

= 2007 Hawaii Bowl =

The 2007 Sheraton Hawaii Bowl was a post @-@ season college football bowl game between the Boise State University Broncos from the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) and the East Carolina University Pirates from Conference USA (C @-@ USA) at the Aloha Stadium in Honolulu , Hawai'i on December 23 , 2007 . The game was the final competition of the 2007 football season for each team and resulted in a 41 ? 38 East Carolina victory , even though sportsbooks favored Boise State to win by 10 ½ points . Many experts believed East Carolina to be big underdogs to Boise State , which had defeated the Oklahoma Sooners in the 2007 Fiesta Bowl . The 2007 Hawai'i Bowl paid \$ 750 @, @ 000 to each team 's conference in exchange for their participation .

The game , which was the sixth edition of the bowl , was expected to be an offensive shootout . Boise State averaged 42 @. @ 4 points during the 2007 season , while East Carolina averaged 31 . That expectation turned out to be justified as East Carolina took a 31 ? 14 lead in the first half . The Broncos fought back in the second half , however , tying the score at 38 late in the fourth quarter after East Carolina 's Chris Johnson fumbled the ball , allowing Bronco defender Marty Tadman to recover the ball and return it 47 yards for a touchdown . The game remained tied until the final moments as East Carolina 's Ben Hartman made a 34 ? yard game @-@ winning field goal as time expired . The attendance of 30 @, @ 467 was the largest crowd to attend a Hawai'i Bowl game that did not feature the host school . Boise State 's loss dropped them to a final 2007 record of 10 ? 3 , while East Carolina 's final @-@ game win earned them a record of 8 ? 5 .

= = Selection process = =

The Hawai'i football team normally receives an automatic bid to the game unless the team is selected to participate in a BCS game or is not bowl eligible . If either of those events happen , the WAC selects its next @-@ highest ranked team to compete in the game . In 2007 , Hawai'i was selected to play on January 1 , 2008 in the Sugar Bowl against Georgia , marking just the second time since the creation of the Hawai'i Bowl that Hawai'i would not participate . The only previous time that Hawai'i failed to make an appearance was in 2005 , when the Warriors finished their season with a 5 ? 7 record and were not eligible for a bowl game .

Conference USA fields the other team in the Hawai'i Bowl . The Liberty Bowl has the first selection of C @-@ USA teams , and GMAC Bowl picks second . After those two are picked , the conference provides a team for the Hawai'i Bowl and three other bowls . In 2007 , the University of Central Florida accepted the bid to compete in the Liberty Bowl , Tulsa accepted the bid to compete in the GMAC Bowl , leaving East Carolina to be selected by the Hawai'i Bowl on December 1 , 2007 .

Boise State was undefeated in conference play going into the final game of the regular season , and suffered just one out @-@ of @-@ conference loss . In that final game , BSU lost 39 ? 27 to undefeated Hawai'i . Following the game , the Broncos decided to travel to Hawai'i , rather than play at home in the Humanitarian Bowl , which is located at Boise 's home stadium in Boise , Idaho and features a matchup between a WAC team and one from the Atlantic Coast Conference . Boise ended its regular season 10 ? 2 overall and 7 ? 1 in conference play .

East Carolina , meanwhile , had been in first place in the C @-@ USA 's East Division with just two games remaining . A loss to Marshall University in that second @-@ to @-@ last game , however , put ECU into second place in its division , and thus out of competition for the Conference USA Championship . After winning against conference foe Tulane in the final game of the season , the Pirates decided to travel to the Hawai'i Bowl . East Carolina ended the regular season 7 ? 5 overall , and 6 ? 2 in conference play .

= = Pre @-@ game buildup = =

On December 1 , 2007 , Hawai'i Bowl representatives announced East Carolina and Boise State as the competitors in the 2007 edition of the game . It would be the first time in history that the two teams had ever met . Two weeks after the announcement , Boise State 's top wide receiver Jeremy

Childs , cornerback Keith McGowen , and linebacker Ben Chandler were declared out for the game after violating team rules . In an online contest held by ESPN.com in the weeks leading up to the game , 98 % of the participants voted that Boise State would beat East Carolina . Participants also gave 32 out of 32 " confidence points " on average , indicating the highest possible confidence in the predicted outcome .

