

Second-half surge sends Elkton past Mapleton

By Zach Silva
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There is no doubt that Elkton football team can score points. The Elks (7-1) put that on full display last Friday afternoon turning a two-point halftime lead into a 78-36 victory over Mapleton (3-5) at home.

The game took a turn in the second half when Mapleton's sophomore JJ Neece was sidelined with back spasms. Neece was able to walk off the field after the injury but left the game in an ambulance. In the first half Neece had 29 carries for 171 yards, two rushing touchdowns and one passing touchdown.

"I hope that it's nothing serious because he's a good, hard-working kid. You hate to see that. Because when he's done, that's the end of the game, he's that big a deal," said Elkton head coach Bill Shaw. "You have to worry about him on every play and that creates openings for other guys to just be good enough to catch a pass or to run a little bit so he can carry it one more time. Amazing kid."

In the first half, the team's traded scores. The visiting Sailors opened up their scoring with an opening six-minute touch-down drive.

The Elks were unphased as they started their first drive at the Mapleton six-yard line after a big return mixed with a Mapleton penalty. Two plays later and Trentyn Halstead found the end zone. In the first half, the Elks had five drives of two-plays or less. Four of those resulted in touchdowns (Halstead's run, Gunnar Lynn five-yard reception, a four-yard Halstead run and a 53-yard run from Spencer Moore) with the other ending in a pitch attempt inside the Mapleton five-yard line that the Sailors recovered. Moore also added a fifteen-yard rushing touchdown in the first half.

"I think our offensive execution showed today. We were pretty effective on our plays. I wasn't running around with our play sheet trying to figure out what I'm going to fool them with. This was straight forward, let's run our stuff and get after it," said Shaw.

Mapleton continued to answer Elkton's score with methodical drives orchestrated by Neece including a five-minute second-quarter drive that tied the game. Both teams found the end zone once more in the half and for Mapleton, it was the last time of the game. Elkton carried a 38-36 lead to the break.

To start the Elkton second half, it was the special teams that stood out. A surprise to those at Elkton's practice on Thursday.

"We were just going to walk through our special teams. We couldn't even line up right for the kickoff and then they got mad at each other and with me and Coach Hughes trying to organize them they got mad at each other and we literally started to have a meltdown," said Shaw.

There were no signs of meltdowns as the Elks opened the half by turning Mapleton's on-side kick attempt into a Jase Billman touchdown in which he was untouched along the sideline after a perfect bounce right to him.

"Just an open lane. It was just luck, it happens in football," he said of the play.

After a Mapleton punt, Aus-

tin Luzier then returned a punt for a 73-yard touchdown. The following drive Neece, who was also the team's punter, was injured and Mapleton was forced to punt again but it hit an offensive lineman and Billman recovered the ball and scored another touchdown.

Three touchdowns in the opening four minutes of the half put the game away for the Elks. With their backups in, the team scored twice more behind a pair of Kiel Briggs rushing touchdowns.

Now the Elks host Siletz Valley (4-2) on Friday at home in a league-playoff game. The Elks are looking to add a few wrinkles to their offense but the main goal is to heal from any lingering injuries.

"Get everyone healthy and get going again," said Shaw.



Elkton's Trentyn Halstead speeds past a group of Mapleton defenders.

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