



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Chris Woodworth celebrates after sacking Gladstone quarterback Hudson Meyer during the third quarter Friday night.

TIGERS

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board early in the second quarter. The Tigers, immediately after holding Gladstone on fourth-and-goal at the 3-yard line, marched 97 yards in nine plays — all rushing — to open the scoring, with Reed accounting for 77 of the yards and finishing from 8 yards out for a 7-0 lead, which was where the margin stood at the break.

The only other score came again after a major defensive play by the Tigers. Gladstone chewed up nearly six minutes of the clock on a nine-play drive to open the second half, but Chris Woodworth sacked Gladstone quarterback Hudson Meyer on third and long to force a punt.

"I just saw the play coming, saw the guard that was going to pull, saw (Meyer) dropping back," Woodworth said.

Reed then capped another long drive, this one of 10 plays and 70 yards, with a 6-yard run for the final score with 1:53 to play in the third quarter.

"We had a great game plan,"

Reed said. "We knew it would be a tough game. They're a great team, but we came out and executed. But we're still not satisfied. This isn't where we want to end up. The semifinals isn't our goal. We're happy, we'll celebrate and get back to work."

The defense did the rest, limiting Gladstone to just 50 yards in the second half, and only 18 on the ground.

"We really just played our hearts out and shut down their run," Woodworth said. "They couldn't really do anything."

The matchup of run-heavy teams quickly turned into a smash mouth affair, with both teams relying almost exclusively on the ground game.

Neither team, in fact, completed a pass on the only six attempts that were thrown in the first half. Four of the passes were intercepted — two by Ryan Lee of Gladstone, one by teammate Blake Harman on the final play of the first half, and one by La Grande's Dawson Gaertner in the first half.

The teams combined to complete just three passes for 49 yards on



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The La Grande bench celebrates Friday during the final seconds of the Tigers' 14-0 win over Gladstone.

the night, due partly to the rainy conditions that came and went at Community Stadium, and due to the teams throwing just 14 passes.

Each team, by comparison, ran the ball 39 times, with La Grande outgaining the Gladiators 282-126 on the ground.

"Our defense was highly prepared," McIlmoil said. "(Defensive coordinator Matt) Wolcott spent hours watching them and breaking down film, giving (our team) what they needed to know."

Gladstone's best chance to get on the board came in the first quarter after Lee grabbed his second interception. The Gladiators used the 13-play drive — including a key punt fake by Burgos to get a first down and keep the drive alive and a 22-yard run by Mason Scheehead — to threaten for the early lead.

But Hunter Lehman dropped a pass in the end zone on fourth down to give the ball over to La Grande, which followed with the go-ahead drive.

Gladstone's only other major threat was snuffed out by the interception grabbed by Gaertner in the second quarter.

The Tigers will face The Dalles in the semifinals Saturday in Hermiston, with kickoff for the contest set for 5:30 p.m. The Riverhawks



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La Grande's Eli Leavitt (64) and Dawson Gaertner (4) wrap up Gladstone's Mason Scheehead during the third quarter of Friday's quarterfinal game.

outlasted Tillamook in a shootout in the quarterfinals, 58-51, to earn their first semifinal berth since 1993.

The teams met in September, a

game won by La Grande, 48-14. The Dalles has had some players return from injury, though, who weren't on the field in the first contest.

FOOTBALL

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quarters, keeping the same energy, and it showed today."

Eastern trailed 20-14 entering the fourth quarter and started the final period with the ball on its own 2-yard line.

A 98-yard drive followed, with two Tanner Zenke receptions — the second a 39-yard completion on a deep fade route — helping get EOU into Carroll territory. Kaler Moore reached the end zone four plays later, scoring a 34-yard touchdown on fourth-and-1 to give the Mountaineers a 21-20 lead with 11:54 to play.

"The kids played for each other," Camp said. "They wanted to send the seniors out as winners. We had a good week of practice (and built) off the win from last week."

EOU's defense then kept Carroll out of the end zone despite the Saints marching into the red zone and having first-and-goal at the EOU 2-yard-line. Matthew Burgess, who had rushed for 157 yards on the afternoon, was stopped on three of the runs, including getting stuffed on fourth down short of the goal line with about eight minutes to go.

"I think they were trying to send a message, saying,



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's Eli Teuteu tackles an airborne Shane Sipes during Saturday's contest against Carroll College. The Mountaineers won, 28-26.

"We're going to power it in right here," Camp said of why Carroll went for it on fourth down instead of taking a short field goal attempt. "That was a big goal-line stand."

Eastern followed with a 99-yard drive, again taking to the air. Completions of 33 and 13 yards to Saige Wilkerson and a 42-yard bomb to Zenke moved EOU to the Carroll 15, and Wilkerson's 10-yard catch two plays later gave the Mountaineers a 28-20 lead with just 3:06 to go.

Camp said the Mountaineers threw a few more deep passes down the field than they had in recent weeks, and it paid off.

"The attitude going in was we were going to take shots on (Carroll's) corners. We know when they're in man coverage there's an opportunity," he said. "Our kids made plays today."

The passes weren't the only times EOU gambled, either. The Mountaineers ran a successful punt fake, attempted an onside kick after

their go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter, and went for it on fourth down near midfield in the third quarter.

"We had nothing to lose. We were going to take a couple shots," Camp said, adding he had plans to run another fake punt later in the game. "I was a riverboat gambler today."

Carroll's last-ditch effort resulted in a 12-yard touchdown catch by Joe Farris at the left pylon on fourth and goal, but on the ensuing 2-point conversion for the tie,

Prom stepped in front of the would-be receiver short of the end zone to break up the pass after Carroll QB Devan Bridgewater was forced to scramble.

"I just recognized the formation. I was shouting it to my team," Prom said of the 2-point conversion. "We were able to get great pressure and I was where I needed to be."

The victory was the fifth in a row in the series for the Mountaineers. Each of the last three have been nail-biters, too — a 41-34 win by EOU in overtime in 2017, an 8-7 win by the Mountaineers in Helena, Montana, last year and Saturday's thriller.

Eastern fell behind 7-0 early, but battled back to tie the score at 7-7 late in the first quarter on an 18-yard touchdown catch by Conner Falk and a 14-7 lead on Moore's 1-yard run with 3:23 to play in the first half. Carroll tied the score going

into the break on a 26-yard Shane Sipes TD catch, then retook the lead, 20-14, on Tony Collins' 18-yard TD catch.

EOU quarterback Kai Quinn saved his best performance of the season for last, completing 23 of 39 passes for a season-high 290 yards and two touchdowns. Zenke (121 yards receiving) and Wilkerson (69) led Eastern through the air.

The Mountaineers finish with an overall record of 4-7 and 4-6 in the Frontier Conference, but the team won its final two games, and three of the last six, to rebound from a 1-4 start to the season.

"It's been a tremendous blessing, and it speaks volumes of Coach Camp and the program and the guys we have," Dias said. "All I saw was guys laying it on the line for each other all year, and today was no different."



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