= = = Boise State offense versus East Carolina defense = = =

Boise State came into the game averaging 42 @. @ 75 points and 475 @. @ 67 yards per game , the fourth and twelfth highest totals in college football . Senior quarterback Taylor Tharp led the offense by more than 3 @, @ 000 yards and 28 touchdowns , headed into the 2007 Hawai'i Bowl . On the ground , the Broncos were led by junior running back Ian Johnson , who had 17 touchdowns and 1 @, @ 030 yards in the regular season . Wide receiver Jeremy Childs also was a potent threat on offense , averaging 87 @. @ 08 receiving yards per game , and backup running back D.J. Harper rushed for 41 @. @ 44 yards per game on average . Johnson and Childs both earned First Team All @- @ WAC honors , and Tharp was named to Second Team All @- @ WAC . Offensive tackle Ryan Clady was the team 's only All @- @ American , and promised to do a good job protecting Taylor Tharp on the offensive line .

East Carolina had been shaky on defense . ECU ranked 98th in total defense and 115th in passing defense , giving up an average of 436 @. @ 42 yards per game . Despite that fact , the Pirates did well in the turnover battle , gaining 27 turnovers while losing just 13 ? a margin of + 14 ? good enough for ninth in the country . In addition , the ECU defense ranked eleventh nationally in tackles for loss . Defensive linemen Zack Slate and C.J. Wilson and defensive back Van Eskridge took C ? USA All ? Conference second team honors .

= = = East Carolina offense versus Boise State defense = = =

Boise State faced the nation 's top all @- @ purpose yards leader , All @- @ American Chris Johnson . Johnson racked up an average of 212 @. @ 67 all @- @ purpose yards per game during the 2007 season , making him a potent threat on offense . Taking snaps for the offense were quarterbacks Patrick Pinkney and Rob Kass . Pinkney had a passer rating of 131 @. @ 58 , while Kass had a comparable rating of 122 @. @ 94 . The top receiver for the Pirates was Jamar Bryant , who averaged 3 @. @ 5 catches for 52 @. @ 17 yards per game . In addition to Chris Johnson , who was named to the C ? USA All ? Conference second team , offensive lineman Josh Coffman received C ? USA All @- @ Conference second team honors .

The Broncos ' defense , meanwhile , was ranked number one in the WAC in total defense , scoring defense , rushing defense , and pass defense . The team 's defense ranked number two in the conference in pass efficiency defense , turnover margin , and sacks . Defensive lineman Nick Schlekeway and defensive back Marty Tadman both received All ? WAC first team honors and promised to pose difficulties for the Pirates ' offensive front .

= = Game summary = =

The 2007 Hawai'i Bowl kicked off on December 23 , 2007 at 8 : 00 p.m EST in front of an estimated crowd of 30 @, @ 467 , which was the largest crowd in Hawai'i Bowl history for a game not featuring the Hawai 'i football team . The game was nationally televised on ESPN , and was watched by an estimated average of 1 @. @ 6 million people , good enough for a television rating of 1 @. @ 47 . East Carolina had to travel 4 @, @ 861 miles (7 @, @ 823 km) one way , making it the longest bowl trip of the season for any team during the 2007 bowl season . Boise State , meanwhile , traveled 2 @, @ 835 miles (4 @, @ 562 km) to Hawai'i . Due to the distance involved , East Carolina fans wishing to support their school , but unable to travel to the game , bought 2 @, @ 709 tickets for troops stationed in Hawai'i as a show of support . The weather at kickoff was mostly cloudy with winds from the northeast at 13 miles (21 km) . The temperature was 77 ° F (25 ° C) .

For the officiating crew , the referee was Terry Leyden , umpire was Kevin Matthews , and the linesman was Bob Bahne . The line judge was Bart Longson , the back judge was Joe Johnston and the field judge was Ed Vinzant . The side judge was Craig Falkner .

= = = First quarter = = =

East Carolina won the pre @-@ game coin toss and deferred the ball until the second half , allowing Boise State to receive the ball to begin the game . The Broncos received the opening kickoff at their 4 ? yard line and went three @-@ and @-@ out . Following the Broncos ' punt , East Carolina began its first possession of the game on its 43 ? yard line . The offense marched to the 19 ? yard line of Boise State , but was stopped on third down . ECU kicker Ben Hartman was sent into the game and made a field goal from 36 yards away .

East Carolina kicked the ball to Boise State 's Austin Smith and he returned the kickoff 89 yards for a touchdown . The touchdown and extra point made the score 7 ? 3 and gave Boise State its only lead of the game .

The next two drives for each team ended in punts . On East Carolina 's third drive , Chris Johnson rushed on the first play 68 yards for a touchdown . With the point after , East Carolina lead 10 ? 7 . The next Boise State drive ended in a three and out , and the Broncos kicked the ball away . The Pirates marched down the field 55 yards , but the quarter ended before ECU had a chance to score .

