

-10 - What's more impressive than a 15-lateral play? - 10-

October 2008

Mir-a-cle (mir'e-kel) n.

1. An event that appears inexplicable by the laws of nature, held to be supernatural in origin or an act of God.
2. One that excites admiring awe.
3. A miracle play.*

Maybe the third definition could now appear: 3. A miracle play. See: final play – Trinity University (TX) vs. Millsaps College (MS) – Oct. 27, 2007.

There's no better way to describe the play that transpired as the final two seconds clicked off the scoreboard at Harper Davis Field in Jackson, Miss., almost a year ago. Tabbed "The Miracle in Mississippi" by local media, many of the players and coaches feel the term "miracle" is a bit heavy to be used when describing a football play.

"A miracle is when somebody has cancer and it goes away, and they are able to spend the rest of their life with their family," said Jason Guthrie, Trinity's receivers coach. "What we did was a great experience and a great play, but sometimes I feel like calling it a miracle may be a little much."

Guthrie might be right. Maybe scoring a 60-yard touchdown, in which seven players combined to lateral the ball 15 times, is not on the same level as God healing a cancer patient or protecting someone in a car accident. But then you find out that Brandon Maddux and Riley Curry, the final players to touch the ball and receive much of the national attention surrounding the play, are Christian men who understand that God is to receive the glory in everything. Even if it was just a spectacular football play, the fact that the players are using their platform to spread God's Word—well, that can only be described as an act of God.

Before the 2007 season even began, the Holy Spirit was working in the Trinity Tigers. Upperclassmen, including Curry and Maddux, displayed biblical servanthood to their new teammates when they arrived on campus for opening day check-in. They welcomed the newcomers and handed out FCA material, gospel tracts and bottled water to provide relief from the Texas heat.



The Magnificent Seven: Michael Tomlin, Stephen Arnold, Brandon Maddux, Josh Hooten, Blake Barmore, Shawn Thompson, Riley Curry. The number of footballs represents the number of laterals thrown by each player.

A few weeks later, Trinity's head athletic trainer, Mark Powell, with the help of San Antonio FCA Field Associate Steve Ribble, began the Wednesday night Huddle and Bible study that roughly 35 student-athletes (many of them football players) attended.

Maddux's father, Butch, started a weekly e-mail devotion series that was sent out to more than 100 players, coaches and support staff, and also led pre-game devotions and prayers before both road and home games. More than 15 players attended the pre-game services, which, according to Maddux, "challenged the players to get right with God before entering the field of competition so that they could be used for His glory."

By their fifth game of the season things were getting interesting

for the Tigers. The team suffered an upset defeat at the hands of Tennessee's Rhodes College, which meant that, in order to stay alive in the conference championship hunt, they would need to win each of their remaining five games.

They cruised through the next two games easily enough, but then traveled to Jackson, Miss., to take on the defending conference champion Millsaps College Majors. Trinity was fully aware that this would be the toughest game on their regular season schedule. In order to prepare, the team paid close attention to the pre-game devotional, which provided biblical inspiration about (literally) facing a giant. First Samuel 17: David versus Goliath.

"Many people seem to think that it's only a great children's Bible story," Maddux said. "But it's a story of God's empowerment. We were blessed to see that empowerment on us that day."

The game was tightly-contested, and with only 2:11 remaining, Trinity scored a touchdown on a fourth down to pull within two points of Millsaps, 24-22. Millsaps recovered Trinity's ensuing on-side kick attempt, but the Tigers were able to hold on defense and reclaim the ball.

The stage was set: 60 yards from the end zone and only two seconds left on the clock. Perhaps even Goliath appeared more conquerable at that point.

"I guess, as a coach, it's hard not to look at the odds of scoring given the circumstances," Head Coach Steve Mohr said. "But I have to admit, the players really had confidence."

The coaches kept it simple and instructed the first pass to be over the middle with improvisation to follow.



Trinity's Shawn Thompson completing lateral #6 to Brandon Maddux.

Improvisation was apparently the key word.

Quarterback Blake Barmore delivered a 16-yard strike to receiver Shawn Thompson, who tossed it back to Curry, who then lateraled it to lineman Josh Hooten. This continued down the field where Michael Tomlin and Stephen Arnold also got involved. It all culminated when Maddux, in an almost desperate heave, bounce-passed the ball perfectly to Curry, who scooped it up, scooted past six Millsaps defenders, and dove into the end zone.

"It was all kind of a blur to me," Curry said. "I can watch it on YouTube, but it was like I wasn't actually a part of it. I felt like I was just watching it unfold. Somehow, there was always another guy behind the guy with the ball to pitch to."

Sixty-two seconds in real time had passed, 60 yards had been covered, seven players had touched the ball for 15 combined laterals.

Trinity 28, Millsaps 24.



Curry and Maddux at the 2008 ESPY Awards.

