

Independence Bowl preview

Written by Hal Braswell
Monday, 24 December 2012 08:16 -

When the 2012 AdvoCare V100 Independence Bowl kicks off at 1 p.m. Friday, two teams hungry for a win should provide spectators with great entertainment in a game featuring two high-powered offenses.

University of Louisiana at Monroe (8-4) is making the first bowl game in the program's history since moving up to the FBS ranks beginning with the 1994 season, and would like to take advantage of what is essentially a homefield advantage. Ohio University, also 8-4, will be making its fourth-straight bowl game but its first to the Independence Bowl.

"We are very excited that the hard work of the team and the staff have been noticed by the AdvoCare V100 Independence Bowl," said ULM head coach Todd Berry. "To have a historic season culminate in a bowl such as the Independence Bowl and the great city of Shreveport is extra special. This team continues to work very hard.

The ULM faithful can be very proud of this team both on and off the field and can know that we will give a maximum effort towards bringing the Independence Bowl trophy home with us."

ULM enters the contest with a two-game winning streak. Immediately preceding those two wins, however, were losses to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (which won last week's New Orleans Bowl 43-34 over East Carolina) and to Sunbelt Champs Arkansas State.

Ohio won 8 of its first 9 games but closed the regular season with three straight losses to Bowling Green, Ball State and No. 23 Kent State. During the season, Ohio was ranked as high as No. 25 in the Associated Press Poll.

"The Ohio University football program is extremely excited for the opportunity to play in the Independence Bowl," said head coach Frank Solich. "For over 25 years this has been one of the premier bowl games in the country and I couldn't be happier for our team. Louisiana-Monroe has had a very good season and we're certain that this game will be a great matchup."

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Numerous injuries upset Ohio's hopes for a really special season but the Bobcats aim to pick up a win to avoid a loss in five of their last six games.

Both ULM and Ohio have had their moments this season, garnering national attention with season-opening wins against big-name opponents.

Ohio stunned Penn State 24-14 before more than 95,000 fans in Beaver Stadium in its season opener.

ULM opened its season with a 34-31 overtime win at then-No. 8 Arkansas.

Friday's contest will be the first-ever meeting between the two universities in any sport. Ohio is a member of the Mid-America Conference, where it finished 4-4 this season. ULM is a member of the Sun Belt Conference, where it finished 6-2.