At the end of the first quarter , East Carolina led Boise State 10 ? 7 .

= = = Second quarter = = =

ECU began the second quarter on Boise 's 30 ? yard line , and quarterback Patrick Pinkney continued the Pirates ' drive with a 14 ? yard rush . After three more successful plays , Dominique Lindsay rushed 3 yards for a touchdown . Kicker Ben Hartman converted the point after , which made the score 17 ? 7 ECU .

The Broncos ' first drive of the second quarter was halted after a holding penalty and an incomplete pass denied BSU a chance for a first down . Boise was forced to kick the ball away once more . The Pirates ' second drive of the quarter began at their 26 ? yard line . ECU needed just four plays to march 74 yards down the field for a touchdown . On the drive , Chris Johnson rushed for 46 yards and threw an 18 ? yard pass for a touchdown . After the touchdown and the extra point kick , ECU led 24 ? 7 .

Boise State 's first play after the post @-@ touchdown kickoff was intercepted by Pirates ' defender Travis Williams . Despite the turnover , East Carolina was unable to attain a first down , and went three @-@ and @-@ out before punting . On Boise 's second play of the new drive following the punt , the team earned its first first down of the game . The Broncos continued the drive by going 69 yards in eight plays , culminating in a touchdown . The series included five complete passes and two rushes . With the score , The Broncos had closed the gap to ten points : 24 ? 14 East Carolina .

East Carolina started their series on their 41 ? yard line . A substitution infraction on ECU and an incomplete pass forced ECU to punt the ball away . On the Broncos ' fourth drive of the second quarter , the team began with three complete passes for 18 yards . On the fourth play , however , BSU 's Titus Young fumbled the ball away . Pirates ' defender Jay Ross recovered the fumble , and ECU had another chance on offense before the end of the first half . East Carolina ran five plays for 38 yards . With the clock running down , ECU elected to kick a field goal . The kick was good , and made the score 31 ? 14 ECU . Boise State had one final chance on offense , and Boise Quarterback Taylor Tharp went two @-@ for @-@ four , but ran out of time before coming into field goal range .

At halftime , East Carolina led Boise State 31 ? 14 .

= = = Third quarter = = =

Because Boise State had received the opening kickoff , East Carolina received the ball to open the

second half . ECU completed seven rushes and four passes for 74 yards in five minutes and 53 seconds . On the last play of the drive , Brandon Simmons rushed three yards for a touchdown , and ECU increased its lead to 38 ? 14 .

To begin its first series of the second half , Boise State returned the post @-@ touchdown kickoff 55 yards . Two quick plays later , Boise quarterback Taylor Tharp completed a pass to Jeremy Avery for a touchdown , cutting East Carolina 's lead to 17 points , 38 ? 21 .

After the punt , the Pirates were unable to obtain a first down . Three plays netted only two yards , and ECU was forced to punt the ball away . On the ensuing drive , Boise State completed three first downs on the series . BSU kicker Kyle Brotzman , converted a 31 yard field goal and the Broncos shrank the ECU lead further . The series went 40 yards in nine plays . It took the team two minutes and 37 seconds to score .

East Carolina took the kickoff on the 39 ? yard line , after a Boise player illegally touched the ball on the 39 . Pinkney threw an incomplete pass to start the drive , and after two more plays failed to convert the first down , ECU was forced to punt the ball away . After a touchback , Boise State began at its 20 ? yard line . The Broncos completed three plays for 11 yards before the third quarter ended .

At the end of the third quarter , East Carolina led Boise State 38 ? 24 .

= = = Fourth quarter = = =

BSU started the fourth quarter by throwing two incomplete passes . Tharp then completed two passes for a combined 39 yards before Pirates ' defender J.J. Milbrook intercepted Tharp 's fifth pass of the quarter . Milbrook returned the interception 27 yards . The Pirates completed one first down but failed to convert the interception into points . Kicker Matt Dodge came into the game , ostensibly to punt the ball away . In a trick play , he rushed the ball instead , picking up the first down . Despite the trick play 's success , the Pirates were not able to gain another first down . On fourth down , Dodge came out again , and this time punted the ball 47 yards for a touchback . The Broncos began the second drive of the fourth quarter by going 80 yards in nine plays for a touchdown . It took just three minutes and 59 seconds and BSU only three first downs . Boise had now cut the Pirates ' lead to 38 ? 31 .

