



February 5, 2008

From Iraq To New Orleans For LSU Win And Back To Iraq To Collect On Bet

By John Connor
Gulf Region South District

TALLIL, Iraq—Frank DeBoer was barely into his third tour in Iraq last summer when he arranged for his R & R trip home to coincide what he was sure would be an appearance by the Louisiana State University football team in the national championship game.

In fact, DeBoer, a financial analyst with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, told a colleague at the USACE deployment center in Winchester, Va., a couple weeks earlier that the LSU Tigers were going to win the national championship and that he was going to be at the game.

Before heading out on R & R from the Corps' southern district headquarters at Tallil, DeBoer made a bet with Cecil Whitehouse, a construction representative with USACE and a staunch Ohio State Buckeye fan, on the outcome of the Ohio State-LSU national championship game. Both DeBoer and Whitehouse are with USACE's Gulf Region South district.

The bet was for the loser to wear a shirt adorned with the colors and name of the winning team. LSU beat Ohio State Buckeyes 38-24 in the New Orleans Superdome back in January. And the bet was paid off in Iraq in early February, the day after the Super Bowl, with Whitehouse donning one of DeBoer's LSU shirts for a three-day stint in Tiger colors.



Ohio State fan Cecil Whitehouse, left, pays off football bet to LSU partisan Frank DeBoer by wearing LSU shirt. (USACE photo by Mohammed Aliwi).

Whitehouse, who works for the Louisville, Ky., district back in the states, was a generally gracious loser. However, he did insist on wearing an Ohio State 2002 national championship hat while wearing the LSU garb. He also noted that LSU lost a couple games this year while Ohio State went 14-0 in 2002. (DeBoer reports Ohio State is 0-9 against South-eastern Conference opponents).

Whitehouse said he wore his Ohio State hat and LSU shirt to the base post office and ended up explaining to a confused postal worker that he was paying off a bet by wearing the shirt. "If it's any consolation, the last two Ohio State fans in here paying off bets were wearing dresses," the postal worker is reported to have said. Whitehouse said it's a good thing his betting partner wasn't smarter than a fifth grader.

DeBoer, a New Orleans native who works for the Corps' Memphis district back home, was at the championship game, with a nice seat. He had 30-yard line second-tier, right smack in the middle of the Ohio State alumni section. He missed out on the lottery among season ticket holders and paid the going freight but there he was, at the game, like he promised himself.

"This was my dream come true," DeBoer said, "my boyhood dream."

The dream looked for a time like it might turn into a nightmare for the 10-year LSU season ticket holder.

LSU fell behind 10-0 and the Ohio State fans started to razz DeBoer, who, of course, was wearing his LSU shirt. "They were taunting me pretty good," he recalled, "I told them to speak to me in the fourth quarter. I wasn't worried. LSU had come from behind four or five times during the regular season."

When the tide turned in LSU's favor, he said, "I was a gentleman. I kept my cool."

The season had a couple rough patches for LSU and DeBoer—the Tigers lost two games, both in triple overtime. But the bottom line was the bottom line--a national championship.

DeBoer was especially anxious to make the big game this year. He was in Baghdad when LSU won the 2003 national championship.

Note: John Connor is a public affairs officer with the Gulf Region South district, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact him at 540-665-2656 or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.