



# A HISTORIC SEASON

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# FOOTBALL

Cora Hall | Sports Editor | hallc36@ferris.edu

# Bulldogs fall in National Championship



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

Ferris senior defensive tackle Jamil Pollard and junior defensive end Austin Edwards fight to get past the Valdosta offensive line in the National Championship game Saturday, Dec. 15. Edwards racked up 42 solo tackles, 55 assisted tackles and 8.5 sacks this season while Pollard added 16 solo tackles and 33 assisted tackles.

## Historic season ends two points short of a national title

**Noah Poser**  
Torch Reporter

Ferris came to Texas in search of their first ever football National Championship but left the stadium watching the other team hoist the trophy.

In front of a crowd of 4,306 people packed into McKinney ISD Stadium in McKinney, Texas, Ferris ultimately came up short of their national title aspirations, falling 49-47 to Valdosta State Saturday, Dec. 15.

In a game that featured seven lead changes and one tie, it was one for the ages as the two last undefeated teams in Division II football put on a show, scoring 96 points total, which is the third highest points scored in a championship game.

In this shootout, both offenses believed that they did what they needed to do to win the game, and Ferris junior wide receiver Dion Earls said there wasn't much else their offense could have done.



Dion Earls

"I don't believe that there was anything we could do better. I feel like 47 points, especially in a championship game, is enough. I feel like we did a great job on offense all around," Earls said.

However, that performance was largely for naught.

The Bulldogs opened the scoring with a Division II National Championship Game record 80-yard touchdown pass by Ferris junior wide receiver Jevon Shaw. Shaw took the lateral from Ferris junior quarterback

Jayru Campbell and proceeded to throw it to wide-open Ferris senior wide receiver Keyondre Craig, who took it to the house for a 7-0 lead.

After the Blazers answered with Valdosta sophomore quarterback Rogan Wells throwing the first of what would end up being five touchdown passes on the day with a 21-yard strike

to Valdosta sophomore wide receiver Lio'undre Gallimore, the Bulldogs followed it up with some more history.

With 2:18 left in the opening quarter, Ferris junior kicker Jackson Dieterle nailed a Division II National Championship Game record 52-yard field goal. That may come as a surprise to many, given the fact that he was just 7 of 18 on his field goal attempts thus far this season.

The back and forth action continued into the second quarter. After Valdosta had retaken the lead on a second touchdown pass by Wells, Ferris got the lead back after a muffed punt led to a short field, which led to a three yard touchdown run by Campbell and a 17-14 lead.

The score at the half would end up being 28-24 in favor of the Blazers after a short touchdown run by Valdosta freshman running back Seth McGill with just seconds remaining before halftime.

In the third quarter, Valdosta would extend their lead out to 42-31 thanks to a couple more touchdown tosses by Wells and an untimely pick from Campbell. The pick was just Campbell's sixth of the season.

Ferris tightened it up to 42-38 on a crazy touchdown reception by Craig, in which Valdosta sophomore defensive back Corey Roberts questionably decided to tip the ball back into the endzone while going out of bounds in search of an interception. Instead of a pick, it landed in the hands of Craig in the endzone for a Ferris touchdown.

However, the Blazers responded with some trickery of their own as they brought in backup quarterback, Valdosta freshman Ivory Durham, and lined him up at halfback. The result was Durham getting the ball and tossing it down the sideline to Wells for what was Wells' sixth touchdown of the game. That made the score 49-38 with 11:36 remaining in the game.

Ferris would have a chance though. After a pair of defensive stops and another Dieterle field goal, the Bulldogs had a chance to march down the field and tie the game.

However, it was not meant to be, even though the Bulldogs

would score with a five-yard run by Ferris freshman wide receiver Sy Barnett to make it 49-47. Despite the touchdown, the Bulldogs were unable to convert the two-point try as Shaw's pass would sail incomplete out of the back of the end zone.

That two-point try was stressful for everybody who was in the stadium, and that would certainly apply to Valdosta State head coach Kerwin Bell, who could barely stand to watch the play as it happened.



Kerwin Bell

"I didn't want to go to overtime, that's for sure. With their quarterback, he's special, and I did not want to go to overtime," Bell said. "It came down to a big play and everybody is sort of running that play after the Eagles made it famous last year, and we covered it really well."

And thus, this became a game that Ferris players, along with the coaches and the fans who made the trip, will remember for a very long time, despite the loss. While it certainly wasn't the end that anybody wanted, it's important to look back and admire the season for what it was.



Tony Annese

Despite the loss, Ferris head coach Tony Annese believes his team has many reasons to be proud.

"You know, I've said it all along. we internalized our mission. They never give in and they never quit. We have never, and I mean never, had a time where one moment would bring us down," Annese said. "So I don't know why we have that attribute of being gritty and never giving in, but that's who we are and at the end of this game, we

were very proud of our guys."

The 2018 Ferris football team became the first to reach the National Championship Game and set a program record with 15 wins in one season.

**W** vs. East Stroudsburg - Big Rapids  
Thursday, Aug. 30, 2018  
49 - 17

**W** vs. Findlay - Big Rapids  
Saturday, Sept. 8, 2018  
59 - 13

**W** @ Northwood - Midland  
Saturday, Sept. 15, 2018  
53 - 10

**W** @ Northern Michigan - Marquette  
Saturday, Sept. 22, 2018  
35 - 19

# Big game, big implications

*National attention gained from Ferris' second national championship*

**Landry Shorkey**  
Torch Reporter

Bulldog football may not have brought home the National Championship trophy but their successful season was still a win for Ferris.

The team fell just short of a historic victory against Valdosta State (Georgia) Saturday, Dec. 15, in McKinney, Texas, with a final score of 49-47.

However, making it to the championship game was an accomplishment that many students feel will put Ferris on the map.

"I feel like getting our name out there is really good and I know a lot of people are interested in sports, so they would definitely find out about our school and see how good we are,"

Ferris pre-science junior Alyssa Michels said.

A win would have been the university's second national title in 2018, with the Ferris men's basketball team securing the first in March.

"I think that's awesome. I knew last year we did really good for basketball, so that's kind of cool that we're doing better for football as well," Michels said.

Ferris undecided freshman Cameron Larsen said he thinks Ferris will see an increase in enrollment because of the notable sports seasons, and that it would have positively impacted his decision to attend the university.

"I know I'm going to a good school if we have a good education system and we have good sports teams. It just makes life better for everyone," Larsen said. "It would have made me want to come here even more."

Ferris business administration freshman Josh DeBoode said that when the athletes do well, it makes him even more proud to be a Bulldog and that Ferris sports teams will become more nationally relevant.

