

SPORTS

# FOOTBALL: Oak Ridge erases 18-point deficit, tops Clear Creek

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SHENANDOAH — Oak Ridge put up 22 unanswered points in the fourth quarter to beat Clear Creek 28-24 on Saturday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

With a little over two minutes to play in the third quarter, Oak Ridge fell behind 24-6. The War Eagles put together an impressive comeback and walked away victorious in front of a loud and proud home crowd.

“Best feeling ever,” quarterback Steve Smedley said. “Comeback from behind — it’s the best feeling. You can’t beat that feeling.”

Early in the fourth quarter, Smedley connected with Jahron Jonas for a touchdown pass and two-point play to cut the lead to 24-14. With 6:03 to go, it became a three-point game after a 1-yard touchdown run from Justin Williams.

Favour Awodoyin make a fourth down tackle at the War Eagles’ 37-yard line to get Oak Ridge the ball back with 2:51 to go.

In the game-winning drive, the War Eagles converted on fourth down with a 28-yard pass from Smedley to Jaquale Harrison. The very next play was a 32-yard touchdown run from Frankie Arthur to put Oak Ridge ahead 28-24 with 1:23 to play.

The War Eagles defense forced a turnover on downs to get the ball back, then kneels ended it.

“We talked at halftime about responding to adversity,” coach Mark Schmid said. “How you choose to respond can determine how successful you are. The kids took it to their heart. We came out and we played different in the second half. We played with a little bit more of a sense of urgency, we trusted one another and we made plays when we had to. I think some of our younger players grew up tonight.”

Smedley was 12 of 17 for 126 yards in the win. He was 5 of 8 for 97 yards and a touchdown in the second half.

“Last year I didn’t really have much experience,” Smedley, a junior, said. “I was nervous and didn’t really know what I was doing. This year, I have experience and know what I’m doing. We came back and got the win and it was amazing.”

A three-headed sophomore rushing attack also led the War Eagles offensively. Arthur had seven carries for 113 yards, Larry DeBose had eight carries for 68 yards and Williams had 12 carries for 50 yards.

“I love their athleticism and how they play the game,” Schmid said. “There’s three of them and that gives a lot of depth to that position, and they’re all very unselfish. They really don’t care who gets the credit as long as we’re doing well.”

Clear Creek found the end zone twice in the first half, while Oak Ridge saw its three possessions derailed by inopportune negative plays.

On the War Eagles’ first drive, a loss on third down forced a punt. On the second one — which drove into Clear Creek territory — a 13-yard loss on a sack by the Wildcats’ Landen Gunter forced another punt. Oak Ridge’s third first half possession got to the Clear Creek 25-yard line before a 4-yard loss on a run and an 11-yard loss on a sack forced a punt.

Clear Creek, meanwhile, went on a two long scoring drives.

In the first quarter, the Wildcats went 70 yards on 12 plays, ending with a 7-yard pass from Cody Raboin to Colton Jarmosco.

In the second quarter, an 8-play, 95-yard drive ended with a 75-yard touchdown run from Jeremiah Crum on a third-and-12 play.

Crum rushed for 183 yards on 18 carries and Rocky Ketchum had 79 yards on 17 carries.

Clear Creek’s last drive of the half got to midfield and ended with an interception by Oak Ridge’s Sammy Keith as the first half expired.

After forcing a Wildcats punt to begin the third quarter, Oak Ridge found the end zone in a unique way.

Clear Creek was slow to get lined up and the War Eagles took advantage, snapping the ball and handing it off to Frankie Arthur, who scored 73 yards later. The extra point missed and Oak Ridge trailed by eight.

“That was big,” Schmid said. “The entire first half, our offense would be out on the field waiting for them as the play clock went down. So I told the official at halftime if (Clear Creek) is not coming out on the field, we’re going to snap the ball. He said yes

coach, that's legal. That was big and our kids needed a little lift. It helped propel us the rest of the night."

The Wildcats answered with a 27-yard field goal from Garrett Carleton, then an onside kick. A 44-yard pass to Jarmosco set up a 6-yard touchdown run from Crum and the Wildcats were ahead 24-6.

The third quarter ended a couple minutes later, but Oak Ridge wasn't quite finished.

The War Eagles host Houston Stratford at 7 p.m. Friday back at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

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