

SPORTS

# Offense picks up in second half as Oak Ridge tops College Park

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Oak Ridge WR JaQuale Harrison (1) is tackled from behind by College Park DB Andrew Powdrell (4) in the first half of action during a District 13-6A high school football game between Oak Ridge vs College Park at Woodforest Bank Stadium in Shenandoah, TX, October 20, 2022.

Juan DeLeon/Contributor

**SHENANDOAH** — With time running out on the season, Thursday night football was truly a must-win situation for both Oak Ridge and College Park, as the winner of this District 13-6A contest would be tied for third place with Willis going into Week 10.

This edition of Thursday night football, however, was quite like some recent NFL Amazon Prime showcases in recent weeks. Not much was happening on the scoreboard at Woodforest Bank Stadium in the first half with a scoreless game after 24 minutes.

In the second half though, Oak Ridge pulled away with five touchdowns – including one from the defense – in a 35-7 win over the Cavaliers.

Oak Ridge (5-3, 4-2) has now won four straight games while College Park (3-5, 3-3) has now dropped back with three straight losses. The War Eagles also broke up a four-game slide against the Cavaliers and now are ahead in the all-time series, 9-8.

“As we wind down district play with three weeks to go, we knew all three of these games were going to be important in determining playoff seeding and things like that,” Oak Ridge coach Mark Schmid said. “College Park was in the same situation, needing to win two of the last three to have a chance to get in.

“Getting one of those two was big for us tonight against a really well-coached team. Real happy for that and happy the way the kids played.”

## Highlights

In the first half, nine drives ended on punts.

College Park lost a big chance when Oak Ridge stopped a fourth-and-goal at the 1 in the first quarter.

Oak Ridge, however, had a field goal blocked in the second quarter and also had a drive stopped on fourth down. It also lost a fumble that was recovered by College Park linebacker Mason Stallons.

Just a couple bagels on the scoreboard in the first half.

“We just got more focused in the second half,” Oak Ridge quarterback Steve Smedley said. “Guys rallied around in the locker room. It was good for us.”

Schmid and his staff had a clear message at the break.

“We’ve got two more quarters to play,” Schmid said. “We talked about that College Park was playing for the exact same thing we were and the exact same situation. It wasn’t going to be easy.”

The teams exchanged touchdowns to begin the second half.

Braylan Harrelll caught a 53-yard pass from Smedley.

College Park lost starting quarterback Kam Montgomery to injury near the end of the second quarter. With usual starter Conner Dunphy playing wide receiver, third-string quarterback Mickey Wells went to work and led the Cavaliers on a long scoring drive.

James Sweeney capped it at the 6:14 mark with an 8-yard score.

It was all Oak Ridge from there.

Frankie Arthur had two touchdown runs of 13 and 8 yards, respectively, in the second half.

“He’s just great,” Smedley said of Arthur. “He’s good in short yardage, you feel like he’s going to go for a touchdown every time. It’s just great having him.”

Jaxon Wiley made it 21-7 on a pick-6 run back of 55 yards to the end zone near the end of the third quarter.

Harrell then added his second touchdown of the night from 41 yards out with 2:26 left in the game.

“Second half, we made some adjustments offensively,” Schmid said. “We played a little cleaner. We were able to do some things offensively. I was real happy with the resiliency our kids showed in dealing with some adversity.”

## **What it means**

Oak Ridge has now allowed just seven points in the past two games and is in a groove down the stretch.

Junior linebacker Justin Williams was proud of how the War Eagles' defense kept the team in the game when there wasn't much scoring going on early.

The win will go a long way towards getting back to the playoffs for the first time since 2020.

"This is our season to get into the playoffs and we played great overall," Williams said. "Defense was on all cylinders. It took the offense a little bit (to get going). But we loved every bit of it."

College Park was held to 153 yards of offense with just 34 rushing.

## Quotable

"We had to win two of our next three games," Smedley said. "We've now beat College Park, we need to beat Caney Creek next week and then it comes down to Willis. It was a great win. We did what we needed to do."

## Game balls

Smedley finished 15-for-21 for 220 yards. In a game like this, his leadership was leaned on.

"He's a three-year varsity starter," Schmid said. "He's played a lot of varsity football games against really good people. For him to be in a moment like tonight where we felt like it was a must-win, he commanded and led the offense. He was a barometer for the offensive kids and it was important."

Arthur had 21 carries for 103 yards.

Kamran Nekooi also had an interception in the second half.

Dunphy had five catches for 53 yards for the Cavaliers as he returned after missing last week due to injury.

## Up next

Oak Ridge travels north to Buddy Moorhead Stadium next Friday to take on Caney Creek.

College Park is back at Woodforest Bank Stadium the same night to host first-place New Caney.

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