"It just gives us some pride as a student, like bragging rights for our friends that go to other schools," DeBoode said. "People will probably know about us more and they'll recognize us as more of a competitor."

However, DeBoode said that he does not feel national titles have an effect on the university's overall legitimacy, because it is the success of students educationally that matters.

"It's more of just how we do as students here and how the school cares for everyone that goes here that provides the legitimacy and shows people who we really are as a school," DeBoode said.



Graduating seniors in Texas for National Championship don't mind missing commencement

**Madison Kettlewell**  
Torch Reporter

Although some Ferris seniors had to miss the graduation ceremony to be at the championship game on Saturday, their attention remained focused on the game.

The Ferris commencement ceremony for December 2018 was on Saturday, Dec. 15, which conflicted with the Division II National Championship game. Ferris sports marketing senior Syerra Wilcox, who works for the football team, said she had known about five months ago that graduation and the National Championship would be on the same day.

"I have been working for Ferris State Football for almost four years, so there was no 'decision' that had to be made," Wilcox said. "If the championship game is the same day as graduation, then the decision was made for me. I knew instantly that if I didn't attend this game that I would regret it for the rest of my life."

Ferris senior quarterback Bret Mooney said that as an athlete, he's accustomed to having to make these decisions. According to Mooney, every day, student-athletes have to make sacrifices that other students don't have to.

"We're used to it. The number one thing we sacrifice is our time. As athletes, we don't have our weekends to do whatever we want, and we have responsibilities every day of the week on top of school," Mooney said. "I

believe there's an option to come back in the summer to walk, but I'm not doing it."

As for having to miss a milestone moment like graduation, the seniors remain unbothered. According to Mooney, players are embracing the experience and their coaches are just excited to be in the national championship.

"The players and coaches put so much time into achieving something like this. Many of the players have been here since June and the only reason for that was to reach the position we are in right now. Nothing else matters," Mooney said. "I don't think it's that big of a deal some players don't get to walk, and the university probably doesn't care either."

Wilcox said that the championship is just as important to the football staff.

"I honestly think that this championship means just as much to us as it does to the players. We are a part

of this family and if we really wanted to be at graduation instead of this game, then we would be," Wilcox said.

"Being a part of the Ferris State football staff, in which it's the first time reaching the national championship, is honestly such an amazing feeling. I would never trade this experience for the world."



Bret Mooney

## What a feeling

*It was well worth the 20-hour bus ride there and back*

When I made my decision to come to Ferris, it wasn't for the sports.

Actually, sports were the one thing that kept me wanting to go to Michigan State. I always dreamed of being in the Izzone or watching Spartan football at their enormous stadium. I grew up eating, sleeping and breathing sports, so when I chose to come to Ferris, I figured it would be fun to watch the Bulldogs play but I was sad I was going to miss out on experiences like watching my school play in March Madness or a bowl game.

Boy, was I wrong.

Ferris has sent a team to a national championship both years I've been here: first with winning the basketball national championship in March, and now with the football team playing in the national championship this year.

I had the opportunity to go to the national championship football game to cover it for the Torch and it was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I never could have dreamed that I would get to experience a football championship game with my school in it, let alone be on the turf watching it.

Being on the sidelines of the national championship football game was one of the coolest things I've ever done, period. The thrill of being inches from the action is an indescribable feeling and the emotions on the field are ten times what you feel in the stands. It was every sports fan's fantasy.

When Sy ran in the ball to bring



Cora Hall  
Sports Editor

Ferris within two points of tying the game with less than two minutes left, my heart was pounding and I could barely breathe as I shot photos from behind the end zone. My heart sank with the players' as I watched them walk past me off the field after the game and it truly felt like I was a part of this journey with them.

I've loved every second of watching Ferris make this historic run to the Division II National Championship and it's been a dream come true to write about them this weekend. It's an opportunity I'll cherish forever.

I met countless football alumni this weekend, too, and it left me with the feeling that Ferris football truly is a family. Some of these guys played back in the 70s and they still come to a majority of the games. Hearing them talk about watching the team make their national championship run couldn't help but put a smile on my face.

So, I guess all I have to say is thank you. Thank you to the football team for the endless hours of hard work and the 16 incredible games they played. Thank you to the fans for their undying support and for making the trip to Texas to make this experience happen. Thank you to the Torch for letting me report on history in the making.

**W** vs. Ashland - Big Rapids  
Saturday, Sept. 29, 2018  
28 - 21

**W** vs. Michigan Tech - Grand Rapids  
Saturday, Oct 6, 2018  
42 - 24

**W** @ Grand Valley State - Allendale  
Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018  
35 - 31

**W** @ Saginaw Valley State - Saginaw  
Saturday, Oct. 20, 2018  
28 - 14

# POST GAME TWEETS

**Ferris St. Football**  
@FerrisFootball

We owe everyone involved a tremendous thank you for what has been the greatest season in school history. There is no fanbase more special than Bulldog Nation. We love you all.

187 1.3K

**GLIAC**  
@GLIACsports

#NCAAD2FB FINAL | Valdosta State - 49 Ferris State - 47

We would like to congratulate @FerrisFootball on a truly exciting and incredible contest against the Valdosta State Blazers. Also, on the impressive 2018 season as a whole!

#WhereChampionsCompete  
#NCAAD2 #GLIACFB

27 208

**Malik Taylor**  
@Taylor12Malik

To all my family, supporters, and bulldog fans.. thank you for standing by my side throughout my entire career. I'm sorry this year turned out the way it did. Being a Bulldog has been the best experience of my lie. I'm going to continue to keep God first and move forward.

36 480

**Davontae Harrington**  
@iamDH3\_

Win or lose, all glory be to my lord and savior Jesus Christ, couldn't have gotten here without him. S/O to all the fans that came out from wherever they came to support. Congrats to my teammates and coaches on a great season. #thankful

21 58

**NCAA Division II**  
@NCAADII

Congrats to Jayru Campbell, the 2018 Harlon Hill Trophy award winner as #D2FB's player of the year!

#MakeltYours

97 324

**Ferris St. Football**  
@FerrisFootball

After a truly incredible game and season, we also want to congratulate Valdosta State, a deserving National Champion, let's do it again sometime.

91 800

**-REPLY-**

**Valdostra St. Football**  
@valdostrastatefb

How does December 21, 2019 sound? Great game with even better people. Safe travels back home #MakeltYours

25 254

# The cherry on top



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

Ferris junior quarterback Jayru Campbell talks to the media after winning the Harlon Hill trophy Friday, Dec. 14. Ferris has brought home three of the last five Harlon Hill trophies.

