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GEORGE HOSTETTER
SPORTS ON TV

Millions viewed The Upset

Poor USC. It wasn't enough that the Trojans were upset 24-7 by Fresno State Dec. 29 in Freedom Bowl IX. Millions of viewers watched their humiliation.

Raycom executive vice president Ken Haines said the game had a 3.7 national rating and a 6 national share. That means 3.7 percent of all U.S. households with a TV were tuned in to the game. Six percent of households with the TV turned on were watching the game.

Raycom, a North Carolina-based company, also produced the last two Freedom Bowl telecasts. Haines said the national ratings were 2.5 for San Diego State-Tulsa in 1991 and 2.6 for Colorado State-Oregon in 1990.

Each rating point represents approximately 928,000 TV households.

"There was the national appeal of USC and the high-scoring, upset reputation of Fresno State," Haines said. "It was an interesting game and an upset. It's hard to imagine a better scenario for Fresno State."

Haines said the Bulldogs' victory "definitely enhanced the marketability of FSU" for future national telecasts.

The local numbers on KMPH (Channel 26) were even better. Program director Debbie Sweeney said KMPH had a 48 rating among the approximately 237,000 TV households in Fresno County. The share among TVs in use was 77.

"Those are the highest ratings in our 21-year history," Sweeney said.

Millions see it in California: Sweeney estimated that 1 million viewers from Kern County to Mariposa County watched the game on KMPH.

"And that's not counting the people in bars," she said.

The Freedom Bowl was televised in Los Angeles on KCAL, an independent station. Sweeney said the game received a 9 rating and a 17 share, more than double KCAL's average numbers for that Tuesday time slot.

Many hits, a few misses: The telecast generally was a strong one.

■ KMPH's 30-minute pre-game show was excellent. Sports director Ralph Wood to FSU nose tackle Zack Rix: "Do you think about what it would be like to beat S.C.?" Rix: "Oh, yeah. Pretty soon, we'll know what it's like to beat them."

■ Raycom analyst Dave Rowe on FSU quarterback Trent Dilfer: "He hasn't made any mistakes. He hasn't tried to force any passes in. He's playing within his own game."

■ Rowe on USC quarterback Rob Johnson: "When Johnson starts to run, he loses all vision downfield."

■ Small details stick out. FSU guard Josh Coldiron leading the way for Ron Rivers' fourth-quarter touchdown. FSU defensive end Nick Serfas tackling Estrus Crayton with a one-hand grab of the USC tailback's jersey. FSU offensive tackles Jesse Hardwick, Raycom's player of the game, and Ron Collins handling USC's highly touted Willie McGinest and David Webb.

■ Rowe at the end: "S.C. is a powerful team with a powerful tradition. But Fresno State has just not been awed by it."

There were a few fumbles.

KMPH's post-game show was disorganized. On two occasions, Rowe confused FSU center Jason James with the injured Billy Scott. Rowe also credited Chris Williams for causing Crayton's fumble on a third-quarter punt return and never corrected that Jamie Christian actually caused the fumble.

But those were minor flaws. Viewers who recorded the game got themselves a keeper.

George Hostetter is a Bee staff writer. His column appears Tuesday.