



Florida State University

ARF News Special Feature

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Pasadena 2014: Winning the Big One

by Fred Standley



Appearing in 2009 at his first football kickoff luncheon as the new President of FSU, Eric Barron in his brief remarks indicated that in athletics he would be satisfied with nothing less than winning a football national championship. Obviously that struck a responsive chord in those who were present because of the university's history in the sport.

Six times in the last two decades the Seminoles have played for the national title, having won three of the half-dozen. In 1993 we beat Nebraska in the Orange Bowl; in 1997 we lost to Florida in the Sugar Bowl;

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The game that stands out for us, however, is the victory in Pasadena. It was the first time for the Seminoles to play in the Rose Bowl, the so-called granddaddy of all of the bowls, and that is special. Of course it was the game that wrested the national championship from the recent hegemony of the Southeastern Conference. That win tied us with the hated Gators for the number of national championships each team has won. And, it marked the second time the Noles have won the national honor by going undefeated throughout the season and postseason.

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The tradition of Chief Osceola riding Renegade onto the field and planting a flaming spear in the grass - a pre-game highlight of every FSU home game - continued in the Rose Bowl on Monday night.

Renegade made the 2,300-mile trip by van from Tallahassee to Southern California, leaving at 5 a.m. Jan. 1 and arriving Friday evening.

Allan Durham runs the program that helps maintain the horses and pick and train the riders and support workers.

“We had a great time bringing Renegade out here,” Allan Durham said. “It was definitely the road trip of the century for us.”

Renegade was housed by the Los Angeles Police Department while in LA.





Quite by chance we were housed in the excellent Balboa Bay Club Hotel in Newport Beach with an array of amenities and considerable local lore. In earlier days Hollywood stars lived in the area. The hotel lounge with its Dukes Bar was once the haunt of John Wayne who used to down his afternoon whiskey there as well as play poker and chess. Additionally, it was a favorite hangout of the infamous Rat Pack, featuring Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., Joey Bishop and Peter Lawford.

Ah, but the game! What can one say to do justice to the magnitude of the win after that sinking feeling of futility in the first quarter, then a glimmer of hope in the second, the huge uncertainty of the third, and finally the euphoria and exuberance with four seconds left on the clock. The almost delirious joy of being Seminoles at the end contrasted sharply with the evident disbelief on the faces of the Tigers in the post game aftermath.

The Marching Chiefs flew to Pasadena in a double decker 747. They performed at FSU events before the game. At the National Championship Game, they performed the normal home opening, where they enter the field in a flash and stir up the crowd.

At half time they used a James Bond theme with elaborate formations and some cool moves in the end. Also they formed the word "Seminoles" and played the fight song.

After the game, even President Barron led them in the "Warchant". Many football players climbed the director's ladder to pretend directing them and thanking them for helping the TEAM!!!!



Additionally, just before kickoff, it was great to see our former faculty colleagues and now active members of ARF: Marilyn Young and Michael Launer at the game.

On the bus ride back to the hotel following the awards ceremony, Jayne and I were reminding ourselves that one person who was not at the game but who made it all possible to happen was former President T.K. Wetherell. It was his courage and foresight, with the support of Board Chair Jim Smith, in acting to change the head coach that enabled the transformation ultimately resulting in winning the big one in Pasadena.



For each important away game that FSU plays and WINS, a member of the team takes a small piece of sod and the Boosters place it in a casket and bury it in the Sod Cemetery. A plaque is placed over it with the date, team played and score. For the National Championship Ceremony, they even had a funeral tent. They displayed caskets, with flowers, for the State of Florida Championship, ACC Championship and National Championship.