## Jayru Campbell brings home Harlon Hill trophy

**Cora Hall**  
Sports Editor

After accumulating several accolades already this season, Ferris junior quarterback Jayru Campbell added one more to his resume.

The Harlon Hill trophy is given to the Most Valuable Player in the NCAA Division II and it was awarded to Campbell Friday, Dec. 14. In addition to the Harlon Hill trophy, Campbell has been awarded Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) Player of the Year, First Team All-GLIAC Quarterback, American Football Coaches Association First Team All-America Quarterback and Associated Press' All-American honors.

Campbell said he's thankful for the opportunities.



Tony Annese

"I mean, I came every day to practice, weights, conditioning, whatever it was, I came prepared like I was the best player out there, the best player in the world," Campbell said. "I'm very thankful for this award."

Head coach Tony Annese had nothing but praise for his starting quarterback after the announcement was made, and he said there's more to it than his stats.

"It's been a dream season for him, a dream season for our team," Annese said. "A lot goes into it, you know, he's been a great leader, a hard worker and he's really propelled us to take it to the next level. You talk a lot about his skill set but he's really, what he's really done is made us a tougher team and helped us be a great



Jayru Campbell

team." Annese put together a watch party for the announcement in McKinney, Texas, and said Campbell was originally against the idea.

"We came down to Texas to play in the national championship game," Campbell said. "Coach Annese is a really loving coach and he loves to do stuff like this and I don't know, I guess I was a little too focused on the championship game."

Campbell was named GLIAC Offensive Player of the Week six times this season and leads the nation in touchdowns with 43 this year. He also leads the nation in rushing yards as a quarterback with 1,188 yards. He has a 60 percent passing completion and has 2,453 passing yards.

Ferris freshman wide receiver Sy Barnett said ever since Campbell came to Ferris, they've had a bond and it's only gotten stronger since then.

"Oh, he definitely deserves it, 100 percent," Barnett said. "He's the hardest worker I've ever met. He's the man who needed to win this award."

The last time a Ferris player won the Harlon Hill was Jason Vander Laan, who brought home the trophy in both 2014 and 2015.

**W** vs. Wayne State - Big Rapids  
Saturday, Oct. 27, 2018  
38 - 28

**W** vs. Davenport - Big Rapids  
Saturday, Nov. 3, 2018  
41 - 17

**W** @ Williams Jewell - Liberty, MO  
Saturday, Nov. 10, 2018  
47 - 6

**W** vs. Harding - Big Rapids  
Saturday, Nov. 17, 2018  
21 - 19

# The road to the National Championship



Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor

The Ferris defensive line held steady before Valdosta snapped the ball in the national championship game Saturday, Dec. 15. The defensive line spent 32:50 on the field during the championship game.

## A look at how Ferris football got to where they are

As you may know, the Bulldog football team went to their first-ever DII National Championship, so we'll look back and see the road the Bulldogs had to conquer.

It all started well before the first game of the season, with the conversation of which quarterback would get the starting spot. It was running through everyone's minds; the staff, players, even the coaches did not know who would start the first game against East Stroudsburg. The decision from that game forward would be one that could make this 2018 team go into the history books.

Enter junior Jayru Campbell. He was the expected starter for the Bulldogs, but no one was for certain yet, with the experience of Travis Russell and the great spring season Bret Mooney had. As the Bulldogs beat East Stroudsburg 49-17, it showed why Campbell would be the starter of this Bulldog team. As Campbell had a total of 304 yards with three touchdowns, rushing and passing combined, head coach Tony Annese and the Bulldogs knew they had a star from the get-go.

The Bulldogs went two weeks right after their opener putting up 50-plus points and holding their opponents to under 14 points each, with one of those teams being the 19th-ranked Findlay Oilers. Just like the first game, the Bulldogs were led by Campbell with a combined total of 661 yards and nine touchdowns in just six quarters.

On the contrary, the Bulldogs were tested in the next two weeks, one week with the Northern Michigan Wildcats, and then the next with the Ashland Eagles. Campbell would play the entire game for the first time this season and squeak out with a 35-19 win against the Wildcats. As for week five against the Ashland Eagles, the Bulldogs got out to a quick lead, but the Eagles had an eye on a comeback, scoring 14 points in the fourth quarter. However, they still fell short and the Bulldogs improved to 5-0 with a close 28-21 win.

The Battle at the Ballpark held at Fifth-Third Bank Ballpark against the Michigan Tech Huskies was no threat, as they continued their so-far perfect season with a 42-24 win to go 6-0.

What came the following week, as the Bulldogs had to travel back down south to Allendale, would tell the fate of what the team was capable of for the rest of the season.



Michael Reedy  
Torch Reporter

It was Saturday, Oct. 13, and the matchup was the No. 3 Bulldogs against the No. 2 Grand Valley State Lakers in the Anchor-Bone Classic. It would appear that the winner of this game would eventually be the winner of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) and the players and fans knew that the game before them would be one to remember. With both teams going back and forth, which the score matched, it wasn't until the final moments where the Bulldogs secured the 35-31 win.

Trailing 28-31 in the final five minutes, the Bulldogs marched into Laker territory and on 4th and 2 with 31 yards to go for a touchdown, the Bulldogs ran a trick play, a pitch to wide receiver Jevon Shaw to complete the pass to Campbell, who went all the way into the end zone. This trick play would be the game winning drive. Ferris handed the Lakers their first loss of the season while the Bulldogs stayed perfect.

Ferris seemed to be a little worn out from the Anchor-Bone Classic, as they barely beat the Saginaw Valley State Cardinals and the Wayne State Warriors in the following weeks. After those two games, however, the Bulldogs got back in the groove of things and defeated their next two opponents by a substantial score and finished the regular season undefeated and GLIAC champs at 11-0.

As the Bulldogs headed into the playoffs ranked No. 2 in their region, the phrase "Revenge Tour" started to float around as their first round matchup was against the Harding Bison, the team that knocked the Bulldogs out of the playoffs the year before. It looked as if the Bulldogs had the game in the bag going into the fourth quarter as they were up 21-0, but the Bison did not stop grinding to try and ruin the Bulldogs' season. Ferris gave up 19 points in the fourth quarter and tension grew since they didn't want a repeat of last year, but the Bison were stopped short, as the first stop of the "Revenge Tour" was complete with a 21-19 win over Harding.

The "Revenge Tour" kept on rolling as

the Bulldogs faced the Northwest Missouri State Bearcats, the same team that beat the 2016 Bulldogs in the semi-finals. Campbell was not dressed due to an injury that occurred the previous game, so the pressure was on for all three quarterbacks the Bulldogs used to beat the Bearcats. Just like the previous week, the Bulldogs had the ball rolling but fell off after the second half, as they only scored a touchdown after they scored 20 points in the first half. The game came down to the final seconds but the Bulldogs forced a Bearcat fumble and secured the 27-21 win as well as improving to a school record of 13-0.

