The Sun Bowl aftermath

by Susan Shackelford Asst. Sports Editor

EL PASO, Tex .- The ring of the cow bells was gone.

The Mississippi State fans put the maroon and white clangers aside after the game and turned to celebrating. With the 26-24 win over UNC Dec. 28, Miss. St. got its first bowl victory in 11 years.

The Tar Heel footballers, who have journeyed to a bowl four years out of head Coach Bill Dooley's eight at UNC. eventually started partying, traveling to Juarez, Mexico only a few miles away and in general, trying to live up to the Sun Bowl's "Fun Bowl" reputation.

Dooley relaxed in his motel suite with his wife, Chris, assistant coaches and friends. Though exuberant Sun Bowl officials congratulated him on such an exciting game, one that lived up to its billing as an offensive show, Dooley's restrained demeanor was no doubt tempered by the simple fact: UNC lost.

The old "trench fighter," also must have been very conscious that Miss. St. was his own alma mater, as he sent out for steak sandwiches at suppertime, hours after the game.

Also having difficulty finding the "Fun Bowl" spirit was UNC star running back Mike Voight, who was stopped soundly for no gain by Miss. St. tackle Jimmy Webb on a fourth down-and-one play with about 1:30 remaining in the game.

Walking to his Villa Motel room, Voight assessed the game generally ... "We lost to a good team ... I'm not embarrassed ... We made their coach (Bob Tyler) sweat a little"... But his most immediate concern on two specific aspects: that pivotal fourth quarter play and a particular Christmas gift.

"Three of their players knew the play was coming," the soph standout recalled. "They pointed to the spot and said, 'It's going right there.""

Sipping a Coors Beer from the "Hospitality Room" provided by the Bowl officials. Voight continued: "When I took the ball one step (on the hand off from quarterback Chris Kupec), Ray Constict

aggressive game. Webb put the pressure on Chris. That forced us to run more than we wanted. They eliminated much of the aerial attack," Voight, watching the Fiesta Bowl on television, said.

Concerning Christmas, he explained: "I promised to give my mother a touchdown for Christmas. My mother has high blood pressure and to make the bowl trip she would have had to drive three days.

"So I promised her a touchdown since she couldn't come," he continued. "I was going to get a picture (of it) blown up. I already had an agreement with a photographer to get it." Just as the 1900-mile distance prevented Mrs. Voight's attendance, it also kept many other UNC fans away. But Voight said the Heels, who won only one contest (Wake Forest) on the road during the regular7-4' season, weren't affected by the meager, support. (Carolina sold only about 300 tickets, according to UNC Sports Information Director Jack Williams.)

"Knowing the fans wanted a good game gives you a lot of inspiration." he said. "After all, they spend their money (\$8 a ticket), time and fight the cold. The people who came to see this Sun Bowl got what they paid for.

"What I'm mad about is that I felt we could have beaten them," Voight, sitting on the edge of his bed, said. "I was upset in the lockerroom. And I guess I'd be happier right now if we had been the underdog and gotten blown off the field."

Meanwhile, the UNC defense, which received much criticism throughout the season, gave up 499 yards for a Sun Bowl total offense record, but defensive back Ronny Johnson said, "We gave it our best." "They had so much speed on the outside," he said referring to the 349 yards rolled up by Miss. St. tailbacks Walter Packer (185 yards) and Terry Vitrano (164), a freshman voted by the media the game's most valuable player.

"I think that's the best option team we've played this year," Johnson, shaking his head outside the lockerroom at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) stadium, encircled by snow-covered mountains. "We had them third and long but we let them make it."

The defense's third down breakdown set up the Bulldog touchdown that provided the victory margin. With the 10:20 remaining in the 30 degree clash, Miss. St. utilized the brilliant play selection of quarterback Rockey Felker, who during the game called over 20 plays at the line of scrimmage to wound the UNC defense.

In this instance, the senior thinker led a 16play, 80-yard march to push the Bulldogs ahead 26-24. Successful third down plays of seven, seven, two and five yards, respectively, were the lifeline of the drive, which consumed 5:52 before the fateful fourth-and-one maneuver on the subsequent UNC drive.

"Let me put it this way," said Dooley, whose team tossed the lead back and forth with Miss. St. throughout the game. "We didn't lose it. Time ran out on us."

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stuck me real well, He's a good linebacker. We found that out in the game.

