

Mesa Community College wins Valley of the Sun Bowl in double overtime

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(Photo: David Wallace/azcentral sports)

Who says that bowl games are meaningless? There's just something about them that brings out the best – and also the worst – in each team.

And the end result? It's usually a classic that leaves fans wanting more.

That was definitely the case as No. 8 Mesa Community College beat No. 7 Lackawanna (Pa.) College 48-42 in double-overtime to capture the Valley of the Sun Bowl title Saturday in Mesa.

"This is the best ever," Mesa coach Ryan Felker said. "This was by far the best game I've seen in my career."

There's plenty of reason for the fifth-year coach to think that. Mesa (9-2) didn't have a lead in regulation and only led for a total of three plays all game – the last being Darius Aguirre's 25-yard game-winning touchdown reception on Mesa's first offensive play in the second overtime.

"They didn't quit," Felker said. "They had been there before. These boys trust each other, they love each other and they made plays for each other."

No doubt there was plenty to smile about after the game for Mesa. Even Lackawanna (10-1) and its coach Mark Duda, which saw a perfect season come to an end with the loss, didn't seem particularly upset with the loss.

About the only thing that Duda was upset about was the penalties – and there was more than enough to go around on both sides. The two teams combined for 32 penalties for 312 yards, Lackawanna accounting for 19 penalties for 172 yards. Players from each side were ejected as a brawl nearly broke out in the second half.

"We had way too many penalties," Duda said. "I don't know how many and I haven't seen them yet, so I can't make a judgment on them. In general, I'm proud of the way my guys played and proud of the way (Mesa) played."

Lackawanna dominated most of the first half, led by dual-threat quarterback David Pindell. Pindell and company opened the game with an 11-play, 71-yard drive and proceeded to pick apart Mesa's defense throughout the first quarter en route to a 21-0 lead. Mesa closed the gap to 21-7 by half after Skylor Clifton's 11-yard touchdown reception late in the second quarter.

That's when Aguirre started to take over.

After a drop turned into an interception in the second quarter, Aguirre was as sure-handed as they come in the second half. He started the third quarter with a 53-yard pass from Rathen Ricedorff on the second play from scrimmage and then added touchdown receptions of 20 and 40 yards in the second half. He finished with 13 catches for 199 yards and four touchdowns.

"When he dropped a ball that hit off his hands and was intercepted, he came up to me and said, 'Hey Coach, that ain't me,'" Felker said. "I told him that I knew it wasn't him and said we're going to come back and get this right."

In the second overtime, Aguirre watched as Eric Hill's 33-yard field goal sailed wide. From there, he looked at Ricedorff, who completed 37 of 54 passes for 372 yards and five touchdowns, and without a word, they were both already on the same page.

"That whole drive in the first overtime, they were jumping our hitch route," Aguirre said. "I figured we'd do the double move and open it up. Sure enough, as soon as I turned around in the end zone, (Ricedorff) through a perfect pass and touchdown."

MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE 48, LACKAWANNA COLLEGE 42

[Fullscreen](#)

Lackawanna 21 0 7 7 7 - 42

Valley of the Sun Bowl

Mesa CC 0 7 14 14 13 - 48

FIRST QUARTER

L – Jerrod Diggs 9 pass from David Pindell (Eric Hill kick)

L – Pindell 1 run (Hill kick)

L – Diggs 5 pass from Pindell (Hill kick)

SECOND QUARTER

M – Skylor Clinton 11 pass from Rathen Ricedorff (Ryan Grimm kick)

THIRD QUARTER

M – Darius Aguirre 53 pass from Ricedorff (Grimm kick)

M – Aguirre 20 pass from Ricedorff (Grimm kick)

L – Zahneer Shuler 5 pass from Pindell (Hill kick)

FOURTH QUARTER

M – Tyrek Cross 5 run (Grimm kick)

L – Jo-El Shaw 35 run (Hill kick)

M – Aguirre 40 pass from Ricedorff (Grimm kick)

OVERTIME

M – Cross 2 run (Grimm kick)

L – Diggs 5 pass from Pindell (Hill kick)

M – Aguirre 24 pass from Ricedorff (Grimm kick)

Garden City beats Arizona Western in National Championship

Garden City (Kan.) Community College scored with 30 seconds remaining to beat Arizona Western 25-22 in the NJCAA Football National Championship on Saturday in Yuma.

Harley Hazlett capped a six-play, 56-second drive with a 1-yard touchdown reception from Peyton Huslig to capture Garden City's (11-0) first championship.

Arizona Western (11-1) quarterback Emanuel Gant went 13 of 26 for 169 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions. Running back Trevaughn Rodriguez had 24 carries for 137 yards.