As for the regional final, the Bulldogs did not have much experience with the Ouachita Baptist Tigers besides a win in last year's playoffs, but the revenge side of it came more from how these two teams were seeded in the region. The Tigers were ranked No. 1 in the region despite being ranked two spots below the Bulldogs in the American Football Coaches Association. Ferris was penalized for playing an ineligible player during the first few weeks of the season, so they looked to get revenge on the seeding and show that they should have been ranked No. 1 in the region. The Bulldogs had no problem getting past the Tigers as the rolled to the semi-finals after a dominant 37-14 win.

The Bulldogs would advance to their second National Semifinal game in three years, and while there was no previous history between the Minnesota State Mavericks and Ferris, they looked to get their "revenge" by doing what the 2016 team could not do, which was advance to the program's first ever National Championship. The game was tight headed into halftime with a score of 21-19, but the Bulldogs took control in the second half and took down the Mavericks with a score of 42-25.

The Bulldogs' greatest challenge was in the Valdosta State Blazers in the National Championship. The Bulldogs fell 49-47, losing the National Championship title to the Blazers and ending their season with a record of 15-1. Had they won the game, Ferris football would have been the first ever 16-0 program in any level of collegiate football. Although the 1894 Yale Bulldogs also went 16-0, it cannot truly be considered an official 16-win season, as four of their wins came from community gymnasiums, which is the equivalent to a club team.

## A deeper dive into what could've been

Three reasons for a Ferris loss instead of a championship



Noah Poser  
Torch Reporter

Ferris took on Valdosta State in the NCAA Division II National Championship Game Saturday, Dec. 15. In the game, the Bulldogs battled back and forth with the Blazers of Valdosta State before losing a close game 49-47.

In further examination of this game, the reasons for this loss came down to three in particular: they lost the minutes of possession battle, they couldn't defend Valdosta's receivers and there were some questionable play calls.

So let's dive into this game, shall we?

As Ferris head coach Tony Annese stated multiple times in the postgame press conference, the defense failed to get off the field. This was bad for Ferris for a multitude of reasons, aside from the obvious fact that it increased the likelihood of Valdosta scoring points.

For starters, it means they put way more pressure on the Ferris offense. This is due to the fact that the longer Valdosta held the ball, the less possessions that the Bulldog offense received. This increased the importance of each possession as they had fewer chances to score, so they had to maximize the amount of points they got on each and every possession.

It also meant that it kept the ball out of Harlon Hill winner Jayru Campbell's hands because the Bulldogs had to find ways to keep the ball as long as possible, thus leading to a heavy dose of runs from a bevy of players.

While that was a big reason for the loss, an even bigger aspect of the loss was the inability to defend the passing attack of Valdosta State. There was also a multitude of reasons for this, such as a lack of pass rush, but the biggest reason was the inability for the defensive backs of Ferris to stay on top of the Valdosta receivers.

This led to multiple big plays through the air, including three touchdown passes of more than 20 yards that really tilted the game in favor of Valdosta.

Why was this able to happen exactly? It's as simple as the fact that the matchups were in favor of the Blazers and they were able to take advantage of those matchups with their speed across the board on offense. As Valdosta receiver Lio'ndre Gallimore said in the postgame press conference, he just won a foot race against the defender he was up against. It just so happened that it was a common occurrence throughout the evening.

The final reason that may have led to Ferris losing the game is a little more controversial, and opinions will vary greatly on whether or not these decisions were right or wrong. However, one of the biggest reasons for a Ferris loss in this game might come down to play calling, especially one play call in particular.

Now, don't get me wrong, I think that the play calling was pretty spot on for 99 percent of the night, but the one particular call that may not

Deep dive | see page 10

**W** vs. Northwest Missouri St. - Big Rapids  
Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018  
27 - 21

**W** @ Ouachita Baptist - Arkadelphia, AR  
Saturday, Dec. 1, 2018  
37 - 14

**W** @ Minnesota State - Mankato, MN  
Saturday, Dec. 8, 2018  
42 - 25

**L** vs. Valdosta St. - McKinney, TX  
Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018  
49 - 47

# Earning their free miles

## Football travels over 5,000 miles during playoff run

**Cora Hall**  
Sports Editor

With the trip to McKinney, Texas for the Saturday, Dec. 15 game, the Bulldogs travelled for the third consecutive weekend in a row.

After hosting the first two rounds of the NCAA playoffs, Ferris traveled to Arkadelphia, Arkansas to face the Ouachita Baptist Tigers in the Regional Championship. The team logged around 1,720 miles flying roundtrip the weekend of Dec. 1.

With the victory over the Tigers, Ferris made it to the Final Four where they would face Minnesota State-Mankato in Mankato, Minnesota Saturday, Dec. 8. Another weekend, an-

other flight that would take the Bulldogs about 1,230 miles there and back with another win in the books.

The National Championship weekend would be the farthest trip, as the Bulldogs headed to McKinney, Texas, for the championship game against Valdosta State University (Valdosta, Georgia). The players, coaches and staff flew out of Grand Rapids on Wednesday, Dec. 12 for a trip that is over 1,000 miles each way.



DeShaun Thrower

All the while, All the while, Valdosta played on their home field for the last four games before the National Championship.

The Bulldogs have travelled approximately 5,151 miles in the last three rounds of the playoffs. As long as the trip is going south, though, most players are alright with the constant traveling.

"If we're going somewhere warm, it makes it easier," Ferris junior defensive back DeShaun Thrower said. "We loved playing down in Arkan-

sas and going to Minnesota, it was just like how it was here kind of, the air was kind of dry but it wasn't too bad. Going to Texas now playing in 50 degree, 60 degree weather, that makes it easier for us since we're used to playing in 20 and 30 degree weather right now so, not too bad. And it's fun because we get to get out of Michigan and keep traveling and enjoy different things and create different memories with our teammates and coaches."

