year in the conference . Auburn , meanwhile , finished the season undefeated at 12 ? 0 , and was named champion of the SEC . Controversy erupted around Auburn 's selection , as the Tigers had been denied a spot in the national championship game in favor of two other undefeated teams : the University of Southern

California (USC) and Oklahoma .

= = = Virginia Tech = = =

The Virginia Tech Hokies entered the 2004 college football season having gone 8 ? 5 in 2003 , culminating with a 52 ? 49 loss to California in the 2003 Insight Bowl . The 2003 season had also been Virginia Tech 's final year in the Big East Conference , and Tech began the new season in the Atlantic Coast Conference . Tech started the season unranked for the first time since 1998 , and was picked to finish sixth (out of 11 ACC teams) in the annual ACC preseason poll , held in July . The Hokies ' first game in their new conference was a non @-@ conference contest at FedEx Field in Landover , MD. against the top @-@ ranked USC Trojans . Tech lost , 24 ? 13 , but recovered to win its next game ? against lightly regarded Western Michigan ? in blowout fashion , 63 ? 0 . In its first conference game in the ACC , the Hokies beat Duke , 47 ? 17 , to improve to a 2 ? 1 record . Their first win in the ACC was followed by their first loss , however , as the Hokies lost the next week to North Carolina State , 17 ? 16 , when Tech kicker Brandon Pace missed a last @-@ second field goal .

Following the loss , Virginia Tech was 2 ? 2 on the season , and faced the potential of being ineligible for a postseason bowl game if it did not improve its winning percentage . The Hokies won their next eight games , finishing the season with a 10 ? 2 record . With late @-@ season wins over perennial rival , 16th @-@ ranked Virginia , and fellow ACC newcomer , ninth @-@ ranked Miami , Virginia Tech clinched the ACC football championship (the last year in which it would be decided without a conference championship game) and a bid to a Bowl Championship Series game . Because the ACC 's normal bowl destination , the Orange Bowl , was hosting the national championship game , Virginia Tech was selected to attend the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans , Louisiana , instead .

= = = Auburn = = =

Auburn , like Virginia Tech , had gone 8 ? 5 during the 2003 college football season , and entered the 2004 season with high expectations . The Tigers were using a new offensive scheme ? the West Coast offense ? and boasted two highly rated running backs on offense . In its first game of the 2004 season , the 18th @-@ ranked Auburn football team overwhelmed the University of Louisiana @-@ Monroe , 31 ? 0 . It was Auburn 's first shutout since 2002 . One week later , the Tigers backed up their good start with an emphatic 43 ? 14 victory over Southeastern Conference foe Mississippi State University . In the third week of the season , Auburn faced its first challenge of the young season , against the fourth @-@ ranked Louisiana State Tigers . In a hard @-@ fought defensive struggle , Auburn won , 10 ? 9 , when a missed extra point was replayed after a penalty .

After an easy 33 ? 3 victory over The Citadel , Auburn faced eighth @-@ ranked Tennessee . The Tigers ' defense forced six turnovers en route to a 34 ? 10 victory . With the victory over Tennessee , Auburn reeled off another four victories and became a prominent candidate for inclusion in the national championship game . In the 11th week of the season , Auburn faced the fifth @-@ ranked Georgia Bulldogs . After a defensive effort that held Georgia scoreless until late in the fourth quarter , the third @-@ ranked Tigers won a 24 ? 6 victory . After defeating Alabama in their final regular @-@ season game , Auburn entered the SEC championship game undefeated and in third place nationally . Although the Tigers defeated the Volunteers , 38 ? 28 , in the conference championship game , Auburn remained in third place because both USC and Oklahoma also remained undefeated . With USC and Oklahoma selected to play in the national championship game , Auburn was forced into the Sugar Bowl . With the winner of the BCS Championship Game guaranteed first place in the Coaches Poll , Auburn fans held hopes that the combination of an overwhelming Tigers victory in the Sugar Bowl with Oklahoma defeating USC with a weak performance would cause enough voters in the AP Poll to put Auburn ahead of Oklahoma in their final poll . The result would have been a split national championship similar to what occurred the previous season .

