

Eagles survive Curiel, Echo to win in OT

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The Joseph Eagles are still unbeaten at home as a six-man football team.

But on Friday, Sept. 3, it took surviving a late fourth-quarter rally by Echo to remain that way.

Jaxon Grover rushed for 164 yards and three touchdowns, including a 2-yard run in overtime that proved to be the game winner, and Joseph withstood a massive effort by Echo quarterback Dom Curiel to collect a 39-32 overtime victory in its season-opening contest.

“Probably one of the best games we’ve ever played in four years of being here,” Joseph head coach Duncan Christman said. “This crew we have put it together. ... The kids performed exceptionally well, and the biggest thing from this game is we got the win, we see what we need to work on and we know how we’re going to start the week out.”

Grover ran for 21 yards on the first play of overtime, breaking several Cougar tackles in the process, to get down to the 4-yard line and set up first-and-goal. Three plays later on third down he broke into the endzone to put the Eagles ahead to stay.

Echo, which had just rallied from a 14-point deficit, tried one more time to get even, but Curiel missed on four passes, and Joseph survived.

The late stretch of incompleteness was a rarity for Curiel, whose passing prowess helped get the Cougars back in the game late. The sophomore was 23-for-41 for 425 yards and threw four touchdown passes, two to his older brother Javon Curiel.

Joseph had seemingly put the game away when James Burney broke away for a 25-yard touchdown and a 32-18 lead with 5:34



Joseph's Jaxon Grover carries the ball in overtime Friday, Sept. 3, 2021. Grover rushed for 164 yards and three touchdowns, including the eventual game-winner in the extra session as the Eagles edged Echo 39-32 in their season opener.

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to play, the score matching the Eagles' largest lead of the game.

Echo quickly responded, with Curiel finding his brother for a completion of 24 yards and Sam Wyse for 36 yards, then hitting Mac Nasario for a 13-yard scoring strike. A two-point conversion kick (PAT kicks are worth two points and run or pass plays on just one point in six-man) trimmed the margin to 32-26 with 2:55 remaining.

Echo got a stop to get the ball back with about a minute to play. After a sack and an incomplete pass, the Curiels connected for 40 yards to the 21, then again

for 9 yards to get into the red-zone. A wild, penalty-filled play resulted in Echo getting the ball at the 6 with just seven seconds to go, and two plays later — on the last play of regulation — Curiel threw another touchdown pass to Nasario to tie the score. A conversion pass attempt for the win, though, hit off the hands of Javon Curiel, sending the game to overtime.

Dom Curiel was a handful for Joseph from the outset. On the first two plays of the game he hit Javon Curiel for 14 yards and Wyse for 48 to quickly get Echo to the 3, and the older

Curiel bulled into the endzone for a 6-0 lead just 30 seconds into the game.

“Dude is a beast. ... He can dance out there. It’s something else,” Christman said of Echo’s sophomore quarterback. “Very good at avoiding the block and getting there and reading downfield. Football IQ on him is awesome.”

Echo recovered an ensuing inside kick, but Joseph’s defense then found its footing. On the first play following the inside kick, Harley Miller sacked a scrambling Curiel for a loss of 22 yards, forced a fumble and recovered the fumble all in one fell swoop to change the tone of the game.

“Just some little personnel adjustments,” Christman said. “... It ended up working in our favor to make some switches and bring in some new blood and really get a hold on the game.”

On the next possession, the defense got Joseph on the board. After three completions and a penalty got Echo moved down to the 9-yard-line, Kale Ferguson sacked Curiel for a loss

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Joseph edges Echo in five to start off solid weekend

Chieftain staff

JOSEPH — The Joseph Eagles won a thriller in their home opener on the volleyball court.

Molly Curry had a team-best nine kills and also had nine digs, and the Eagles rallied twice to top Echo in five sets Friday, Sept. 3, 13-25, 25-23, 25-27, 25-21, 15-13.

The final set alone was indicative of how close the match was, as the teams tied five times and changed leads four times. In the final set, Joseph seemed to take control with a 6-1 run, capped by a Curry kill and two errors by Echo to go ahead 9-6.

The Cougars responded with the next five points, taking an 11-9 lead after a Nevaeh Thew kill and a Faith McCarty ace.

Joseph, though, scored the next five points to pull ahead for good. An ace by Aimee Meyers put the Eagles ahead, and kills by Sarah Orr and Abby Orr pushed the lead to 14-11.



Joseph's Maggie Miller (3) makes a play on the ball in front of teammate Cooper Nave (16) during the Eagles' match against Echo Friday, Sept. 3, 2021 at home. Joseph won the match in five sets.

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Joseph took the match three points later when an Echo serve went long.

The Eagles recovered from a rough first set to take an eight-point lead in the second before holding on

to square the match. Joseph then seemed primed to pull ahead when a Meyers kill gave them a five-point lead at 19-14 late in the third set.

Echo recovered, then took the lead at 25-24 after

two Joseph error. Emma Orr's block tied the score, but the ensuing serve by Joseph went long and Charlei Harwood's serve

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Outlaws fall just short against Crane

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Gideon Gray did a little bit of everything for the Enterprise Outlaws in their season opener Friday, Sept. 3.

It wasn't enough for them to come away with a win, though they gave traditional eight-man power Crane all it could handle.

Gray rushed for 148 yards and a touchdown, had a touchdown reception, and recovered a fumble on defense, but the Outlaws fell short as the Mustangs escaped Enterprise with a 16-14 win in a defensive battle.

“Crane is always tough,” head coach Rusty Eschler said. “It was good for us to get out there and play somebody like that right off the bat.”

A game about as close as one could be statistically, coincidentally enough, was ultimately decided by the fact the Mustangs converted on both their two-point conversions while Enterprise missed on one early in the game. The yardages were

nearly identical — Enterprise had 209, Crane had 204. Both teams lost a fumble — four plays apart in the third quarter, in fact. Enterprise had the edge on the ground, 149 yards to 123, while Crane held an edge in passing yards, 81-60.

Crane held an 8-6 lead at the half, and was up by the same score after three quarters before Enterprise pulled ahead. Gray took a counter handoff, broke through a hole on the right side and scampered 26 yards to cap a short five-play drive that, following a two-point conversion run by quarterback Jackson Decker, put the Outlaws ahead 14-8 with 10:42 remaining.

“Gideon’s a really good athlete. The only thing I ever critique him on is he runs a little too much like Eric Dickerson, straight up,” Eschler said. “I worry about his health a little bit. Other than that, Gideon is a (heck) of a ball player. Proud to have him on the football team. And he is an even better leader. Him and Jack-

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