

WHS Survives In OT

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 31 August 2013 10:49

It wasn't pretty, but as the old saying goes, "a win is a win." And the Watauga High football team, which struggled mightily on offense Friday night with its star quarterback Aaron Dobbins on the shelf with a concussion, found a way to get the job done.

The Pioneers (2-0) defeated Ashe County 13-7 in overtime at Huskies Stadium in West Jefferson, N.C. Zach Williams, who missed last week's season opener with a high ankle sprain, scored the game winning touchdown on a one-yard run in the first OT period. It was WHS' 12 straight win against the Huskies in this series.

"It was a tough night," Williams said. "But the blocking really opened things up on that last play. We just ran the ball right at them on that last possession. There weren't any holes until my last carry. We just powered the ball in there. The offensive line made it possible. I couldn't have done it by myself."

That was WHS' only offensive TD of the game. The Pioneers only managed 150 yards on the night. And the running game struggled for the second week in a row. The Pioneers had 31 yards on 23 attempts. Williams was WHS' leading rusher with 22 yards on 11 carries.

"Give a lot of credit to coach (Brian) Hampton and his team," WHS coach Ryan Habich said. "They were well prepared for us. They out played us, and they out coached us. They're kids really wanted this game. It was a great effort on their part. But our guys found a way to get it done. It was an ugly win, but with our program being as young as it is, and with the injuries we have, a win like this is good. We fought through it, and sometimes you win games like this." If anyone deserved a game ball, it was WHS' defense. The Pioneers coughed up 313 yards, including 161 on the ground. The Huskies also ran 79 plays to 44 for WHS. And the Huskies held the ball for 30 minutes. But time and again, the Pioneers turned the Huskies (0-2) away. Ashe County missed two field goals and another was blocked.

"I told my kids to put the blame on me," Hampton said. "We're doing a lot of good things getting the ball in the red zone, but then it just stops. And that's my fault. My kids played a heck of a game. Our defense pitched a shutout tonight. Take away that interception return, and we win this game, 7-0."

T.J. Poulos gave WHS an early lead when he picked off a pass and returned it 80-yards for a TD. But the Huskies tied it up with 8:35 left in the first half on a one-yard run by Matthew Hamilton. That capped off Ashe County's best offensive drive of the night---13 plays, 61 yards. "(Quarterback) Conner (Bowers) was just trying to throw the ball away on that interception," Hampton said. "But (Poulos) made a great play and he's fast as heck in the open field. Take that play away and it was a great effort on our part, but we just came up short."

Hamilton paced the Huskies with 125 yards on 21 carries. Bowers, despite the interception, was 15-26 for 152 yards. Austin Northern, who got the start for the injured Dobbins, was 7-18 for 93 yards with two interceptions.

"We just tried to keep it simple for our quarterback tonight," Habich said. "But we're still not executing on offense like we're suppose to be. We're not blocking well up front, we're not running the ball well. We have to do more than just throw the ball. We're young up front. But it's on us the coaches. We just have to get them prepared, and make them better."

Dakota McCrary paced WHS on defense with a team-high 13 tackles, including 1.5 tackles-for-loss. He made two huge stops on Ashe County's final possession in regulation time. He stuffed Hamilton on third-and-three at the WHS 26-yard-line, and he dropped Hunter Barnes for a two-yard loss on fourth down. Justin Greer chipped in with 11 stops.

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"Our defense has a bend but don't break mentality," Habich said. "I'm proud of my kids the way they came back. We didn't play as well as we could have tonight. Our defense did a great job keeping them out of the end zone. We have a bye week coming up, so we're going back to the basics next week, blocking and tackling."

The Pioneers travel to Avery on Friday, September 13. Coverage begins at 6:30 p.m., on AM 1450, WATA and Goblueridge.net.

NOTES: The Pioneers are off to their best start since 2006....WHS won its first overtime game since 2008. They beat McDowell 30-29 in Marion that season....The Pioneers have beaten Ashe County 12 straight times in this series. Friday's night's game was the first overtime game in this series. WHS leads the all-time series, 13-2....The Pioneers have won six in a row in West Jefferson. The Huskies haven't beaten WHS since 2001. Both of Ashe County's wins have come at home (1999 and 2001)....Ashe County coach Brian Hampton is 0-2 against WHS, and those two losses have been by a combined total of eight points.

WATAUGA 13, ASHE COUNTY 7 (OT)

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	[5]	Score
Watauga High	7	0	0	6			13
Ashe County	0	7	0	0			7

SCORING SUMMARY

1st 2:28 WHS TJ Poulos 80 yd interception return (S. Shirley kick)

2nd 8:35 ASHE M. Hamilton 1 yd run (Cesar Ruiz kick), 13 plays, 61 yards

OT 12:00 WHS Zach Williams 1 yd run 4 plays, 10 yards

STATISTICS

FIRST DOWNS: WHS 10, ACHS 19

RUSHING YARDS: WHS 31, ACHS 161

PASSING YARDS: WHS 119, ACHS 152

TOTAL YARDS: WHS 150, ACHS 313

PENALTY YARDS: WHS 4-30, ACHS 9-55

FUMBLES/LOST: WHS 1-0, ACHS 0-1

TURNOVERS: WHS 2, ACHS 2

TIME OF POSSESSION: WHS 17:53, ACHS 30:07

THIRD-DOWN CONVERSIONS: WHS 1-10, ACHS 5-15

FOURTH-DOWN CONVERSIONS: WHS 1-3, ACHS 2-6

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

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RUSHING:

ACHS: HAMILTON 21-125-TD

WHS: WILLIAMS 11-22

PASSING:

ACHS: BOWERS 15-26-I-152

WHS: NORTHERN 7-18-2I-93

RECEIVING:

ACHS: LUCAS 6-79

WHS: BAKER 4-60