"I felt it (the power isolation play) should have been run," he added. "But I really felt 1 made the first down on the third down.

"But you've still got to give credit to the Miss. St. defense. They were psyched up. Their linebackers and Webb played a really

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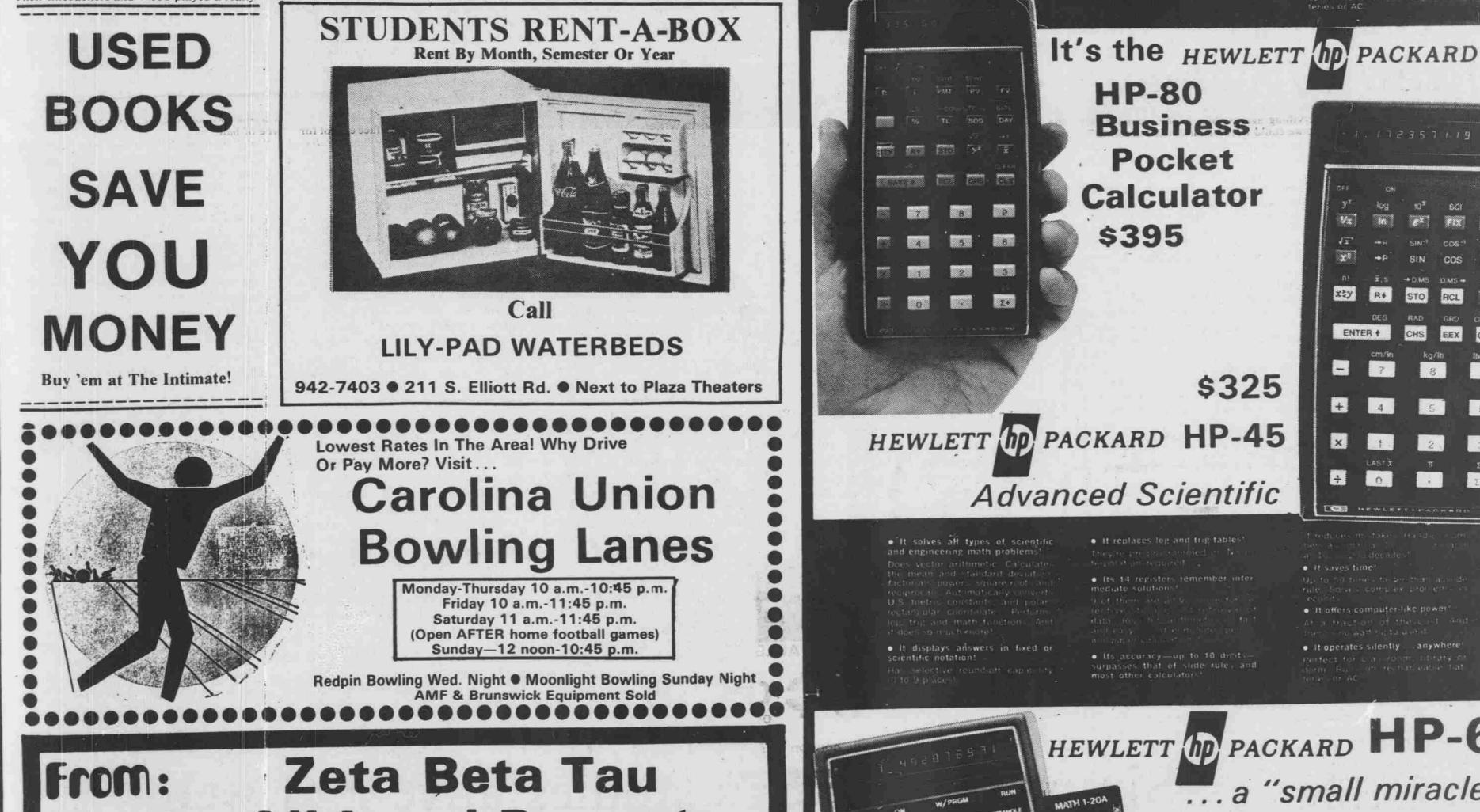
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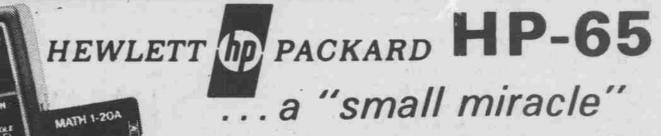
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