= = Pregame buildup = =

In the weeks leading up to the game , media coverage of the game focused on Auburn 's exclusion from the national championship game , a controversial point for Auburn fans and other observers in the weeks leading up to the game . In addition , both teams boasted high @-@ ranked defenses that had performed well during the year . Much was made of that fact and the success of Auburn running backs Carnell Williams and Ronnie Brown , each of whom were considered among the best players at their position . On the Virginia Tech side , senior quarterback Bryan Randall performed well for the Hokies during the regular season and was predicted to continue his success in the Sugar Bowl .

= = = Rankings controversy = = =

Shortly after the final pre @-@ bowl game Bowl Championship Series standings were released on December 4 , Auburn was among several teams disgruntled with the system . One of these was California , which only lost to top @-@ ranked USC , but was denied a bid to the prestigious Rose Bowl after Texas vaulted it in the rankings despite having the same record . The Golden Bears were forced to attend the less @-@ attractive Holiday Bowl instead . The Auburn Tigers , meanwhile , had completed their first 12 @-@ win regular season and won their first conference championship in 15 years , but in the final BCS rankings , Auburn was third , behind USC and Oklahoma . It was the first time since the creation of the BCS in 1998 that three major @-@ conference college football teams were undefeated at the conclusion of the regular season . Some pundits and fans considered Auburn 's failure to reach the championship game to be based on the fact that the Tigers had started with a lower ranking at the beginning of the season . The Tigers had been ranked 17th at the beginning of the season , while USC had been ranked first and Oklahoma second , the same spots they occupied at the end of the regular season .

Sportswriters also pointed to the Tigers ' tougher conference schedule when compared to those of USC and Oklahoma . SEC commissioner Mike Slive remarked , " If Auburn goes through this league undefeated , they deserve to play for the national championship . " Virginia Tech head coach Frank Beamer , in the runup to the game , seemingly agreed with the assessment , saying , " We started out playing Southern Cal and I believe this Auburn team is better . " Some writers also indicated USC 's five @-@ point win ? in which the Trojans struggled ? over rival UCLA as an indicator that the Tigers could be the better team . In the end , such arguments were unable to sway voters , who ranked USC first , Oklahoma second , and Auburn third in all of the major polls decided by human voters . The Utes , who were also undefeated at the conclusion of the regular season , received limited attention because they were a member of a non @-@ BCS conference .

Due to the controversy surrounding Auburn 's failure to be given a chance to play for the national championship and controversies involving teams lobbying for improved ratings in the poll , the Associated Press sent a cease @-@ and @-@ desist order to BCS officials , forbidding them the use of the AP Poll in calculating BCS ratings .

= = = Auburn offense = = =

Auburn head coach Tommy Tuberville was named the Associated Press Coach of the Year on December 24 , due in large part to his success in using Auburn 's new West Coast offense to drive the Tigers to an undefeated 12 ? 0 regular season . In response to his success , Auburn administrators agreed to a seven @-@ year , \$ 16 million contract extension with Tuberville prior to the Sugar Bowl . Tuberville planned an offense that finished the regular season averaging 33 @.@ 4 points and 430 @.@ 8 yards of total offense per game .

Heading Auburn 's offense on the field was quarterback Jason Campbell . Campbell finished the regular season with 2 @,@ 511 yards and 19 touchdowns , one short of tying the Auburn record for most touchdowns in a single season . Campbell was second in the Southeastern Conference in passing yards per game (209 @.@ 2) , and was a first @-@ team All @-@ SEC selection .

Auburn 's rushing offense was led by two highly regarded running backs : Carnell Williams and Ronnie Brown . The two men , combined with quarterback Campbell , ran for 15 @, @ 739 yards and 129 career touchdowns prior to the Sugar Bowl . Williams led the SEC in all @-@ purpose yardage (137 @. @ 2 yards per game) and average yards per punt return (11 @. @ 7) . He finished the regular season with 1 @, @ 104 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns . The touchdown mark was the most recorded by a running back in the SEC that year . For his accomplishments , Williams was named a first @-@ team All @-@ SEC pick . Despite missing most of his first two seasons due to injuries , he ranked second on Auburn 's all @-@ time rushing list with 3 @, @ 770 yards ? behind only NFL and MLB star Bo Jackson . Williams also had the most rushing touchdowns in Auburn history (45) and was Auburn 's leading scorer in school history (276 points) . Brown accumulated 845 rushing yards and caught 34 passes for 314 yards during the season prior to the Sugar Bowl . He finished with eight touchdowns and was named a second @-@ team All @-@ SEC pick . His 34 receptions were 10 more than he earned in his first three seasons combined .

