

Outlaws beat tough Elmira in Homecoming game

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Sisters came out on top 21-16 in a hard-fought contest with a very physical and stubborn Elmira squad at home on Friday, October 23. The Outlaws clinched the Sky-Em League football championship. The Outlaws wrapped up their season unbeaten with a 7-0 record.

A crowd filled the stands — many more stood along the perimeter — and cheered on the Outlaws in their final league game of the season. The contest was full of intensity and excitement, and the Outlaws played strong and steady.

After a scoreless first quarter, the Outlaws opened the scoring with a 20-yard touchdown pass from quarterback

Tanner Head to Ben Saba on the left side, and got on the scoreboard. Elmira took over from there, and owned the remainder of the quarter. The Falcons had success in their running game, and scored on a 42-yard field goal from Devin Vestal and a 33-yard touchdown run from Chad Estrella for a 10-7 advantage at the half.

The second half opened with high energy and electricity in the air. Chance Halley took the kick-off, hurdled over defenders, broke tackles, and side-stepped all the way from the five-yard line down to Elmira's 25-yard line before he stepped out of bounds. However, the Falcons' defense held and the Outlaws were unable to score.

Elmira took possession, and on third down, Johnny Gurney recovered a fumble on the 22-yard line. Mitch Gibney took a hand-off and carried the ball to the one-yard line, and on the next play, ran it in for the touchdown, which capped the long drive. Jadon Bachtold had a perfect kick for the PAT and Sisters took a 14-10 lead.

With just a couple of minutes left in the third quarter, a bad snap by Elmira resulted in the Outlaws taking possession of the ball at midfield. Quarterback Tanner Head threw a pass to twin brother Tyler, who took it all the way to the 13-yard line. Logan Schutte followed with a run to the five-yard line as time

ran out in the period.

Thirty seconds into the final quarter, Gibney ran the ball to the one-yard line for first-and-goal and followed with a TD run on the next play. Bachtold's kick was good, and Sisters extended their lead to 21-10.

Elmira bobbled the ball on the kick-off return, but re-grouped, and ended their drive with a 38-yard TD run. The Falcons were stopped on their two-point conversion attempt, but did narrow the score to 21-16 with 5:40 left on the clock.

The Outlaws went three-and-out, and Elmira got the ball back. The whole atmosphere intensified as the crowd cheered on the Outlaws defense to hold back the Falcons from scoring. Elmira kept up their march down the field, and got to within striking distance. On fourth down, with 30 seconds left on the clock, they threw an incomplete pass and it was the Outlaws' ball.

Sisters took a knee and the game was over. The win earned the Outlaws a week off, and an automatic berth and home game in the first round of the Class 4A state playoffs in two weeks.

The Outlaws were held to their lowest output of the season on the ground, but showed they can throw the ball effectively. Gibney finished with 67 yards on 14 carries to lead the Outlaws in rushing yards. Quarterback



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Ben Saba went up for the touchdown catch vs. Elmira.

Tanner Head was six-of-nine passing for 179 yards. Tyler Head made two catches for 77 yards, and Ben Saba had three receptions for 72 yards and a touchdown.

"Tanner had a very good week throwing the ball in practice, and that gave us confidence heading into the game in regards to our passing game," said Coach Gary Thorson.

Jacob Gurney was the Outlaws' leading tackler with six tackles on the night.

"We knew coming into the game that Elmira was a very talented football team, and would pose a problem for us," said Thorson. "They were pretty solid against the run all year long, which is our strength, but we took

advantage of what they gave us in the passing game, and were able to move the ball when we needed to.

"I did think our effort was good, particularly in the second half," said Thorson. "The staff and I are proud of the players and what they have accomplished over this last season, and all the way back to when our season ended last fall. The seniors in particular led the way in the off-season in terms of paying the price in the weight room, and that has been the key for us in my opinion. If we didn't have the weight program we do, and the kids hadn't bought into it like they have, we would not have won tonight, and we would not be league champions."



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Tanner Head threw for 179 yards vs. Elmira.

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