

Bears Roar Into National Quarterfinals

Written by Staff Reports

Saturday, 30 November 2013 19:53

The Lenoir-Rhyne Football Team (11-1) moved into the national quarterfinals after coming from behind to defeat Carson-Newman (10-3), 27-20, Saturday afternoon in the NCAA Division II Second Round of

the playoffs at Moretz Stadium.

L-R senior quarterback Josh Justice (Belmont, N.C.) came off the bench in the second half to rush and pass for a touchdown as the Bears rallied from a 20-7 deficit to beat the Eagles for the second time this year. He hooked up with wide receiver Grayson Wells (West Jefferson, N.C.) on a ten-yard toss for the game-winning TD late in the fourth quarter.

Lenoir-Rhyne, ranked No. 13 in NCAA Division II and winners of 11 straight games, will host North Alabama (10-2) in the national quarterfinals next Saturday beginning at Noon.

No. 16 North Alabama (10-2) defeated eighth-ranked UNC Pembroke (9-2) in the second round today by a 37-13 score in Pembroke, N.C.

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Carson-Newman's quarterback, De'Andre Thomas (Milledgeville, Ga.), also rushed and passed for a score as the Eagles built a 20-7 lead on a 20-yard touchdown pass from Thomas to James Phillips (Dallas, Texas) with 5:29 left before intermission.

Lenoir-Rhyne began its rally on a 46-yard field goal by senior placekicker Zach Neumann (Mechanicsville, Md.) on the last play of the first half and the Bears trailed by a 20-10 score.

L-R tied the score at 20 with another 46-yard field goal by Neumann and a four-yard touchdown run by Justice in the third quarter before winning it in the final stanza.

In the fourth quarter, Justice found sophomore wide receiver Greyson Wells (West Jefferson, N.C.) in the back of the end zone from 10 yards out with 4:49 left which proved to be the game-winning score. The touchdown ended an 11-play, 92-yard drive.

Lenoir-Rhyne, the top-ranked team in NCAA Division II in rushing at 376.9 yards per game, finished with 316 on the ground including 194 after halftime. L-R sophomore quarterback Teverrius Jones (Washington, Ga.) led the way with 102 yards rushing including a 68-yard touchdown run in the first quarter. Wells caught two passes on the day, including the game winner, for 26 yards.

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Thomas finished with 225 total yards - 81 on the ground and 144 through the air - but Carson-Newman was held to just 105 yards in the second half after running up 297 yards before intermission.

On defense, senior free safety Michael Green (Kingsland, Ga.) totaled 10 tackles for the Bears while Jaycob Coleman (Norton, Va.) and Jared Henderson (Knoxville, Tenn.) added 10 takedowns each despite the loss.

Lenoir-Rhyne's 11-1 record matched its best mark since an 11-1 season in 1962 when the Bears advanced to the NAIA National Championship game. Carson-Newman and L-R were also meeting in the second round of the playoffs for the second straight year.

Photo Courtesy: Grayson Wells, L-R Athletics