Despite the attention focused on Auburn 's two star running backs , the team also boasted a capable corps of wide receivers as well . Prior to the game , Auburn receiver Ben Obomanu said , " When you have your running game making big plays and the defense has to load the box (defensive line) to make plays and try to stop the running game , that opens up things in the passing game . " Auburn averaged more yards passing (241 @. @ 4 per game) than running (189 @. @ 4 per game) .

= = = Virginia Tech offense = = =

Heading into the Sugar Bowl , the Virginia Tech offense was led by quarterback Bryan Randall , who completed 149 of 268 passes (55 @. @ 6 percent) for 1 @, @ 965 yards , 19 touchdowns , and seven interceptions . He also rushed for 466 yards and held Tech career records for total offense and passing yards . His 37 consecutive starts also are a school mark for a quarterback . In the preseason , Randall competed for the first @-@ string quarterback spot with Marcus Vick until the latter was suspended from Tech for a semester after a criminal conviction . In the weeks leading up to the Sugar Bowl , Randall was named the Virginia Division I Offensive Player of the Year by the Roanoke Times and was named the ACC Player of the Year .

Tech 's rushing offense featured two running backs who shared time on the field : Mike Imoh and Cedric Humes . During the regular season , Imoh rushed the ball 152 times for 704 yards , an average of 4 @. @ 6 yards per carry . He scored four touchdowns and set a school record for rushing yards in a game when he ran for 243 yards in Virginia Tech 's game against North Carolina . Humes was on the field slightly less than Imoh , but earned 595 yards and five touchdowns on 124 carries . Tech offensive tackle Jimmy Martin was expected to play in the game after recovering from a high ankle sprain .

On special teams , Tech 's Jim Davis blocked three field goals during the regular season , and teammate Darryl Tapp blocked a punt . Tech 's success on special teams was at least partially due to head coach Frank Beamer 's emphasis on that aspect of the game , a strategy known as " Beamerball . " Due to Tech 's acumen on special teams , Auburn was forced to spend extra time in preparing its special teams to face Virginia Tech in the Sugar Bowl .

The Sugar Bowl was a homecoming for Tech punter Vinnie Burns , who played high school football 15 miles (24 km) from the Louisiana Superdome , site of the Sugar Bowl . In addition , Burns ' father , Ronnie Burns , was a longtime Sugar Bowl committee member , and Vinnie committed to attend Virginia Tech while the Hokies were in New Orleans to play in the 2000 Sugar Bowl , that year 's national championship game .

= = = Auburn defense = = =

Before the Sugar Bowl , Auburn had the top @-@ ranked scoring defense in the country (allowing 11 @. @ 2 points per game) , the fifth @-@ ranked total defense (allowing 269 @. @ 5 total yards per game) , eighth in passing defense (allowing 163 yards passing per game) , and 16th in rushing

defense (allowing 106 @. @ 5 yards rushing per game) . Cornerback Carlos Rogers was one of the key players on the defensive squad . Rogers , who won the Jim Thorpe Award ? given annually to the best defensive back in the country ? earned consensus All @-@ America honors and was a finalist for the Bronco Nagurski Award and a semifinalist for the Chuck Bednarik Award , each given to the best defensive college football player in the United States .

Linebacker Travis Williams had the most tackles on the team during the regular season , finishing with 76 . He also tied for third on the team in tackles for loss (nine) , had two interceptions , two sacks , and was named a second @-@ team All @-@ SEC selection .

Senior safety Junior Rosegreen , freshman end Stanley McClover and junior nose guard Tommy Jackson were first @-@ team all @-@ SEC picks , signifying they were the best players at their position in the conference . Rosegreen had five interceptions during the regular season , including four in Auburn 's game against Tennessee . That single @-@ game performance tied the SEC record and set the Auburn record for the most interceptions in one game . Jackson finished the regular season with 49 tackles , six tackles for loss , and one sack .

Linebacker Antarrrious Williams was scheduled to miss the game after undergoing surgery to repair a dislocated bone suffered in the Tigers ' game against Georgia . Williams had 44 tackles during the regular season , and had been replaced by Derrick Graves in the SEC championship game . Graves was expected to do so again in the Sugar Bowl .