It wasn't long before the nation began to hear about "The Miracle in Mississippi." The play appeared on SportsCenter that night, and it was an instant hit online. When they returned to San Antonio, the players were greeted by members of the media seeking interviews and plenty of phone calls from friends.

"I got phone calls and voicemails the following Monday from ESPN and the San Antonio Express-News saying, 'Hey, we want to talk to you. Call us back,'" Curry said. "It was so weird. I was calling ESPN because they wanted to talk to me about something that I was a part of."

Eventually the play was named the 2007 Pontiac Game Changing Performance of the Year, which brought \$100,000 to the school's general scholarship fund, and TIME Magazine's No. 1 sports moment of 2007. The team received recognition from the San Antonio City Council and the San Antonio Spurs. Finally, it was nominated for "Best Play"

Trinity football players Brandon Maddux and Riley Curry didn't just soak up the sun and meet famous athletes while in Los Angeles for the 2008 ESPY Awards. Southern California FCA Area Rep Josh Canales arranged for the guys to speak to about 300 youth attending Vacation Bible School at Mission Ebenezer Family Church in Carson, Calif.

Said Curry: "It was really good to step out of the ESPY atmosphere and focus on what really matters, and that's proclaiming the gospel."

Canales also felt blessed to be able to work with Curry and Maddux.

"Working with those two young guys was awesome," he said. "They were just so eager to do something for the Lord."

"We'll never forget the experience," Curry said. "It brought us together as a team, and we have so many memories that most people don't get to have."

Still, they understand that what happened in past seasons stays in the past. New seasons bring new players, new games and, in Trinity's case, even more opportunities to bring people closer to Christ.

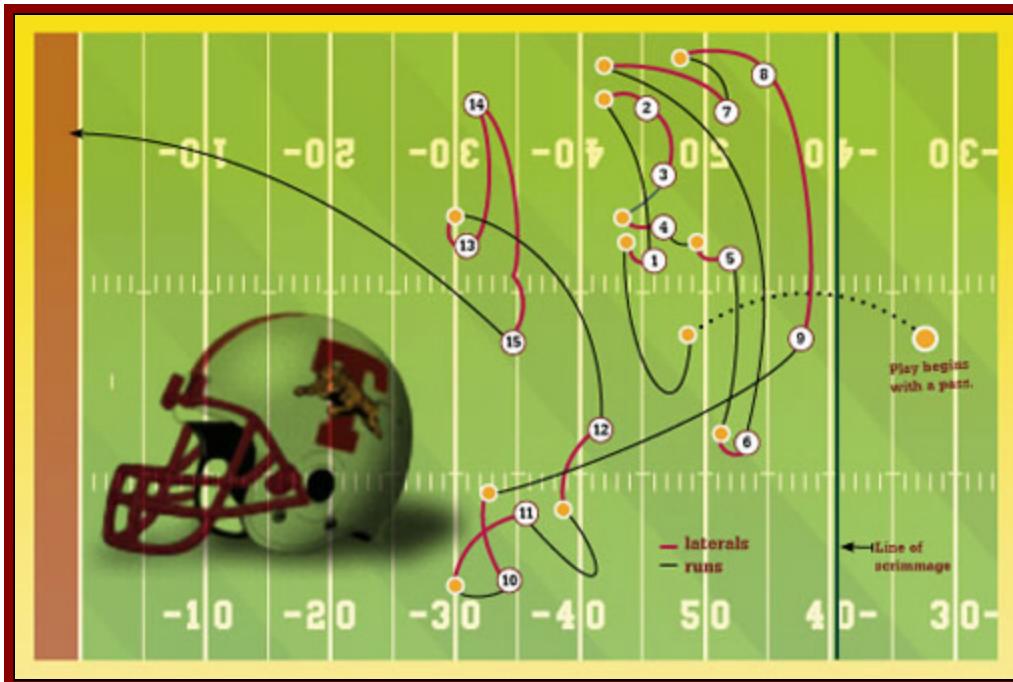
"From a football standpoint, we have all done a really good job of putting that play behind us," Curry said. "We've got to come out every game and understand that our opponents aren't going to give victories to us. We have got to earn them. But we also realize now that every game is not over until the clock is done. There was no way we were supposed to score on that play with two seconds left and 60 yards in front of us."

And outside of football?

"FCA will continue to work in and with the team," he said. "We'll get a consistent group going, form a bigger nucleus and get involved in those guys' lives. I think the guys involved with the pre-game devotionals really have a desire to continue the tradition we started. And I think guys feed off of that as far as becoming closer as teammates and learning more about God and how He relates to us on a personal level."

So go ahead and continue the debate of which is the greatest college football play of all time. The Trinity coaches and players don't mind their play being mentioned in the same breath as the Cal-Stanford kickoff or Doug Flutie's Boston College hail mary to beat Miami. Just try not to call their play a "miracle." **STV**

Trinity's Miraculous Play



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