

# Crushing loss eliminates Tigers



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

La Grande's Parker Robinson accounted for 243 total yards in Friday night's game in Gladstone.

Observer staff

For the second year in a row, the La Grande Tigers were ousted from the Class 4A state playoffs in the quarterfinals by three points.

How it happened this time, though, was much more brutal.

Gladstone's Mateo Burgos connected on a 47-yard field goal as time expired — and just seconds after La Grande had tied the score — to lead the Gladiators to a 30-27 victory Friday night in Gladstone.

"Everyone was playing their guts out," La Grande Head Coach Rich McIlmoil said. "We played as hard as we could."

"You gotta tip your hat to (Burgos)."

La Grande's offense was stymied and kept off the field much of the second half as the Gladiators bounced back from a 20-14 deficit to take a 27-20 lead on Ben Hill's four-yard run with 6:13 left in the game.

The Tigers pulled even on their final attempt of the game — a 16-yard touchdown pass from Parker Robinson to Blaine Shaw on fourth down — to even the score with 49 seconds to play.

"We haven't had a game that has really tested us for a while," McIlmoil said. "When they got tested, they didn't give up. Multiple kids said, 'we can do this.'"

Gladstone responded

by driving down to the La Grande 29 and elected to try what would be a long field goal attempt even for some college kickers. Burgos put the ball just inside the left upright for the victory.

The teams traded punches most of the first half. Robinson threw two first-quarter touchdowns — a four-yard pass to Shaw and a nine-yarder to Gabe Shukle.

Gladstone responded both times, first on a 26-yard run by Spencer Boyd midway through the first quarter, and then on a 59-yard TD reception by Ben Hill to knot the score at 14-14 early in the second.

Robinson scrambled 11 yards to score just before halftime for a 20-14 Tiger lead at the break.

"One of their coaches said we were one of the toughest if not the toughest teams they played all year," McIlmoil said.

Both teams relied heavily on the run game — La Grande (7-3 overall) rushing for 220 yards and Gladstone for 202. The Tigers, though, hurt themselves with four turnovers.

Robinson led the Tigers' ground game with 142 yards and a score, and added 101 yards passing. Shukle led the receiving corps with 57 yards through the air.

Jake Gehrke had 143 yards passing for Gladstone.

# Mountie football ends on high note

Observer staff

With offense at a premium, it was Eastern Oregon's special teams and defense that produced a victory in the Mountaineers' season finale.

Nathan Harden converted two field goals, and Chase Van Wyck blocked a field goal in the closing seconds to lift Eastern Oregon to an 8-7 win at Carroll College Saturday in Frontier Conference action, the Mountaineers' fourth win in a row over the Fighting Saints.

Harden connected from 49 yards out for the lead with 4:59 to play in the game, giving EOU its first lead since the first half. Carroll drove down to the one-yard line and set up for the potential winning chip shot with 24 seconds to play, but the defensive line burst through and Van Wyck got a hand on the kick to give the Mountaineers possession and the ability to run out the clock.

The eight points scored in the victory was the fewest by EOU in a win in the Tim Camp era and the fewest since at least 2000. Eastern has only one other victory

since 2000 in which it scored fewer than 10 points — a 9-3 victory over Southern Oregon in 2006.

The Mountaineers took a 3-0 first-quarter lead on a 25-yard field goal by Harden and extended it to 5-0 when Justin Hughes blocked a punt into the end zone for a safety in the second quarter.

Carroll got on the board on the final play of the first half with an 18-yard touchdown reception by Shane Sipes for a 7-5 lead.

EOU won despite most of the offensive stats favoring Carroll. Eastern managed 245 yards of offense to Carroll's 407, gained 185 yards through the air while allowing 309, and was 1-for-13 on third down while the Saints were 9-for-22.

Gabe Giacci led the Eastern receiving corps with 60 yards, including a key 45-yard catch that helped set up Harden's winning kick.

The victory brings EOU's season to an end at 6-4 overall and in the Frontier, securing the Mountaineers' fourth winning season in the last six years.



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