= = = Virginia Tech defense = = =

At the conclusion of the regular season , Virginia Tech 's defense was ranked third nationally in scoring defense (12 @. @ 6 points allowed per game) , fourth in total defense (269 @. @ 5 total yards allowed per game) and fifth in pass defense (149 @. @ 8 passing yards allowed per game) . The Tech defense featured two highly regarded cornerbacks , Jimmy Williams and Eric Green , who finished the regular season with 50 tackles and 31 tackles , respectively . Williams also had four interceptions (the most on the team) , including one returned for a touchdown , and was named first @-@ team All @-@ ACC . Green , meanwhile , had one interception . Auburn wide receiver Courtney Taylor praised the two players highly in an interview before the game , saying , " Those cornerbacks are amazing to me every time I look at them . I think , ' God , those guys are very athletic . ' We 're going to have our hands full . "

Linebacker Mikal Baaqee was first on the team in tackles , recording 63 during the regular season . Fellow linebacker Vince Hall ranked second , with 62 .

On the defensive line , defensive tackle Jonathan Lewis was considered a key player . Though limited by a cast protecting a broken pinky finger suffered during Virginia Tech 's game against Virginia , Lewis was expected to continue to perform well . Heading into the Sugar Bowl , Lewis had 38 tackles , including 10 tackles for loss and four sacks . Also on the defensive line was Darryl Tapp , who led the team in sacks , tackles for loss , and quarterback hurries . Tapp earned first @-@ team All @-@ ACC honors and had 55 tackles and one interception during the regular season .

= = Game summary = =

The 2005 Sugar Bowl kicked off at 8 : 00 p.m. EST on January 3 , 2005 , in New Orleans , Louisiana . Official attendance was listed as 77 @, @ 349 . Mike Tirico , Tim Brant , Terry Bowden , and Suzy Shuster were the announcers for the television broadcast , which was aired on ABC . About 10 million households watched the game on television in the United States , giving the game a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 5 and making it the 24th most popular Bowl Championship Series game in terms of television ratings . The game was also broadcast on ESPN Radio , and was commentated by Mark Jones , Bob Davie , and Holly Rowe . Spread bettors favored Auburn to win the game by seven points .

Pregame entertainment was provided by Bowl Games of America , a group composed of more than 2 @, @ 000 performing @-@ arts bands , dance teams , and cheer groups from across the United States . Together , they performed the song " God Bless America . " The traditional pregame singing

of the national anthem was sung by Brad Arnold from the band 3 Doors Down . Dick Honig was the referee , the umpire was Jim Krogstad , and the linesman was Brent Durbin .

= = = First quarter = = =

Following the ceremonial pre @-@ game coin toss , Auburn elected to kick off to Virginia Tech to begin the game , ensuring the Tigers would have possession to begin the second half . Tech began the first drive of the game from its 20 @-@ yard line following a touchback . The Hokies initially had success moving the ball , as quarterback Bryan Randall rushed for seven yards on the game 's first play , then completed a four @-@ yard pass to wide receiver Eddie Royal two plays later for a first down . The Auburn defense recovered , however , and the Hokies did not gain another first down and were forced to punt . Auburn recovered the ball and began its first drive of the game from its 26 @-@ yard line . On the Tigers ' first play , quarterback Jason Campbell threw a long pass to Cooper Wallace for 35 yards . This was followed by another long play as running back Ronnie Brown ran for 31 yards . After the initial shock of the Auburn offense , the Virginia Tech defense firmed up , and Auburn 's next three plays were stopped for losses or minimal gains . Facing a fourth down at the Virginia Tech six @-@ yard line , Auburn sent in kicker John Vaughn , who kicked a 23 @-@ yard field goal for the game 's first points . With 8 : 35 remaining in the first quarter , Auburn took an early 3 ? 0 lead .

