

Sigmon Lifts WCU over Elon in OT

Written by Staff Reports

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After scoring late in the fourth quarter to tie the game to force overtime, the Western Carolina Catamounts used their overtime possession to boot a field goal to claim a 27-24 victory over the visiting Elon Phoenix on Saturday.

Elon (2-7, 1-4 Southern Conference) saw quarterback Mike Quinn throw for a career-high 326 yards and three touchdowns while extending his streak of passes attempted without an interception to 207. The streak established a new SoCon record, surpassing the mark of 203 set by Furman's Braniff Bonaventure in 1996. Receiver Andre Davis caught six passes for a personal-best 162 yards and a score for the maroon and gold.

Defensively, the Phoenix forced two turnovers - a fumble knocked loose by David Wood and recovered by Corey Mitchell and an interception by Edward Burns. Elon has now forced eight turnovers in its last five outings. Both Burns and Wood also broke up three passes.

Trailing 24-17 after John Gallagher drilled a 48-yard field goal, Western Carolina (2-7, 1-4 SoCon) took possession with 3:30 left on the fourth quarter clock. Quarterback Troy Mitchell consistently eluded Elon defenders to keep plays alive, including twice on third-and-long, as he guided the Catamounts to the Elon five-yard line. After a penalty gave WCU first-and-goal at the two, Mitchell fumbled a snap, but was able to fall on it at the six just as Phoenix linemen arrived. On the next play, Mitchell looked to the end zone where Kanorris Benson snared his second touchdown catch of the day in the back corner. The PAT knotted the game at 24 and forced overtime.

Elon got the ball first in the extra session, but was forced to attempt a 44-yard field goal that missed right. A holding penalty backed Western up on its first play of overtime before the Catamounts faced a fourth-and-seven from the 22. Richard Sigmon came on and was able to split the uprights to end the game and give WCU the win.

After falling behind 3-0, Elon began the ensuing drive at its own seven and had moved to the Phoenix's own 36 before Quinn hit Davis on a short screen and the speedy receiver raced into the end zone to complete the 64-yard scoring play. The PAT moved the maroon and gold in front, 7-3.

The Catamounts quickly regained the lead, 10-7, on the first play of the second quarter when Eddie Sullivan found an open Benson wide open after the Elon defensive back had slipped on the turf. Benson hauled in the heave and went 80 yards for the go-ahead score.

The back-and-forth continued on Elon's next drive. The Phoenix faced a second-and-16 from its own 34 before Quinn connected with Kierre Brown for 13 yards and then ran it on a quarterback draw for six and a first down. On the next play, Quinn threaded the ball between Catamount defenders to Rasaun Rorie who set up some blockers and raced in for the 47-yard score as Elon went back in front, 14-10.

The Phoenix extended its lead to 21-10 with 4:46 left in the first half when Quinn tossed his third

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TD pass of the game, this one a two-yard connection with Doug Warrick. That score capped a nine-play drive that covered 76 yards. Elon's TD was set up by a 37-yard toss-and-catch from Quinn to Davis that took the ball to the three.

Western Carolina closed its deficit on its first drive of the second half, keeping the ball on the ground for 10 plays of a 12 play drive. The Cats began at their own 24 after an Elon fumble before the they got in to the red zone on a 21-yard dash by Mitchell to the 11-yard line. Two plays later, Mitchell rolled to his right and found a crossing Michael Helms for an eight yard touchdown as it became a 21-17 contest following the PAT.

Alexander Dawson had another solid game at linebacker for the maroon and gold, recording a team-best 10 tackles.

For Western, Mitchell threw for 192 yards and two touchdowns and also ran the ball for 61 yards. Sullivan threw for 157 yards and one score.

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