

Mustangs prove resiliency on the road, as they take down Kennedy



Conor Brosnan leads Caden George through a wall of defenders enroute to a first down. -Photo by Damon Brosnan.

By Blake Carter

The Mustangs traveled to take on the Kennedy Trojans, their toughest matchup of the season where they pulled off a 34-28 win in comeback fashion. Heppner and Kennedy have become very familiar foes, these two teams have faced off in the last two playoffs. Back in 2018 Kennedy came to Heppner and took the Mustangs down in convincing fashion, 34-0 in a first round playoff game. This was the Mustang's last defeat before they rattled off 21 straight wins, going 13-0 in 2019, 5-0 in 2020, and starting off 3-0 this season. Heppner remembered that loss as they came back the following year in 2019 and took the Trojans down 12-7 in the state title game. Heppner and Kennedy have been picked as the two best teams, by the coaches, in the state of Oregon for 2A football. This game was a highly anticipated match-up; it previewed a possible playoff game.

Fans filed in to watch this matchup of the top two teams in the state. Heppner stood to the north with blue and gold covering the stands and the sidelines behind them. The Kennedy faithful did the same as their home grandstands were filled. This game had the feeling of a state playoff game, and it did not disappoint. Entering the game as the underdogs, Heppner looked to grab the momentum early, Kennedy wasn't going to let that happen. After receiving the opening kickoff, Trojan quarterback Riley Cantu connected with Brett Boen for a three-yard touchdown. Down early the Mustang offense needed to

respond, but on just the second offensive play, Landon Mitchell's screen pass was intercepted by Trojan defensive back Elijah Traeger and returned 25 yards for a touchdown. Facing their largest deficit of the season the Mustangs were reeling, but Landon Mitchell and the Heppner offense responded with a five-yard touchdown throw to Jace Coe. Mitchell would sneak in for the two-point conversion inching Heppner closer with 14-8. Kennedy struck pay dirt again in the second quarter as Cantu escaped the pocket and cashed in a 11-yard run to put Kennedy ahead 21-8. Again, the Mustang team would not back down, Mitchell hooked up with Coe on a 56-yard touchdown throw to shrink the Trojan lead back down to 21-14. The two teams would trade punts, and Heppner was able to stand strong as the second quarter expired leaving Kennedy on top 21-14.

Heppner received the second half kickoff, and immediately drove down and slashed the Kennedy lead down to just 21-20. Mitchell was able to throw a 28-yard touchdown pass to Kason Cimmiyotti. Kennedy looked to add to the lead early in the fourth quarter, as Owen Bruner cashed in on a two-yard touchdown rush to extend the Trojan lead back out to 28-20. Heppner fired right back as Mitchell tossed his fourth touchdown to Cimmiyotti on a 40-yard strike. However, the two-point conversion would fail leaving Heppner behind again, 28-26. With their backs against the wall the stingy Mustang defense came

alive, forcing a punt and giving the Mustang offense a chance with 4:26 showing on the clock. Knowing this was most likely their last chance the Mustang offense took the field at their own 45-yard line. Using just six plays, Brock Hisler put the Mustangs on top for the first time in the contest, on a five-yard touchdown run, with 1:39 remaining in the game. Mitchell and Cimmiyotti connected again on the two-point conversion, leaving the score 34-28. Again, the Mustang defense would come through and get the ball back, allowing Mitchell to take a knee as Heppner celebrated a huge win.

Statistics for the game; Landon Mitchell put together an impressive performance passing for 225 yards and four touchdowns on 12-14 passing. Mitchell added five yards rushing, Caden George rushed for 41 yards and Brock Hisler ran for 72 yards and one touchdown. Jace Coe led the Mustangs in receiving as he brought in four catches for 107 yards and two touchdowns. Kason Cimmiyotti also had four receptions, racking up 82 yards and two touchdowns. Caden George brought in three receptions for 37 yards. The Mustang offense was able to bring in a total of 336 yards of offense on just 34 plays. The Mustang defense was big when the team needed it the most, they allowed 264 yards of offense on 59 plays. Brock Hisler led the way with 12 tackles, Conor Brosnan added nine, while Toby Nation, Kason Cimmiyotti and Derek Smith all had seven tackles. Jace Coe had four tackles, Caden George, Ty Boor, Blaine



Cody Fletcher leads the way for Caden George. -Photo by Damon Brosnan.



Mustangs Celebrate their victory. -Photo by Damon Brosnan.

Mahoney and Tucker Ashbeck all added three tackles. Cade Cunningham, Cody Fletcher and Blake Carter all had a tackle each.

This win allowed the Mustang winning streak to grow to 22 wins, they will now shift their attention to their league sched-

ule, beginning with the Weston-McEwen Tiger-scots (3-0). That game is scheduled for a 7 p.m. kickoff on Friday, October 1.

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