

BOUNCE BACK: Big second half propels Louisburg



Louisburg junior Thomas San Agustin runs into the endzone with the football on his back in the fourth quarter to bring the Wildcats to within one point of Eudora on Friday in Eudora. The Wildcats rallied for a 50-42 win.

EUDORA – Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry got his team in the huddle before what was a critical 2-point conversion try.

The Wildcats trailed Eudora by one with four minutes left in the game and had been trailing the entire night. He had one simple message for his teammates.

“Austin said that plays like this is what wins games,” junior running back Thomas San Agustin said. “We don’t say stuff like that many times in the huddle, but that is when the line gave it their all, like it was their last play.”

Technically, Terry was right.

Terry gave the Wildcats the lead with a run up the middle to get the 2-point conversion and the Wildcats came through in the 50-42 victory Friday in Eudora. Terry broke two different tackles before following his offensive line to sneak into the endzone.

The Louisburg defense came up with its biggest stop of the night on Eudora's next drive and the Wildcats responded with a big touchdown run from San Agustin to put the game away.

"That was just amazing," Terry said. "I had some help from some teammates to help me get in there. I was definitely a little nervous before the play, but you just have to trust your teammates and do what you have been taught."

The touchdown to bring the Wildcats within one was almost as memorable. San Agustin was trying to break free from a couple Eudora tacklers when the ball popped out and rolled on his back.

The Louisburg junior reached behind to secure the ball and ran in for the 14-yard touchdown run. About five of those yards featured San Agustin holding the ball on his back as he ran into the endzone.

It was the second half Louisburg coach Kyle Littrell had wanted to see coming out of halftime. The Wildcats trailed by 14 points coming into the third quarter and had given up a lot of big plays on defense.

Eudora had 320 yards of total offense in the first half alone and Littrell knew his team had to change the way they did a lot of things, especially on defense. All the Wildcats did was outscore the Cardinals 36-14 in the second half and played with a different mindset.

"I just told them at halftime that I related it to my second favorite sport, which is a UFC fight," Littrell said. "The first two rounds are over, you are sitting on your chair and are you going to answer the bell? We put up 36 points in the second half, so offensively we answered the bell. Defensively we did better, especially only giving up 14 points, but we had too many big plays, too many missed assignments. We need to get better at that."



Senior Mitchell McLellan hauls in a pass in the second half Friday against Eudora.

It was a game that featured big play after big play in both halves. Eudora jumped out to a 28-14 halftime lead and all four of the Cardinals' scoring plays were over 47 yards.

The Wildcats had a couple big plays of their own. After Eudora's first score of the game, San Agustin answered as he scored on an 83-yard kickoff return for a touchdown to tie it at 7-all.

On Eudora's first play of its next drive, it scored on a 47-yard run from its quarterback, Grant Elston. The Wildcats drove the ball to start the second quarter and eventually scored on a 1-yard touchdown run from Alex Dunn to tie the game again.

The Cardinals put some distance between themselves and the Wildcats with two long touchdown runs to put Louisburg in a hole thanks to some missed tackles.

"It boils down to blocking, the desire to tackle and protecting the football," Littrell said. "The second half we had a desire to tackle. In the first half we were arm tackling, going down to our knees to tackle. We weren't clubbing up and accelerating on our feet, and when you get a

team that is as good as they are, with the athletes that they have, you can't arm tackle. They were breaking those and that is what they did in the first half."

Louisburg opened the second half with a long drive that ended with a 3-yard touchdown run from San Agustin to cut the Eudora lead in half. The Wildcat defense held firm to hold Eudora on its first possession of the half.

The Wildcat offense responded again to tie the game when Terry found tight end Grant Harding for a 62-yard touchdown catch and run. The play swung all the momentum to the Wildcat sideline.

Both teams traded touchdowns on two different occasions, late in the second half that eventually led to Terry's 2-point conversion try.



Running back Alex Dunn looks for some extra yards in the first half against Eudora on Friday.

"It was just one of those things where we have been playing from behind all night long and I wasn't sure if we ever would have the opportunity to touch the ball again," Littrell said. "I just trust my kids to execute any play that I call."

Louisburg defense forced the Cardinals to turn the ball over on downs on their next possession and San Agustin responded with a 39-yard touchdown run. Terry intercepted a pass with just seconds left in the game to seal the win.

San Agustin had a big game for the Wildcats as he finished with 110 yards rushing and three touchdowns. He had a fourth if you include the kickoff return.

"The thing I like about Thomas is that he gets tougher as the game goes on," Littrell said. "He gets so emotional, and is so tightly wound that sometimes his emotions drain his gas tank. When he learns to control that emotion, and not get gassed after the first two or three plays, he is just tough as nails. He is getting better and better all the time."

The Wildcats did have a scary moment as junior Korbin Hankinson, who finished with more than 100 yards on the ground, had to leave the game in the second half with a concussion. Before that time, Hankinson keyed the Wildcats on a couple of their scoring drives.

"Hankinson is as tough as nails," Littrell said. "He ran the ball great for us. Hopefully we can get him back as soon as possible, but we are not going to rush anything. We are going to take care of him just like any family member."

Terry also had one of his better games as the Wildcat quarterback as he completed 11 of 17 passes for 233 yards. Cole Kramer and Mitchell McLellan each had more than 70 yards receiving to lead Louisburg.

Defensively, San Agustin led Louisburg with seven tackles, while juniors Dustyn Rizzo, Jake Hill and Harding each added six. Rizzo also finished with the team's only sack.

Louisburg returns to action Friday when it travels to Piper for its second road game of the year. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

EUDORA		14	14
7	7 - 42		
LOUISBURG		7	7
14	22 - 50		

First quarter

E: Travis Neis 60 run (Grant Elston kick)

L: Thomas San Agustin 83 kickoff return (Alex Dunn kick)

E: Elston 47 run (Elston kick)

Second quarter

L: Dunn 1 run (Dunn kick)

E: Elston 65 run (Elston kick)

E: Lee Andrews 56 run (Elston kick)

Third quarter

L: San Agustin 3 run (Dunn kick)

L: Grant Harding 62 pass from Austin Terry (Dunn kick)

E: Ryan Verbanic 10 pass from Elston (Elston kick)

Fourth quarter

L: Terry 2 run (Dunn kick)

E: Austin Downing 6 run (Elston kick)

L: San Agustin 14 run (Terry run)

L: San Agustin 39 run (Dunn kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING: Thomas San Agustin 22-110; Korbin Hankinson 13-107; Austin Terry 8-16; Alex Dunn 4-12; Mitchell McLellan 1-1

PASSING: Austin Terry 11-17-233-1

RECEIVING: Cole Kramer 3-73; Mitchell McLellan 5-72; Grant Harding 1-62; Alex Dunn 2-26.