

In a battle of unbeatens, Louisburg takes down Piper



Louisburg head coach Robert Ebenstein celebrates with senior Brandon Cooper following his 31-yard touchdown catch Friday against Piper. The Wildcats remained unbeaten with a 28-21 win over the Pirates.

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – Facing a fourth-and-goal from the 31-yard line, and the game teetering on the balance, Louisburg quarterback Madden Rutherford got the play from head coach Robert Ebenstein.

There weren't too many options in the playbook for a scenario like this one. Louisburg held a one score lead in the fourth quarter and didn't want to give the ball back to Piper.

Still, Ebenstein sent the play to his quarterback in hopes something positive would happen. Rutherford, though, didn't like what he saw and changed the play.

"He is probably going to be slightly mad at me because I didn't throw it to the guy he told me to," Rutherford said of his coach, "but he will get over it."

It didn't take long for Ebenstein to go from puzzled to elated as Rutherford threw a ball to the endzone to Brandon Cooper, who leapt in the air and pulled down the jump ball. The touchdown all but sealed the win for the Wildcats as they

knocked off undefeated Piper, 28-21, on Friday at Piper High School.

"I cannot express how proud of them I am in their ability to be able to just stay grounded and stay focused," Ebenstein said of his team. "They were just so resilient. We have some seen some growth throughout the season, and 28-21 may not where we thought it could have been, but the growth and resilience that they showed was outstanding. I couldn't be more proud of that."

The Wildcats (4-0) had to develop a lot of resilience throughout the game – one that featured many twists and turns.

On the first play of the game, Piper quarterback Dalton White took the option and carried the ball 69 yards for a touchdown and the Wildcats were quickly in a hole.

It didn't take long for Louisburg to dig out of it as the Wildcats drove down the field on its first possession as Rutherford hit Josh Casey for a 20-yard touchdown pass, and after a missed point, still trailed.

Louisburg's defense rose to the occasion as it didn't allow a Piper touchdown again until late in the fourth quarter and forced several big punts in the first half.



Brayden Gage holds on to the ball despite getting his helmet knocked off Friday against Piper.

The Wildcats took the lead early in the second quarter when senior running back Austin Moore drug Piper tacklers into the endzone for an 8-yard touchdown run, and then ran in the 2-point conversion to give Louisburg a 14-7 advantage.

Louisburg's offensive line was able to control the line of scrimmage as Brayden White, Garrett Harding, Noah Larson, Jonathan DePriest and Kiefer Tucker, along with tight end Michael Waldron and running back Blue Caplinger, provided a lot of running room and time to throw the ball.

Moore was a big recipient of those blocks as he carried the ball 28 times for 228 yards and a touchdown. Rutherford also fared well in the pocket as he completed 10 of 13 passes for 147 yards and three touchdowns.

"I thought the line did a good job and you could hear them talking to each other out there," Ebenstein said. "That was something we stressed coming into the game, was to just talk. Blue Caplinger set a lot of lead blocks out there and he was outstanding. He didn't have the stats, but he might be the player of the game. Austin ran the ball hard and he is dog tired, but you would never tell by looking at him."

Piper, which had scored 50 or more points in all three of its win to start the season, had a hard time trying to find success against the Wildcat defense.

Louisburg forced another punt midway through the second quarter and then the Wildcat special teams got involved when Cooper blocked a punt and gave the Wildcats the ball at the Piper 15-yard line. However, Piper's defense made a play when a helmet to the ball forced a Moore fumble on the Wildcats' first play, and the Pirates picked it up and ran it 89 yards back to tie the game.

It didn't get much better for the Wildcats when Piper intercepted a Rutherford pass on their next possession and the Pirates got the ball on the Louisburg 35-yard line. As time was ticking down in the first half, the Pirates took the ball inside the 10, but the Wildcats made several big stops to force a turnover on downs.

"Defense played great," said Moore, who led Louisburg with nine tackles. "We knew Piper was fast and we knew they were going to fly around all game long. They have players that play just one side of the ball, so a lot of them get to take breaks, so we just had to condition a lot at practice and just be ready to run around and go as hard we can the entire time. They don't take a lot of time between plays and we knew it would be tough, but we can rest later. We just had to give it all we had."



Louisburg senior Noah Larson brings down a Piper runner in the redzone Friday.

With the ball inside its own 5-yard line and only two minutes left in the half, Louisburg's offense came through with several plays including a 26-yard run by Moore and a 35-yard pass play to Caplinger.

All that set up a 22-yard touchdown pass from Rutherford to Brayden Gage with 17 seconds left to give Louisburg a 21-14 lead going into halftime.

The score stayed that way until nine minutes left in the fourth quarter when Rutherford connected on the fourth down touchdown to Cooper, a play that left the entire Wildcat sideline in a state of euphoria.

"Brandon just went up and made a play," Rutherford said. "I put it where he could get it, but props to him from going up

and grabbing it. I am just so proud of the guys when something bad happens, with how we respond and we were able to move on to the next play.”

Ebenstein was pleased with his team’s composure down the stretch, including that of his quarterback that was able to call the right play at the right time.

“Madden grew up a lot tonight,” Ebenstein said. “I probably shouldn’t admit this as a coach, but I didn’t call that play on where we scored there. I called it the other way and he checked it out and he made the play. That is what a good quarterback does. He owned the huddle and did what he needed to do.”



Seniors Brian Houck (23) and Tanner Belcher team up for a tackle Friday against Piper.

In a game where Piper didn’t force a Louisburg punt, the

Wildcat defense was the one that came on strong at the end. Louisburg again turned Piper over on downs with five minutes left in the game and ran off enough time to be able to seal the win, despite a late Piper score.

"This obviously gives us some confidence," Ebenstein said. "They were 3-0 and they are a really good team. I like to think we are a good team too. The way our kids just hung in there, on the road, I am just really proud of them. We still have a lot of room to get better and I think we will do that."

Louisburg will try for its fifth straight win to start the season this Friday when it travels to Eudora. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

For a photo gallery from the Piper contest, make sure to click [here](#).

LOU	6	15	0	7 –
28				
PIP	7	7	0	
7 – 21				

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

P: Dalton White 69 run (kick good)

L: Josh Casey 20 pass from Madden Rutherford (kick failed)

Second quarter

L: Austin Moore 8 run (Moore run)

P: Brandon Snell 89 fumble return (kick good)

L: Brayden Gage 22 pass from Rutherford (Drake Varns kick)

Fourth quarter

L: Brandon Cooper 31 pass from Rutherford (Varns kick)

P: White 1 run (kick good)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Austin Moore 28-228; Madden Rutherford 10-25; Blue Caplinger 7-19; Brayden Gage 4-15

PASSING – Madden Rutherford 10-13-147

RECEIVING – Blue Caplinger 2-38; Brandon Cooper 2-35; Brayden Gage 2-24; Josh Casey 1-20; Austin Moore 2-15; Michael Waldron 1-10; Weston Guetterman 1-5.

TACKLES – Austin Moore 9, Brayden White 5, Noah Larson 5, Charlie Koontz 4, Tanner Belcher 4, Kiefer Tucker 4, Garrett Harding 4, Brayden Gage 3, Blue Caplinger 3, Jorge LeBron 3, Brian Houck 1, Ben Wiedenmann 1.