

Mustangs trample Dragons

Clark, Putman lead Mustangs into the Quarterfinals

By ERIC SINGER

Staff Writer

The No. 2 seed Heppner Mustangs forced four turnovers and dominated every facet of the game as they pummeled the No. 15 seed Monroe Dragons in the first round of the OSAA state playoff game, 55-14, at Les Payne Field.

"We came out and set the tone early," said Heppner senior lineman Patrick Collins. "We knew what (Monroe) was going to run, we capitalized on their mistakes, started fast and just never looked back."

The game was long over at halftime, as Heppner (10-0) held a 49-0 lead. The deficit kicked in a running clock for the entire second half which limited each team to just three possessions in the half.

In the first half, Heppner gained 276 yards on 31 offensive plays and seven touchdowns, while its defense held Monroe to just 44 yards on 28 offensive plays.

As rapid as the scoring was in the first half, the pace started out relatively

slow. After forcing a quick three-and-out by Monroe (4-6), Heppner took over at its own 43 yard line and began trying to establish its run game.

On the 13th play of the drive, senior C.J. Kindle took a direct snap and plunged into the end zone from three-yards out to give the Mustangs a 6-0 lead with 4:23 left in the quarter.

A few possessions later after the teams traded fumbles, Heppner took over at Monroe's 42-yard line with 1:35 left in the quarter.

And on just the second play of the possession, running back Weston Putman busted a handful of Monroe tacklers and scampered his way to a 35-yard touchdown run to put Heppner up 14-0.

"Offensively sometimes we struggled to find our rhythm and find out exactly what we need to do and want to do," said coach Greg Grant after the game. "And to our kids' credit we found it, figured out how we needed to block and took care of things, so I was very pleased."

The Mustangs forced another Monroe fumble two plays into the Dragons' drive and recovered it inside the Monroe 10 yard line. Heppner didn't waste



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Mustangs' Weston Putman (20) goes in for a touchdown Saturday during the state playoff game with the Monroe Dragons in Heppner.

any time at all as Putman knifed through the defense for a nine-yard touchdown run to give the Mustangs a 22-0 lead with 30 seconds left in the quarter.

Putman finished the game as the Mustangs' leading rusher, carrying the ball nine times for 88 yards and those two touchdowns. He also had a solid game defensively, registering six tackles and an interception.

A play that epitomized

the way the game played out came early in the second quarter, when Monroe forced Heppner to punt for the first time in the game. But on the punt, the Monroe returner fumbled the catch and Heppner's Collins dove in to recover the fumble to give the Mustangs new life.

On Heppner's first play after the fumble, quarterback Kaden Clark connected with receiver Logan Grieb on a 29-yard touch-

down pass — Grieb's 10th touchdown reception of the season — to put Heppner up 28-0.

The Mustangs scored three more times in the quarter, on a seven-yard pass from Clark to receiver Kaden Hedman, a 16-yard screen pass from Clark to Kindle, and a five-yard touchdown run on an end-around by Grieb to give Heppner the 49-0 lead at halftime.

Clark had a very efficient game directing Heppner's offense on Saturday, completing 9 of 15 passes for 132 yards and three touchdowns, as well as 58 rushing yards on four carries.

"It's what he does, he throws the ball extremely well," said Grant. "I don't know if I've ever coached a better thrower. He puts the ball on the money and did that tonight, and hit a few shots early that really set the tone and set up some things for us."

Heppner's only score of the second half came on a 44-yard touchdown run by Kindle to increased the Mustangs' lead to 55-0 with eight minutes left in the third quarter. Kindle finished the game with 53 rushing yards and 64 receiving yards and three to-

tal touchdowns.

"I'm happy we played well," Grant said. "It's really a great thing for the community, the school, and our kids love home playoff games and they worked their tails off all year long to really capitalize on these."

Monroe did not get on the scoreboard until the 10:42 mark of the fourth quarter, when Kyle Bateman outran the Heppner defense for a 47-yard touchdown run. The Dragons scored their second touchdown on a 1-yard plunge by Joseph Ballard with just seconds remaining in the game.

Heppner held Monroe to just 169 total yards in the game, and forced four punts to go along with the four turnovers. The units' performance got a rave review from Grant following the game.

"I really liked those guys tonight," he said. "I liked that we were ready and we stepped up to it. I was pleased that the kids stepped up physically to play like that."

With the win, Heppner advances in the Class 2A bracket to play No. 7 seed Reedsport Friday in Heppner. The Braves (9-1) defeated Weston-McEwen on Saturday, 14-0, to advance in the 2A bracket.

Area athletes recognized with all-league honors

Athletes from several area schools have been recognized with all-league honors for their respective sports conferences.

The Echo Cougars football team received a number of all-league selections for both football and volleyball. The Cougars football team earned six selections with the volleyball team earning four.