Following the post @-@ field goal kickoff , the Virginia Tech offense attempted to answer Auburn 's quick score . Unfortunately for the Hokies , their second drive fared even worse than the first . Tech committed a 10 @-@ yard penalty , suffered an eight @-@ yard loss on a play , then had a Bryan Randall pass intercepted by Auburn safety Junior Rosegreen . Rosegreen returned the ball 31 yards , and put Auburn 's offense into good field position for its second drive of the game . Auburn also suffered an early penalty in its drive , but moved the ball with another long play ? a 23 @-@ yard pass to Courtney Taylor ? to recover . Again , however , the Virginia Tech defense recovered to force Auburn into a fourth down and a field goal attempt . Vaughn returned to the field and kicked a 19 @-@ yard field goal , giving Auburn a 6 ? 0 lead with 1 : 06 remaining in the quarter .

With time in the quarter running out , Virginia Tech fielded the post @-@ score kickoff and executed a quick series of plays , gaining a first down before time ran out . At the end of the first quarter , Auburn held an early 6 ? 0 lead .

= = = Second quarter = = =

Virginia Tech began the second quarter in possession of the ball and driving down the field . Bryan Randall completed a 10 @-@ yard pass for another first down , but after Tech failed to gain another , the Hokies were forced to punt . Auburn reciprocated by going three and out and punting the ball back to Virginia Tech . In its first full drive of the second quarter , the Hokies had their best drive of the first half . After a holding penalty nullified a long kickoff return , Tech began at its 24 @-@ yard line . Randall completed a nine @-@ yard pass to tight end Jeff King , then ran for another nine yards on a quarterback scramble . He followed the first @-@ down run by completing three consecutive long passes of 16 yards , 13 yards , and 31 yards , respectively . The last pass , to wide receiver Josh Hyman , drove Virginia Tech inside the Auburn two @-@ yard line . There , however , the Tech offense faltered . On three plays , Tech failed to cross the goal line , gaining only one yard in the process . Facing fourth down and needing just one yard for a touchdown , Virginia Tech head coach Frank Beamer elected to attempt to gain the touchdown , rather than send in his kicker for a field goal attempt . The attempted touchdown pass by Randall fell incomplete , and Virginia Tech turned the ball over on downs without scoring any points .

Auburn 's offense took over at its one @-@ yard line after Tech 's failure to score . Jason Campbell orchestrated a successful drive that took Auburn from the shadow of its own end zone , completing passes of 16 yards , 15 yards , and 37 yards in the process . Inside the Virginia Tech red zone , however , the Auburn offense again stumbled . As it had in its two previous scoring drives , Auburn was forced to send in kicker John Vaughn despite being inside the Virginia Tech 10 @-@ yard line .

Vaughn 's 24 @-@ yard kick was successful , and with 1 : 50 remaining in the second quarter , Auburn extended its lead to 9 ? 0 .

With little time remaining before halftime , Virginia Tech used a hurry @-@ up offense . Randall completed a 23 @-@ yard pass to Eddie Royal and ran for 22 yards on his own , but threw three consecutive incomplete passes to end the drive . Tech was forced to punt the ball away , and the first half came to an end . At halftime , Auburn led , 9 ? 0 .

= = = Halftime = = =

The halftime show was presented by Bowl Games of America , a collection of dance troupes , marching bands , and cheerleading squads from across the United States . Together , the organizations presented a pirate @-@ themed show based on the character of Jean Lafitte , a noted brigand who lived in New Orleans ? site of the game ? during the War of 1812 .

= = = Third quarter = = =

Because Virginia Tech received the ball to begin the game , Auburn received the ball to begin the second half . The Tigers started the first drive of the second half at their 22 @-@ yard line . Carnell Williams and Ronnie Brown alternated carries as Auburn gained 17 yards in their first three plays . Jason Campbell completed a pass for a five @-@ yard loss , then , on the fifth play of the drive , completed a 53 @-@ yard pass to Anthony Mix . The pass was the longest play of the game , and drove the Tigers inside the Virginia Tech red zone . Three plays later , Campbell connected with Devin Aromashodu on a five @-@ yard pass for the game 's first touchdown . With 10 : 39 remaining in the third quarter , Auburn had taken a 16 ? 0 lead .