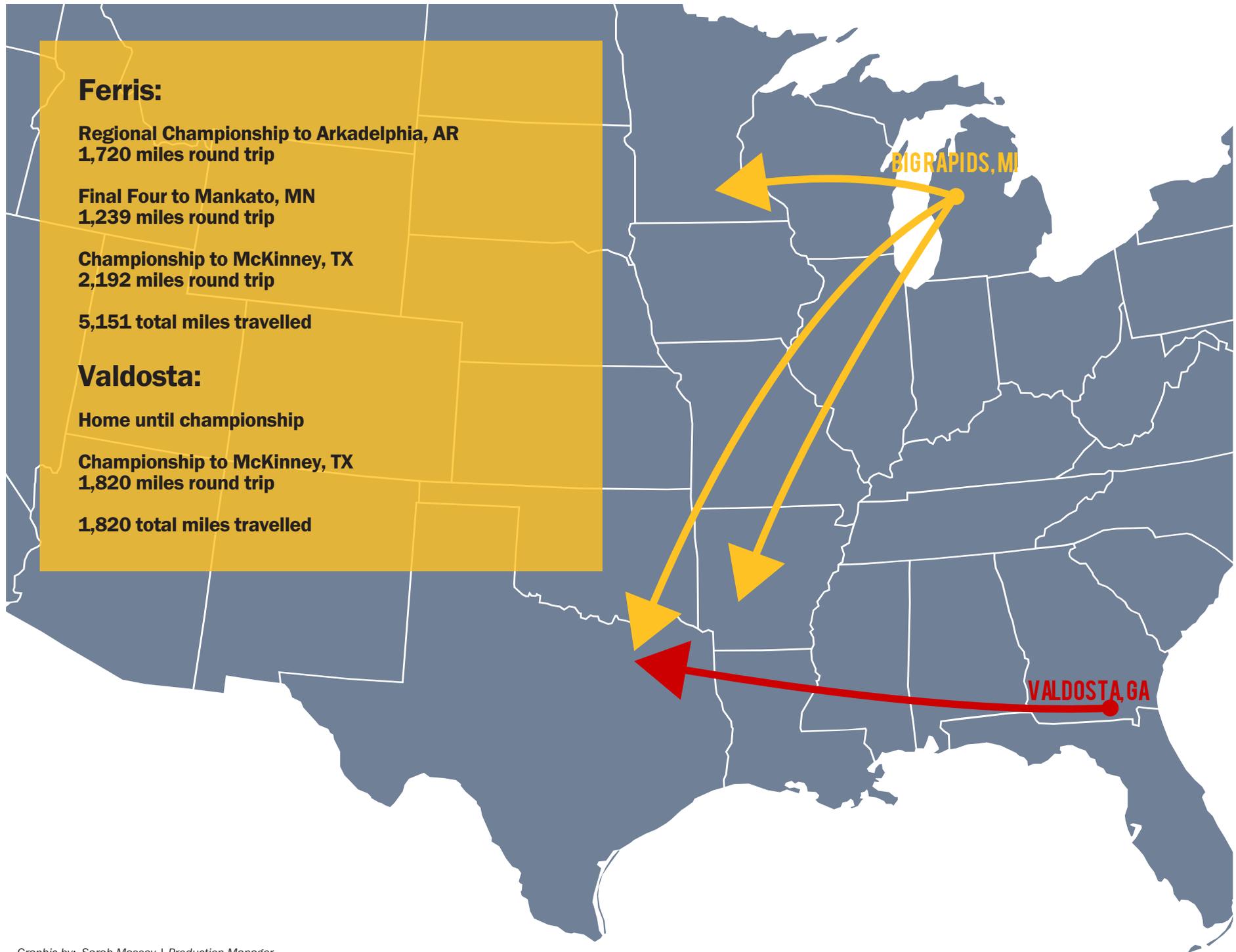


Keyondre Craig

This week's traveling falls on an inconvenient time for most players since it's finals week in Big Rapids, so many had to make special arrangements to take their exams early or have it proctored in Texas.

"I mean, school comes first, always," Ferris senior receiver Keyondre Craig said. "But some professors will work around football schedules so we're just trying to get as much done possible and stay hungry on the football field as well, but it's a struggle, but we do it."

# PLAYOFF TRAVELS



# Annese makes appearance in awards season



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

Head coach Tony Annese talks to one of his players on the sideline of McKinney ISD Stadium during the championship game Saturday, Dec. 15. Annese captured his 300th career win when Ferris beat Minnesota State-Mankato in the Final Four this year.

## Annese earns Hero Sports Coach of the Year honors

Noah Poser

Torch Reporter

Since taking over the football program at Ferris seven years ago, it's hard to ignore the success head coach Tony Annese has had.

This season, the Bulldogs had the chance to show that improvement on the big stage in their first National Championship game Saturday, Dec. 15. Although they left Texas without a win, Annese wouldn't leave the weekend without any accolades of his own.

Fans have certainly recognized Annese's success when they voted him the winner of the Hero Sports Division II football Coach of the Year fan poll Friday, Dec. 14.

"It's pretty neat," Annese said. "I just heard about that today. I really don't know much about it other than one of my assistant coaches said 'Hey, you were Hero Sports Coach of the Year,' but it's neat. It's really a team accomplishment. The team's done great things and it's a coaching staff accomplishment, so I'm proud of everybody."

His players didn't need a fan poll to tell them what they already knew, however, as many of them have come to Ferris just to play under Annese.

"I'd say the culture that he brings to Ferris State and the love that he has for all of his players are the two main factors," Ferris sophomore linebacker Liam Daly said.

Ferris junior linebacker Avonte Bell echoed Daly's sentiment and said Annese cares about them as people, not just players.

"Coach Annese is a wonderful coach. He's like another dad. His qualities as a person just make us better and he's made us better men on and off the field," Bell said. "With Coach Annese, it's deeper than football. It's not like other coaches. Coach Annese actually cares about his players, and it's really cool to have him as a coach."

Overall, it's just another feather in the cap for a coach who is as admired and as respected as Annese is among his players, his fellow coaches and the fans.



Liam Daly

# An unexpected hero

## After struggling all season, Ferris kicker keeps team in the game

Cora Hall

Sports Editor

Although they ultimately fell short in the last minutes of the National Championship, the Bulldogs wouldn't have had the chance to take it to overtime without two crucial field goals.

Ferris junior kicker Jackson Dieterle has struggled all season, completing only seven of the 18 field goals. Saturday, Dec. 15, he broke the Division II National Championship game field goal record with a 52-yard kick in the first quarter and gave Ferris an early game lead of 10-3.

Dieterle wasn't even aware he broke the record until after the game, but he said he treated it the same as every other field goal, even though it was a full seven yards longer than his career best of 45 yards.

"I just take every kick the same, just take a deep breath and walk out on the field and go over my routine in my head and just know that I'm going to make it," Dieterle said. "My coaches put me in the position to make a play and luckily I made it."

Fast forward to the fourth quarter and Ferris is down 49-38. After a long drive down the field, the Bulldogs were forced to kick and Dieterle's 31-yard field goal was good, putting Ferris back in the game at 49-41 with just more than five minutes left to play.

