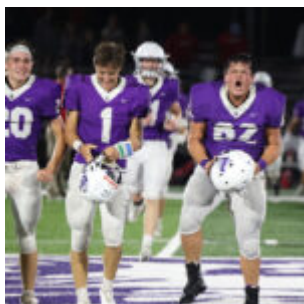


Wildcats 'Battle' back to defeat Tonganoxie in overtime



Louisburg quarterback Declan Battle (1) and junior Carson Wade (20) celebrates with teammate J.R. Rooney (62) following the Wildcats' come-from-behind 34-28 overtime win Friday over Tonganoxie.

Things looked bleak on a couple different occasions for Louisburg during Friday's home opener against Tonganoxie.

The Wildcats were down 15 points at halftime and Tonganoxie had a chance to run out the clock for a win late in the fourth quarter in Louisburg territory.

Neither situation looked all that optimistic for the Wildcats.

The Louisburg players, however, had different ideas.

That belief helped the Wildcats to a memorable 34-28 overtime win against the Chieftains – a victory that left players, coaches and fans buzzing.

“Our kids grew up is what happened,” Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein said. “You could see it in their face, you could see it in their eyes and they believed in themselves and in each other. They put themselves in the right spots and made the plays. It was awesome to see for them – not for me or the other coaches. This is for them.”

Sophomore quarterback Declan Battle was a key piece in the Louisburg comeback as he accounted for four Wildcat touchdowns

and ran in two 2-point conversions.

Battle totaled 212 yards of total offense and had two key touchdown passes in the fourth quarter to force overtime and ran in both conversions. He also ran in the game-winning touchdown in overtime.



Quarterback Declan Battle runs in for his first of four touchdowns Friday against Tonganoxie.

“You are going to see his name quite a bit,” Ebenstein said of Battle. “He is going to be a dude, for sure. He stepped up to the plate for us. He had one under thrown ball that was picked off, but I could see it in his face when he came off the sidelines that he wasn’t going to do it again. Declan was awesome out there.”

The game was tight early as the Wildcats trailed just 7-6 in the second quarter after a Battle 9-yard touchdown run. However, the Chieftains extended the lead with a pair of touchdowns to take a 21-6 advantage at halftime over

Louisburg.

It didn't look great at the time for the Wildcats. Going back to their last game against Spring Hill, Louisburg had been outscored 52-6 in their first six quarters of football.

Then, whatever it was, something seemed to click.

"We went into halftime and just challenged them," Ebenstein said. "We challenged them to be the players that they are and be in the right spot to make the plays."



Jackson Howard fights off a block to make a tackle Friday for Louisburg.

Late in the third, the Wildcats put together a drive that ended on a 2-yard touchdown run from junior Riley Van Eaton. After a missed extra point, Louisburg still trailed 21-12 going into the final quarter.

Louisburg (1-1) was driving early in the fourth when they faced a fourth and six on the Tonganoxie 33. Battle hit Van Eaton for a first down to keep the drive alive and the Wildcats took advantage.

Battle threw a high-arching pass to the end zone and junior Jackson Kush came back to settle under the ball and caught the 22-yard touchdown. Battle ran it in for two points and the Wildcats trailed by just one.

The Wildcat defense stepped up to make another big play as they appeared to stop a Tonganoxie drive when junior Jase Hovey made a big hit on a Chieftain player to break up the pass attempt that would have forced a punt.

Instead, Hovey was called for leading with his helmet and turned into a personal foul penalty to keep the Chieftain drive alive.

“That was just his judgment call,” Ebenstein said of the official. “When I looked at the replay, he had his hands out front and made a hit. Hovey is just a big kid, and when he hits people it is going to make a thud. It was two big kids going hard. That is just how football goes.”



Louisburg linebacker Nathan Vincent (51) celebrates a big stop with his teammates.

Tonganoxie put more doubt in the Wildcats' heads when Chieftain senior Sam Kleidosty broke free for a 33-yard touchdown run to go back up eight.

Doubt really started to set in when the Wildcats offense turned the ball over on downs on their own 20-yard line.

The Chieftains could either score or run out the clock – both would have given them a victory.