After Auburn 's kickoff , Virginia Tech started its first drive of the second half at its 20 @-@ yard line . Down by 16 points , Tech needed to score . The Hokies gained a quick first down , but a five @-@ yard penalty and a sack of Bryan Randall prevented Tech from gaining another . The Hokies were forced to punt , and Auburn took over at its 44 @-@ yard line . Despite having good field position , the Tigers went three and out . Following the punt , Virginia Tech reciprocated by also going three and out . With 3 : 47 remaining in the quarter , Auburn began an offensive drive from its 35 @-@ yard line . From the beginning of the drive , however , the Tigers had problems . The first play of Auburn 's drive was a 10 @-@ yard penalty against the Tigers . The second resulted in a one @-@ yard loss by Ronnie Brown , who attempted to rush through the middle of the defensive line . On the third play , Virginia Tech cornerback Jimmy Williams intercepted an errant pass by Jason Campbell . Though Williams was unable to advance the ball , the Hokies still took over on offense , and with 2 : 38 remaining in the quarter , had their best field position since the first half .

The first play of the Tech drive resulted in a 12 @-@ yard gain as Josh Hyman rushed for 12 yards and a first down on an end @-@ around . Running back Cedric Humes was stopped for a loss on the first play after Hyman 's rush , but earned 10 yards on two subsequent rushes , setting up a fourth down . Needing one yard for a first down , behind by 16 points , and with time running down in the quarter , Tech head coach Frank Beamer elected to attempt the first down play rather than kick a field goal . Humes again rushed the ball , and as time ran out in the third quarter , picked up enough ground for the first down . With one quarter of play remaining , Auburn led Virginia Tech 16 ? 0 , but the Hokies had picked up a first down inside the Auburn 10 @-@ yard line to begin the fourth quarter .

= = = Fourth quarter = = =

Virginia Tech began the fourth quarter in possession of the ball , and facing a first down at the Auburn 10 @-@ yard line . In three consecutive plays , however , the Hokies only picked up a total of four yards . Needing six yards to get a touchdown , Virginia Tech sent in kicker Brandon Pace to attempt a 23 @-@ yard field goal . Despite the short distance , Pace missed the kick . With 13 : 56 remaining in the game , Auburn still held a 16 ? 0 lead .

Following the missed field goal , Auburn took over on offense at its six @-@ yard line ? the point from which Tech had missed the kick . Ronnie Brown picked up 13 yards and a first down on three rushes . Carnell Williams then picked up three yards , and Jason Campbell threw a seven @-@ yard pass that gave Auburn another first down . A five @-@ yard penalty against Virginia Tech pushed Auburn 's offense near midfield , and Ronnie Brown returned to the field , rushing the ball four consecutive times for 16 yards and driving the Tigers into Virginia Tech territory . Facing a fourth down and one yard , Auburn elected to give the ball to Brown again . On the one @-@ yard run , however , Brown fumbled the ball , which was recovered by Virginia Tech 's Mikal Baagee with 8 : 38 remaining .

Virginia Tech 's offense came on to the field desperately needing to score quickly . Though the deficit was only 16 points , and could be made up with two touchdowns and two two @-@ point conversions , the limited time remaining meant the task would be difficult , even if Virginia Tech scored quickly . The Hokies began the drive with a 17 @-@ yard pass by quarterback Bryan Randall . Justin Hamilton rushed for five yards , and Randall completed a six @-@ yard pass for another first down . The Tigers helped matters by committing a 15 @-@ yard penalty , which put the Hokies inside Auburn territory . Three plays later , Randall capitalized on the opportunity by completing a 29 @-@ yard pass to Josh Morgan for a touchdown and the Hokies ' first points of the game . Tech attempted a two @-@ point conversion , but the pass attempt fell incomplete . With 6 : 57 remaining , Virginia Tech now trailed 16 ? 6 .

After receiving the post @-@ touchdown kickoff , Auburn began to run out the clock . The Tigers failed to pick up a first down , and after going three and out , punted the ball back to Virginia Tech . The Hokies started their drive at their two @-@ yard line , and Randall began it successfully by completing a 20 @-@ yard pass , rushing for 10 yards , then completing a five @-@ yard pass to bring the Hokies near midfield . On the fourth play of the drive , however , Randall was intercepted by Auburn 's Derrick Graves . The Tigers , their offense again on the field , began running out the clock again . Tech attempted to interrupt Auburn 's clock management by calling timeouts after each play , stopping the clock with each timeout . Virginia Tech forced Auburn into a three and out , and the Tigers again punted the ball away with 2 : 13 remaining .