Dieterle — who is familiar with the pressure of playoffs, having played in the 2016 playoff run to the semifinals as a freshman — said he dealt with injuries this season, but once he was healthy, playoffs were the only thing on his mind.

"I struggled with injuries all year. I didn't really get healthy until probably the last three weeks of the regular season, so once I got healthy, I got it in my mind that I was going to get ready for the playoffs and be



Jackson Dieterle



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

Ferris junior kicker Jackson Dieterle celebrates his 52-yard field goal, which was a Division II National Championship Game record.

as good as I could in the playoffs," Dieterle said.

According to Ferris head coach Tony Annese, the record-breaking field goal almost didn't happen.

"He had a great day today, I'm very proud of him. We debated and we were late really to get the field goal team on because the three guys who really are primarily responsible for play calling, one said 'Let's go for it,' one said 'Kick the field goal,' and one said 'Let's punt it.' So we were late to decide to go for this field goal. It's really kind of on the edge of his range

and he broke a record, so that's pretty cool," Annese said.

Even though the Bulldogs came up two points short this time, the chance to tie it at the end came courtesy of Dieterle, and he came out of the game with his head high.

"It was a dream season for us. That's the best we've ever done and I feel like in these games you need some experience like that," Dieterle said. "You know, I'm really proud of this team and really proud to be a part of this team. We're one big family and you win some, you lose some."

# Old Dawggs

*Senior Bulldogs dominate the field in their final season*

ROBERT THOMAS III

1

- **Running Back**
- **From Apopka, FL**
- **Games Played: 49**
- **Rushes: 255**
- **Yards: 1186**
- **Yards per gain: 24.2**
- **TD: 10**
- **Longest gain: 36**
- **Fumbles: 5**



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

DERRICK PORTIS

2

- **Running Back**
- **From Lompoc, CA**
- **Games Played: 28**
- **Rushes: 108**
- **Yards: 643**
- **Yards per game: 22.9**
- **TD: 5**
- **Longest gain: 38**
- **Fumbles: 2**



Photo by: Samantha Cavotta | Torch Photographer

KEYONDRE CRAIG

3

- **Wide Receiver**
- **From Muskegon, MI**
- **Games Played: 29**
- **Receptions: 73**
- **Yards: 1,229**
- **Yards per game: 42.05**
- **TD: 8**
- **Longest gain: 80**



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

MALIK TAYLOR

12

- **Wide Receiver**
- **From Flint, MI**
- **Games Played: 44**
- **Receptions: 121**
- **Yards: 2,091**
- **Yards per game: 47.5**
- **TD: 11**



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

BRET MOONEY

15

- **Quarter Back**
- **From West Dundee, IL**
- **Games Played: 9**
- **Completions: 24**
- **Attempts: 45**
- **PCT: 53%**
- **Yards: 200**
- **Interceptions: 2**
- **Yards per game: 22**
- **Yards per attempt: 5.5**
- **Longest gain: 34**



Photo by: Samantha Cavotta | Torch Photographer



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

- **Running Back**
- **From Clinton Township, MI**
- **Games Played: 20**
- **AST Tackles: 3**
- **Rushes: 24**
- **Yards: 140**
- **Yards per game: 10**
- **Avg: 5.8**
- **Longest gain: 29**
- **TD: 2**
- **Fumbles: 2**

only statistics from 2016-2018 seasons included

# 25

**MALIK HAZZARD**


Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

- **Corner Back**
- **From Plymouth, MI**
- **Games Played: 50**
- **Tackles: 24**
- **Assist tackles: 26**
- **Sacks: 0.5**
- **Tackles for loss: 1.5**
- **Yards: 15**

# 27

**DANNY COLLINS**


Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

- **Defensive Tackle**
- **From West Deptford, NJ**
- **Games Played: 28**
- **Tackles: 21**
- **Assist tackles: 54**
- **Sacks: 2**
- **Tackles for loss: 1.5**
- **Yards: 7**

# 44

**JAMIL POLLARD**


Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor

- **Tight End / Long Snapper**
- **From Portage, MI**
- **Games played: 41**
- **Tackles: 5**
- **Assist tackles: 5**
- **TD: 1**

# 47

**JACOB ALLAN**


Photo by: Samantha Cavotta | Torch Photographer

- **Offensive Line**
- **From Aurora, Ill.**
- **AP All-American 2018**
- **Games played: 14**
- **Tackles: 1**

only statistics from 2018 season included

# 52

**DEVON JOHNSON**


Photo by: Samantha Cavotta | Torch Photographer

- **Offensive Line**
- **From Ann Arbor, MI**
- **AP All-American 2018**
- **Games played: 13**
- **Assist tackles: 1**

only statistics from 2016 season included

# 65

**NICS SAWYER**


Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor

- **Tight End**
- **From Portage, MI**
- **Games played: 26**
- **Tackles: 2**
- **Assist Tackles: 3**
- **Kicks returned: 4**
- **Kick return yards: 40**

# 84

**MATT CAPASSO**

# Texas bound

Senior football captain discusses what it means to make it to the National Championship

This is the moment you wait for ever since you first step foot onto Ferris State's campus as a student-athlete on the football team.

You hear about the opportunity to win championships when you are being recruited by Coach Annese and the coaching staff at Ferris, but the reality of it doesn't hit you until you step onto the field for the first time.

That was me my freshman year back in the fall of 2014. I was redshirted that fall, but instantly saw what Coach Annese was building, and that was a championship culture. We won the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) Championship my freshman year for the first time since the 90s, and after that experience of being redshirted, I was eager to step on the field.

Year in and year out, I saw this organization buy more and more into Coach Annese's four pillars of success, which is being in the "FOLD." This stands for faith, order, love and discipline. The organization soon began to realize that only we could beat ourselves and the sky was the limit for what we could achieve.

Fast forward time, and here we are in 2018. I am currently a senior captain on the Ferris State football team in my final semester of school and final fall on the team. I have a career record of 60-7, have made five straight NCAA Division II playoff appearances, have competed in two NCAA National Semifinals and have won three GLIAC championships (in 2014, 2015 and 2018).

During this campaign in 2018, we went 15-1 in my senior year and had a chance to win a National Championship.

I have been on tremendous teams over



Danny Collins  
Former Torch Staff

the past four years and have developed and learned more about my team and myself over the years. We have an ultimate chip on our shoulder, since not many people were expecting us to do as well as we have. We take pride in competing until the end and we will never let our foot off the gas on the field.

I am extremely proud and honored to lead this team as a captain and be a part of such a great group of guys.

Making it the National Championship in my final season means the world to me. It has been something I have worked for ever since I was a freshman here at Ferris. It has taken selflessness, dedication, hard work and persistence to get to where we are.