Senior wide receiver/defensive end Brock Moffit was named a first-team wide receiver and an honorable mention defensive end. Senior Hayden Sather was a first-team guard and first-team linebacker, and senior Tanner McPherson was named first-team nose guard. Sophomore Zach Gehrke is the honorable mention kick returner.

McPherson, Moffit and Sather were also each named to the eight-man all-star list. With three selections, Echo tied Wallowa for most of any one school.

Echo's volleyball team saw senior Kelsey Ronger named to the first team and senior Erika Parks

named to the second team. Senior Lizzie Cox was an honorable mention. Junior Hannah McCarty was named to the Old Oregon League district tournament all-tournament team.

The Stanfield Tigers volleyball team received a handful of honors after the 2015 season.

Larissa Castellanos was named to the second-team all-Columbia Basin Conference after a stellar senior season. Maddie Griffin, Shyanne Connell and Kenzie Blankenship joined Castellanos as honorable mentions.

The Umatilla Vikings earned a number of all-league selections for football, girls and boys soccer, and volleyball.

The football team, which completed one of its best seasons in recent memory, earned 27 selections in all. Junior offensive lineman Alec Williams and senior kick returner Josh Dever were the only first-team selections, junior running back Hunter Cook, junior defensive linemen Elijah

Pine, freshmen line backer Trent Durfey, Dever and senior safety Tristen Sanguino were second-team selections.

Isiah Hart and Sanguino were honorable mention running backs, Justin Maret, Diego Soto and Brylee Duffloth were honorable mention receivers, Jared Adams, Aaron Simmons, Alvin Jamie-Garcia, Antonio Moreno and Blas Zepata were honorable mention offensive linemen, and Williams and Sebastian Trujillo were honorable mention linebackers. Hunter Cook, Fabricio Garcia and Cody Sampson rounded out the football selections as honorable mention defensive backs.

Junior Jocelyn Guardado, Umatilla's leading goal scorer, was a first-team selection for the Special District 2 all-league team. Itzel Rodriguez was Umatilla's only second-team representative, and Mayra Ortiz, Jailin Colula and Maria Moreno were each honorable mentions.

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for an 8.8 yards per carry average and 20 touchdowns.

Quarterback Dylan Grogan, also a junior, has added another element to the rushing game with his size and athleticism, giving Stanfield a legitimate short down option. He's rushed for 976 yards on 123 carries (7.9 ypc) and 21 touchdowns. He's also passed for nine touchdowns on 44-of-62 passing for 708 yards.

But the Tigers have other options, as well. Makiah Blankenship has 449 yards on 87 attempts and four touchdowns, and Justin Keeney has 400 yards on 59 carries and four scores.

"We have a five-headed monster at running back that are worried about who gets the ball," Salas said. "And we know who's gonna get the ball. It's no secret to nobody. Everybody knows who's gonna get the ball — my running back and my quarterback. We're not hiding them anywhere. We're running power football."

Both Stanfield and Central Linn come from tough leagues, setting them both up for potentially deep playoff

runs. Stanfield hails from the Columbia Basin Conference, which at one point in the season had three teams at 5-0 and a fourth at 4-1. The CBC sent four teams to the playoffs this season, with just league champ Heppner and Stanfield advancing rounds.

Meanwhile, Central Linn calls the five-team Tri-River Conference home. There, the Cobras dropped just one game — a 35-18 loss to league champ Regis — and still managed to win the league and take the top seed in the bracket.

Statistically, Stanfield's offense is better than Central Linn's but the Cobras have a better defense. The Tigers have scored 409 points so far this season, the third most in the state behind Heppner (501) and Vernonia (500), who Stanfield beat 56-26 last week. Central Linn, though, has demonstrated a stout defense by allowing just 14 points per game this season, including two shutouts.

"What we're good at, is we sustain 10-, 12-play drives and we eat clock," Salas said. "We're not worried about the big play."

Stanfield is going to need to do something like that to keep Central Linn's big-play

on-the-ground offense on the sideline.

The rushing offense is similar to Stanfield's in that it has multiple options to which it can turn. Three Cobras have more than 100 carries and a fourth has 74. All four guys have more than 500 yards, all four have had a 100-yard game this season, and all four have scored.

Senior Alex Pettner leads the way for Central Linn with 1,117 yards on 164 carries (6.8 ypc) for 13 touchdowns. Hiss 23-carry, 187-yard game in the Regis loss was the most productive rushing game by a single Cobra this season. But Braden Nightengale and his 11.4 yards per carry average will have to be accounted for, as well. The junior has carried just 74 times for 845 yards — second-most on the team — and 11 touchdowns. Chandler Jeppson (619 yards, 8 TDs) and quarterback Jesse Wibbens (504 yards, 7 TDs) are also viable options to run. Wibbens has also passed for 483 yards on just 20-of-34 passing for 10 scores and one interception.

Salas is confident in his bunch.

"I respect everybody," Salas said. "But I'm not scared of anybody."

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