After the ball rolled into the end zone for a touchback , Virginia Tech began its final drive at its 20 @-@ yard line . On the first play of the drive , Bryan Randall completed an 80 @-@ yard touchdown pass to Josh Morgan . The score plus the extra point cut Auburn 's lead to 16 ? 13 . With time in the game almost exhausted , Virginia Tech was forced to attempt an onside kick in order to have a chance to get another offensive drive . Because the Hokies had used their final timeouts to stop the clock on Auburn 's previous drive , Auburn would be free to run out the game 's final minutes . Despite the hopes of Virginia Tech for a last @-@ second miracle , the Auburn Tigers recovered the kick , allowing them to run out the clock and clinch a 16 ? 13 victory .

= = Final statistics = =

Auburn quarterback Jason Campbell completed 11 of 16 passes for 189 yards , one touchdown , and one interception , and was named the game 's most valuable player . Despite his performance , he was neither the leading scorer on his team nor the overall best performer in the game . Auburn kicker John Vaughn was successful on all three of his field goal attempts and also succeeded on his sole extra point kick in the game , resulting in 10 Auburn points . On the opposite side of the ball , Virginia Tech quarterback Bryan Randall completed 21 of his 38 passes for 299 yards , two touchdowns , and two interceptions . Virginia Tech kicker Branden Pace missed his sole field goal attempt of the game , a 23 @-@ yard kick .

On the ground , Auburn running back Ronnie Brown led all rushers with 68 yards on 14 carries . Second was Auburn 's Carnell Williams , who gained 61 yards on 19 carries . Bryan Randall was the Hokies ' leading rusher , accumulating 45 yards on nine carries . Tech 's two running backs , Mike Imoh and Cedric Humes , were stymied by the Auburn defense and managed just 26 yards on 12 combined carries . Virginia Tech wide receiver Josh Morgan finished the game with three receptions for 126 yards and two touchdowns , making him the game 's most prolific receiver . Auburn 's

Courtney Taylor was second , with five catches for 87 yards , and Tech 's Josh Hyman was third with five catches for 71 yards .

For the defense , Virginia Tech cornerback Jimmy Williams was the top performer . Williams had 10 tackles , including 3 @. @ 5 tackles for loss , and one interception . Tech 's Mikal Baaqee had eight tackles and one fumble recovery , making him the game 's second @-@ leading tackler . Auburn defender Derrick Graves was the most prolific tackler for the Tigers , making seven tackles and catching one interception of an errant Bryan Randall pass . Three players had one sack ? two for Virginia Tech and one for Auburn .

= = Postgame effects = =

With the win , Auburn finished the season undefeated , with 13 wins and zero losses . Virginia Tech 's loss gave it a final record of 10 ? 3 .

The victory gave Auburn fans hope that if Oklahoma won the 2005 BCS National Championship Game , a split national championship would result . By contract , the winner of the BCS National Championship Game is voted number one in the USA Today Coaches ' Poll . In contrast , the Associated Press poll has no such restriction . Auburn 's thin margin of victory over Tech put the prospect of split national title in doubt , though not out of reach . USC 's blowout 55 ? 19 victory over Oklahoma , however , made it likely that USC would be the overwhelming choice for first place . When the final college football polls of the season were released , USC was voted number one by a large margin , though three voters in the Associated Press poll voted Auburn first . More than three years after the game , ESPN sportswriter Ted Miller rated the game second on his list of victims of the BCS system , just behind USC being left out of the championship game in 2003 .

The Tigers lost 18 players due to graduation , and several juniors elected to enter the 2005 NFL Draft as well . During the first round of the draft , Auburn had four players selected : Ronnie Brown , with the second overall pick , Carnell Williams (fifth) , Carlos Rogers (ninth) , and Jason Campbell (25th) . Virginia Tech had three players selected in the 2005 draft : Eric Green (75th) , Vincent Fuller (108th) , and Jon Dunn (217th) . Virginia Tech 's appearance in the Sugar Bowl helped its recruiting efforts in the state of Virginia , with eight of the state 's top recruits (ranked by the Roanoke Times newspaper) , pledging to attend Tech .

The visiting fans of Auburn and Virginia Tech injected tens of millions of dollars into the New Orleans economy , despite high food , travel , and lodging costs that forced some fans to cut discretionary spending during their trips .