-SINCE 1976-BIGGER FASTER STRONGER INC.

843 WEST 2400 SOUTH SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84119

1-800-628-9737 Local 801-974-0460 FAX: 1-801-975-1159

E-Mail: info@BFSMAIL.com

PRESIDENT

Dr. Greg Shepard

VICE PRESIDENTS

Richard Anderson Robert Rowbotham

EDITOR

Kim Goss

PRODUCTION MANAGER LAYOUT & DESIGN

Brook Bowen

COVER PHOTO:

Richard Orr Sports #25 Zak Raskett

Insert: Stefan Noesen Photo by: William Snyder

This is the Official Magazine of Bigger Faster Stronger. It is published four times a year: Spring, Summer, Fall & Winter. Subscriptions are \$14.95 per year and can be ordered at 1-800-628-9737.

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"Second" Thoughts

by Dr. Greg Shepard

Seconds count: Especially toward the end of a game or in crucial situations. To totally prepare to win, you must count your seconds and make your seconds count.

The Georgia-Purdue Bowl Game: Some stopwatch practice was certainly needed by the Georgia Bulldogs along with some automatic piloting. Here is what happened: Georgia built a 24-0 lead in the first



half. However, Purdue roared back and Georgia only held a slim 27-24 lead with only 1:41 remaining in the game. Purdue's expected onside kick went out of bounds so the clock didn't move. Now, here is where it really gets interesting.

Purdue has only one timeout left, and they used it on Georgia's first play which was, of course, a running play. So, if you're Georgia, what do you do? Purdue has no timeouts left and you lead by three points. You have the ball on your own 40 and its second down-1:35 left. Do you take a knee? Do you run the ball? If so, how? How much time would be used on two running plays? Where would the clock be?

The announcers didn't really know. They had never accurately timed a clock in this situation. I am not really sure what Head Bulldog Coach Mark Richt knew either. The announcers said 50 to 55 seconds would be left when facing 4th down. I think you really need to accurately practice to win and get out your stopwatch.

Georgia gave the ball to Kregg Lumpkin, a freshman. He mistakenly thought the objective was to get some yards. Lumpkin ran right, then left, then back to twist for an extra yard. He fumbled. Purdue recovered and kicked a field goal to send the game into overtime.

Here is what you should do: Give the ball to your fullback. Another back stands seven yards back looking for a possible fumble. The fullback runs low between guard and tackle and goes down at the line of scrimmage holding the ball with two hands. The offensive linemen create a pile. The wide receivers run a 15-yard pattern. Now, the referees must separate the pile and spot the ball. All that can take between 11-15 seconds before the 25-second countdown begins. Therefore, as third down begins there will only be 55-59 seconds left. As fourth down begins there will only be 15-23 seconds left. You can even take a delay-of-game penalty. Sometimes refs will give you and extra second or two, especially if you appear to be trying to take a snap. Obviously 15 seconds left is a lot different from 55 seconds. Then on 4th down you can punt it, pooch it or even run back for a safety.

During the overtime, Lumpkin had his head down he felt so bad. However, Coach Richt, in a masterful move, said, "Hey, you can't be down now. We might need you to win the game." Minutes later Lumpkin became the hero by scoring the winning touchdown. Georgia 34-27 over Purdue. But, it could have been a whole lot easier.

"Second" thoughts anyone?