On the next drive , ECU brought in a new quarterback , Rob Kass . Kass was initially successful , and gained a few first downs . The Boise State defense stiffened , however , and ECU was forced to punt the ball away . After a touchback , Boise State began on its 20 ? yard line . Running back Jeremy Avery rushed for four yards on the first play . On the third play , Tharp completed a pass for nine yards for a first down . Tharp then passed three straight times for 32 yards and two first downs . On subsequent plays , Tharp rushed for six yards and passed for another six to convert BSU 's third first down of the drive . Three plays later , however , the Broncos ' Titus Young fumbled the ball for the second time in the game , and as before , ECU recovered , seemingly sealing the victory .

After a Boise State unsportsmanlike conduct penalty , ECU began its their 39 ? yard line , needing only to rush the ball to keep the clock moving in order to secure the win . On the second rush by Chris Johnson , however , he fumbled the ball . The fumble was recovered by Broncos ' defender Marty Tadman at the ECU 47 ? yard line and returned all the way for a touchdown . After the PAT , Boise State tied East Carolina 38 ? 38 . The fumble and touchdown turned what had been an inevitable ECU victory into a tie game .

Boise kicked the ball deep , hoping to stop the Pirates ' offense and force overtime . Following the kick , ECU began at its own nine ? yard line . The Pirates began the drive with one minute and 16 seconds left in the game . Dominique Lindsay rushed for two yards before Rob Kass completed a pass to Jamar Bryant for 39 yards , enough for a first down near midfield . The Pirates ' continued to move forward , passing for short yardage and rushing for short gains that kept the clock moving , but advanced the ball closer to field goal range . On the third to the last play , Kass rushed for seven yards , and ECU took a timeout with 15 seconds left . Rob Kass lost one yard while moving the ball towards the center of the field in order to set up a game @-@ ending kick . ECU took its last timeout , again stopping the clock . With four seconds remaining on the clock , ECU kicker Ben Hartman

converted a 34 ? yard field goal to take the lead and the win , 41 ? 38 , as time ran out .

= = Final statistics = =

East Carolina running back Chris Johnson finished the game with 223 rushing yards , 32 receiving yards , and 153 return yards for a total of 408 all @-@ purpose yards . That mark broke the NCAA bowl record for all @-@ purpose yards previously set by Alabama 's Sherman Williams against Ohio State in the 1995 Citrus Bowl . On the basis of his record @-@ setting performance , Johnson was named the game 's Most Valuable Player . On the opposite side of the ball , Boise State tailback Jeremy Avery had a solid , if unspectacular , outing . He produced 69 rushing yards , 43 receiving yards , 41 kick ? return yards , and caught a 25 ? yard touchdown pass . Both Johnson and Avery received the Most Valuable Player award for their respective teams .

Boise State committed four turnovers , compared with East Carolina 's one . The Broncos fumbled the ball away twice and threw two interceptions . Despite the disparity in turnover margin , the teams were strikingly similar in several statistical categories , indicating the closeness of the game : Each team earned seven points off the turnovers . Both teams committed 50 yards in penalties ; the Pirates had seven penalties to the Broncos ' four . In addition , both teams earned 22 first downs .

= = Boise State statistical recap = =

Boise State University had 368 total offensive yards during the game . About 73 % of BSU 's total offense came through the air , as quarterback Taylor Tharp passed for 270 yards . The remaining 98 yards came on the ground from five different rushers . Running back Jeremy Avery ran for a team @-@ high 69 yards on 10 carries , while running back D.J. Harper had the only Boise State rushing touchdown of the game .

Tharp 's 30 completions were caught by eight different receivers . Austin Pettis led the team with nine catches for 89 yards , and his total accounted for one ? third of the team 's receiving yards . Two receivers , Jeremy Avery and Ryan Putnam , accounted for all of the team 's receiving touchdowns . Avery had four catches for 43 yards , while Putnam had one catch for three yards .

Taylor Tharp 's two interceptions were the second @-@ most he had thrown in a game during 2007 , and brought his season interception total to 11 . He completed 30 of 44 pass attempts , a completion percentage of 68 @. @ 2 % . His 270 yards were 13 yards more than his season average of 257 yards . With only two passing touchdowns , Tharp tied for his third @-@ worst passing game in 2007 , faring worse only in the win against Weber State , loss to Washington , win against Fresno State , and loss to Hawai'i . Tharp was sacked once by Pirates ' defensive lineman C.J. Wilson for a seven yard loss .