Instead, the Wildcat defense saved their best performance for the end as they held Tonganoxie short on a fourth and 1. Louisburg got the ball back with more than two minutes on its own 11-yard line.

“Our defense stepped up when we needed them the most,”

Ebenstein said. "They were amazing for us."

It was more than enough time for Battle.

On the first play of the drive, Battle connected with receiver Mason Dobbins, who leaped over the defender to grab the 31-yard pass.



Junior Mason Dobbins leaps in the air to make a 31-yard catch in the fourth quarter.

That all set up the game-tying score as Battle found a wide-open Caden Caplinger in the end zone for a 29-yard touchdown. Battle converted the 2-point conversion to tie it at 28 with just more than a minute remaining.

Louisburg's defense held Tonganoxie at midfield and senior Aiden Barker ended regulation with a sack to force overtime.

Each team got a chance to score from the 10-yard line in overtime and the Wildcats got some help right from the start.

Tonganoxie was called offsides to start the drive, which moved the ball up to the 5 for Louisburg. The Wildcats capitalized for a 3-yard touchdown run to go ahead for the first time in the game, despite failing on the 2-point conversion.

It was again the defense's turn to step up and they did. Louisburg forced two incompletions in the end zone on the final two plays of the game to pull off the comeback.



Layne Ryals and Jase Hovey (22) stuff a Tonganoxie runner at the line of scrimmage on Friday at Wildcat Stadium.

“I had no doubt that we were going to score,” Ebenstein said. “I honestly thought we were going to get the 2-point conversion because we were just kind of rolling at that point. Our defense just played lights out there in overtime.”

Louisburg got big performances from several positions as four different players scored touchdowns and there were many big performances on defense.

Carson Wade, Tom Koontz and Layne Ryals each finished with a team-high nine tackles, while Hovey had eight to go along with two pass breakups and an interception.

Barker, who had the sack at end of regulation, also had six tackles and a fumble recovery. Jackson Howard also had eight tackles with linebacker Nathan Vincent.

“We are in a position to where we don’t have a superstar or we don’t have a kid that we are featuring,” Ebenstein said. “We are just playing team football and going out there and making plays. Kush caught a touchdown, Caden caught a touchdown and one guy that doesn’t get seen as much is Kolby Kattau. He didn’t carry the rock a lot, but he set the edge on almost everything.

“Aiden Barker is a monster. He does everything you ask and he does everything right. I wish I had 25 more Aiden Barkers.”



Louisburg coach Robert Ebenstein celebrates with his players following Friday's overtime win.

The Wildcats will try for their second straight win this Friday when they travel to Baldwin. Ebenstein hopes this victory can propel his team moving forward.

"This win is going to be huge for us," Ebenstein said. "We were down by multiple scores and they came back and put it together to win. This was a huge growing moment."

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SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

T: Andrew Colvert 6 pass from Trevor McGraw (Jackson McWilliams kick)

L: Declan Battle 9 run (kick failed)

Second quarter

T: Colton Brusven 20 run (McWilliams kick)

T: Sam Kleidosty 14 pass from McGraw (McWilliams kick)

Third quarter

L: Riley Van Eaton 2 run (kick failed)

Fourth quarter

L: Jackson Kush 22 pass from Battle (Battle run)

T: Kleidosty 33 run (McWilliams kick)

L: Caden Caplinger 29 pass from Battle (Battle run)

Overtime

L: Battle 3 run (2-point failed)

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Declan Battle 22-76; Riley Van Eaton 16-50; Kolby Kattau 2-5

PASSING – Battle 11-18-136

RECEIVING – Mason Dobbins 2-38; Jackson Kush 2-32; Caden Caplinger 1-29; Van Eaton 4-19; Kolby Kattau 1-18

TACKLES – Carson Wade 9, Tom Koontz 9, Layne Ryals 9, Jase Hovey 8, Nathan Vincent 8, Jackson Howard 8, Aiden Barker 6, Kolby Kattau 5, Bryce Gage 5, Lucas Swartz 2, J.R. Rooney 2, Kaven Bartlett 1, Ashton Moore 1, Trace Eslinger 1, Noah Cowell 1.