I am thankful for the lessons I have learned through Coach Annese and the Ferris State football team. The program has shaped me into a better person and I have grown as a young man. I can honestly say I truly found who I am in my four and a half years at Ferris State University as a student-athlete.

I chose Ferris State because of the family atmosphere and culture that was being established throughout the campus. The people in the Ferris community are what make this place so special. I have made life-long relationships with teammates, coaches, faculty and other students. I am confident I made the right choice to attend Ferris State and I have no regrets.

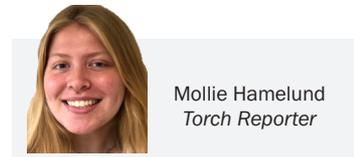


Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor

Ferris senior cornerback Danny Collins celebrates their semifinal win against Minnesota State Saturday, Dec. 8. He has made 24 tackles and 26 assisted tackles in his career.

# Never letting go

## Our coach should stay our coach



Mollie Hamelund  
Torch Reporter

It's no shocker by now that the football team made it to the national championship this season.

The recent rise in success of the football team has only come around the last seven years. No doubt that some years have been weaker than others, but the last time the football team lost more than four games was 2011.

How has the team stayed so successful? The players come and go but one common denominator stays the same: our beloved head coach, Tony Annese.

When Annese became the head coach at Ferris, the team was used to losing. Annese knew that those standards were not going to be good enough for him and has since completely changed the program.

The big talk around campus is that Annese might leave for a Division I school, but there are some reasons he should stay as our beloved coach.

**1. Ready for DI?:** He has only had the Division I experience once. Back in the 2013 season, Annese took the team out to North Dakota State University (Fargo, North Dakota) to get the experience of playing at a Division I level. The team only put up ten points in a 56-10 result and even though Annese wasn't completely at fault for the results, maybe he isn't ready to go Division I.

**2. Family:** That word has always been important to Annese and has come up repeatedly when he talks about his team. He sees his team as one big family and has stated multiple times how "you don't give up on family." Knowing that his team is so close, why would he want to leave them, instead of helping them build into the best that they can?

**3. Player development:** It's known that some of the players on the

team don't have the best past. Some of them have had run-ins with the law but have managed to turn their life around, and some would say that Annese played a big part in their development as people. Since he's helped the guys so much, it would be heartbreaking for them to see him go.

**4. Legacy:** He started out coaching at Muskegon High School and then went to Grand Rapids Community College before ending up at Ferris. Division I is another step above that and even though he has definitely left his mark at Ferris, there would be a lot of rebuilding to do for a new school. Even though he has had so much success at Ferris within seven years, think of the legacy he could build here if he were to stay another decade. A struggling Division I team would take a lot more time to change when he has already built a program at Ferris.

**5. Still work to do:** Annese has already made his mark at Ferris and changed the program into this successful, dominating football program. Especially since they didn't come out of this season with a ring, Annese might want to see what more he could do. He could still bring home the first football championship ever for our school and think of the recruits he can bring in with that accolade. The program can have so much success going off of this season and living out his dynasty until the end would be something for the books.

With all the thoughts of Annese staying at Ferris and the Bulldogs becoming even more of a Division II powerhouse, we just have to understand what Annese has done. He took a team with a losing record and within just seven years has made them one of the best in Division II. A career as a Division I head coach is amazing and would get some respect, but it's pretty safe to say Bulldog football would not be the same without Annese.

### Deep dive

Continued from page 5

have been the right one is the play call on the failed-two point conversion try that was ultimately the difference in the game.

Hindsight is 20/20 of course — and it is easy to say that the play was wrong after it failed — but just look at this quote from Valdosta State Head Coach Kerwin Bell:

"It came down to a big play and everybody is sort of running that play after the Eagles made it famous last year, and we covered it really well."

Bell is saying that it wasn't necessarily all that surprising that they ran that play in that situation, as it is now being run by every team from the high school level to the NFL. But that is hardly the biggest issue that I have with the play call.

My issue is that it removes the ball from your star player's hands. I think it would have been better if a play was called where Campbell could roll out of the pocket and decide whether he wanted to pass or run the ball for the conversion.

Of course, as I said above, hindsight is 20/20. If this play had worked, I wouldn't be saying this, but when you look back at it, it is fair to wonder what would have happened if the play wasn't so "predictable."

Overall, it was a close game, and Ferris allowed plenty of opportunities to go out there and win themselves a championship. However, in a game of such major importance as this one, even the smallest mistakes at the worst times can hurt you, and it just so happens the team hurt by these mistakes was Ferris and not Valdosta.

# An emotional ending

*Players show their sorrow in the game's final moments*



Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor

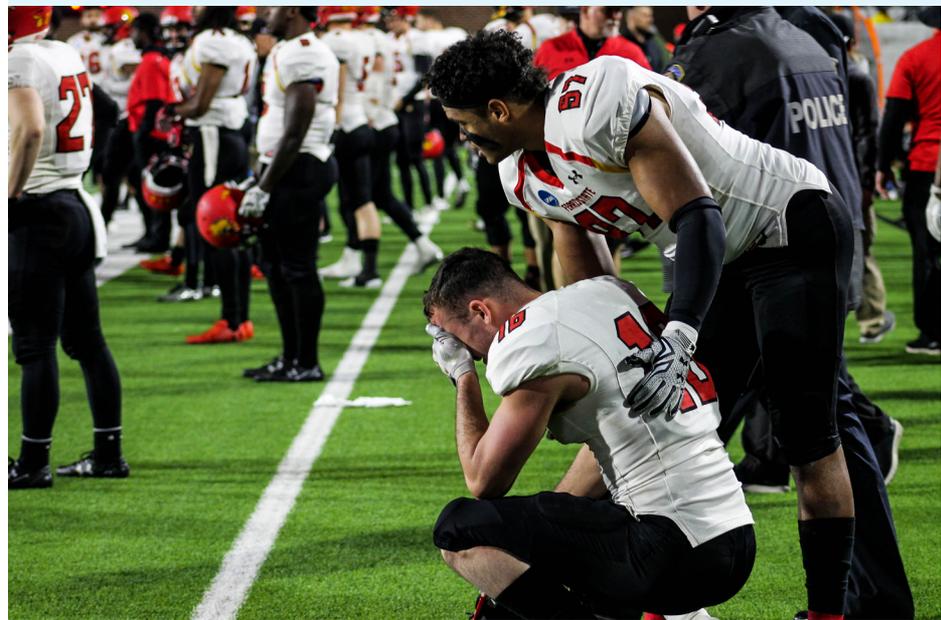


Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor



Photo by: Megell Strayhorn | Multimedia Editor



Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor



Photo by: Cora Hall | Sports Editor



# Ferris State University Tire Fire

The second truest, fairest and most accurate student newspaper on campus



## Still the best team in Michigan

*Ferris turns around after national  
championship to defeat the Detroit  
Lions 42 - 3*

Skip Payless  
*Sports Anal-ist*

The Ferris football team made history with their first national championship game appearance and 15-1 record, but they didn't stop there.