Boise State 's defense had a hard time stopping the East Carolina offense , especially in the first half . The Pirates ' 31 points were the most scored all year by East Carolina in the first half . Leading the Broncos ' defense was safety Marty Tadman . Tadman had seven solo tackles , three assisted tackles , and recorded a defensive touchdown after recovering Chris Johnson 's fumble late in the fourth quarter . Linebacker Kyle Gingg also starred on defense , recording seven solo tackles , one assisted tackle , and one tackle for a one @-@ yard loss . A total of 23 players recorded at least one tackle .

Kyle Brotzman handled all the kicking duties for Boise State , punting the ball four times for 169 yards . His longest punt was 52 yards , and one kick was downed inside the Pirates ' 20 yard line . His only field goal was a 31 ? yard kick that came with three minutes and 11 seconds left in the third quarter . Brotzman kicked off seven times for 384 yards , averaging 54 @. @ 9 yards per kick with no touchbacks . Marty Tadman had BSU 's only punt return for -1 yard . The Broncos ' special teams had more luck on kickoff returns . Three players had kickoff returns . Austin Smith returned four kickoffs for 173 yards . His 89 ? yard return for a touchdown in the first quarter was the team 's longest of the game and gave Boise State its only lead of the game . Jeremy Avery returned two kicks for 41 yards , and Titus Young returned one kick for 52 yards .

Boise State controlled the time of possession only during the fourth quarter , when the Broncos

scored 14 points to tie the game . Overall , however , Boise State only controlled the ball for 26 minutes and 16 seconds , in comparison to East Carolina 's 33 minutes and 44 seconds .

= = = East Carolina statistical recap = = =

Almost 70 % of the Pirates ' rushing offense came from running back Chris Johnson , and the rushing offense itself consisted of two ? thirds of East Carolina 's total offensive effort . Six additional rushers contributed 99 yards on the ground . The longest rush of the game ? 68 yards ? came from Johnson . Quarterback Patrick Pinkney played much of the game , completing 12 passes in 19 attempts . Pinkney threw for 118 yards and one touchdown , but the longest pass came from the Pirates ' second quarterback , Rob Kass . Kass threw a 36 ? yard pass in the fourth quarter to keep the Pirates ' game @-@ winning drive alive . The pass was Kass 's only completion out of three attempts . Almost one ? third of East Carolina 's total offense came from the air .

Ben Hartman and Matt Dodge both contributed to East Carolina 's kicking game . Dodge punted the ball seven times for 302 yards . His longest was a 61 ? yard kick , and he had four touchbacks . Hartman and Dodge shared kickoff duty . Dodge had four kickoffs , compared with Hartman 's three . Dodge averaged 60 @.@ 5 yards per kick , while Hartman averaged 57 yards . In addition , Hartman added six points to the scoreboard from field goal attempts . He was two for two , with the second field goal attempt being the game @-@ winner in the fourth quarter . Dwayne Harris handled all punt returns . He fielded two punts , returning them for a total of five yards . Kickoff @-@ return duty was handled by Chris Johnson . He returned six kickoffs for 153 yards , with his longest return consisting of 39 yards .

East Carolina 's defense managed a strong performance statistically and in real terms . The most obvious examples of this were the two interceptions and two forced fumbles . On the first play of the second drive of the second quarter , Boise State quarterback Taylor Tharp threw an interception to defensive back Travis Williams . Williams also recorded eight solo tackles ? the second @-@ highest total for the Pirates ? and a forced fumble . The other interception came from defensive back J.J. Milbrook , who also boasted three solo tackles , tying him for fifth ? best on the team . Linebacker Jeremy forced the final Broncos turnover , gaining the ball and four yards on the play . In addition to his forced fumble , Chambliss recorded four solo tackles . The Pirates ' defense as a whole only gave up three yards in the first quarter and did not allow a first down until halfway through the second quarter .

That strong defensive effort limited the Broncos ' third ? down conversion rate to 50 % . Until the fourth quarter , BSU was just two for seven on third ? down attempts . On offense , the Pirates fared slightly better , going six for fifteen on third downs .

= = After @-@ effects = =

The win by East Carolina knocked # 24 Boise State out of the final AP Poll of the year . This was the first time BSU was not ranked in the AP Poll top 25 since October 28 , 2007 . Because of his impressive performance , Chris Johnson was invited to the 2008 Senior Bowl . After the game , East Carolina finished the season 8 @-@ 5 , the highest win total since 2000 . This also marked Coach Skip Holtz 's first Bowl win . Boise State finished the season 10 @-@ 3 . This marked Coach Chris Petersen first post @-@ season loss .