Within hours playing in the Division II National Championship Football Game in McKinney, Texas, the Bulldogs were back in Detroit at Ford Field facing off with the Lions in a game that was over before it started.

There was much skepticism about which football team in Michigan was the best after the Ferris football team twitter account tweeted a graphic with every record in the state, Ferris being the only undefeated football team left, and claims that they were the "King of football in Michigan."

Stupidly dedicated Lions fans responded that they weren't better than the Detroit NFL team and the Detroit Lions official account even replied to Ferris' tweet and said, "Try us, bitch."

The matchup was quickly planned and the players were carted off the Ford Field the second they landed in Detroit at 11:30 p.m.

Long story short, Harlon Hill winner Jayru Campbell, Malik Taylor and Sy Barnett tore through the Lion's sad excuse for a defense and racked up two touchdowns in the first quarter.

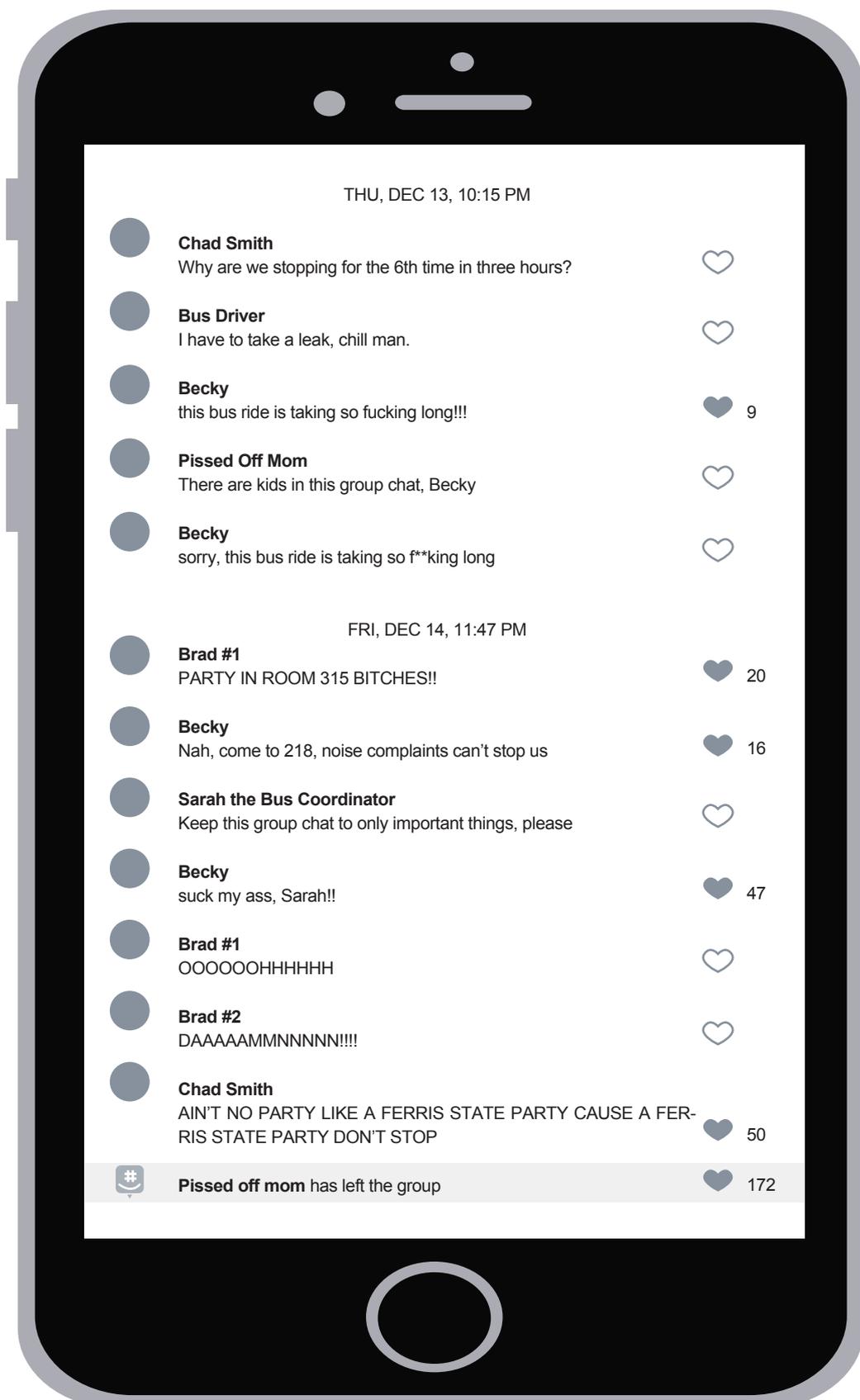
The Lions remained scoreless through the third, unable to crack Ferris' defense, even though they were all exhausted after playing a game just seven hours before.

The Lions saw their first points in the game in the third quarter with a 70-yard field goal from kicker Matt Prater, because, well, you can't stop the Prater train. But junior kicker Jackson Dieterle responded with another career high of the day with an 80-yard field goal right after Prater. The Lions immediately released Prater from the roster and signed Dieterle.

Safe to say, Ferris is the king of football in Michigan. Also, fuck Grand Valley.

## Dawgs getting catty

*With four fan buses, there needs to be a way to communicate departure and arrival times and what better way to do that than a good old GroupMe chat! 200 people ranging from parents to students to coordinators and even children. What could go wrong?*



### Legal Disclaimer:

The Ferris State University *Tire Fire* is a satirical newspaper featuring fabricated or exaggerated stories written by members of the Ferris State *Torch* staff. Pseudonyms and false job titles have been adopted for each of the *Torch* staff members whose work is included in the *Tire Fire*. The *Tire Fire* utilizes invented names and quotes in its stories unless public figures or notable university personas are being satirized or described for the sake of our personal enjoyment, and the enjoyment of our readers. All other use of real names is coincidental. While the *Tire Fire* is an extension of the *Torch*, it is meant to be satirical and does not necessarily reflect the views of the *Torch*, nor Ferris State University.

### Eisler Says:

*"Their mascot is a 'matchstick man' named Blaze. I want whatever their president is smoking."*

