

Tigers rally past Columbia to take opener

By Chris Siers
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LEWISBURG — A veteran group of players able to overcome adversity is the desire of any head football coach.

With the veteran group of Marshall County Tigers Thomas Osteen has on his roster, that mettle was put to the test in Friday night's opener against Columbia.

The Tigers fell behind by two scores in the first quarter, but went on to outscore the Lions 41-7 the rest of the way and take the 41-20 season opener.

"I feel like we were able to one of their kicks to give us a short field. We could have folded after we got down two scores. We have an experienced, older group of kids that know how much they put into this and weren't going to let a little adversity at the start of the game unravel our team. Really proud of the way we handled adversity at the start of the game," Osteen said.

Marshall County moved the ball well on the game's opening drive, but coughed the ball up on a fumble that Columbia returned to the Tiger 48-yard line.

Two plays later, Columbia's Kayden McCoy punched it into the end zone for the first score.

Hoping to answer on the points after the turnover, the Tigers



Demari Braden (29) picks up a block and scampers forward for a big gain for the Tigers. He finished with two touchdowns and 155 yards on 20 carries.

went to the air on the next possession, but were unable to move the chains and were forced to punt after a three and out.

Utilizing its quick-strike ground-attack, McCoy struck again, this time on a 64-yard jaunt, but the kick after failed.

With 5:52 left in the opening quarter, Columbia held a 13-0 lead and had out-gained Marshall County, 136-15 in total offensive yards.

But the return game for the Tigers continued to give Marshall County a short field to work with.

A return by Antomme Cowthorn to the Lions' 36-yard line gave Marshall County prime field position to work with.

Five plays later, Demari Braden put the Tigers on the board with a two-yard run.

Seizing the quick turn in momentum, Jayden Randolph caught the Tigers off-guard and successfully converted the two-point attempt.

Special teams came through on the next defensive possession for the Tigers with a blocked punt, recovered at the 19-yard line, once again giving Marshall County prime field position.

Junior quarterback Silas Teat capped the drive with his first of two rushing touchdowns on a one-yard sneak with 1:32 left.

Even with a bad snap on the point after, Marshall County still led

14-13 after the first quarter.

The Tigers went on to pad their lead on another Lion mistake on the following drive, following another bad snap on fourth down that allowed the Marshall County to recover on the 22-yard line.

Two plays later, Teat connected with tight end John Morgan Thomas on a 20-yard touchdown pass, but again the kick after failed.

Columbia finally orchestrated an answer after the Thomas touchdown reception and orchestrated an 11-play drive that eventually stalled out around the 42-yard line.

Sophomore Aja Jones took the punt reception 83-yards to the house,



Tight end John Morgan Thomas crosses the goal line on a 20-yard pass reception from Silas Teat.

giving Marshall County a 27-13 lead after a successful Wyatt Joyce kick, with 4:59 left.

That score held through the remainder of the half.

On the first drive of the third quarter, Columbia was able to successfully march the ball on the Tigers on a drive that spanned just shy of six minutes and went 80 yards to pull within one score after McCoy's third score of the night.

Following the four-

yard touchdown run by McCoy with 6:12 to go, the Tigers went three and out and prompted their second punt of the night.

Having seized the game's momentum, Columbia again marched to the Tiger Red Zone and on fourth down, senior linebacker Montai Vaughn came up with perhaps the play of the game with an interception in the end zone to prevent the Lion score.

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Despite senior injury, Rockets blast past Eagles in season opener

By Kacy Kincaid
Sports Writer

CHAPEL HILL — The Forrest Rockets and Eagleville Eagles both started strong on Friday night in their season opener at The Rock. However, the Eagleville defense had a tough time holding the Rockets back, especially in the second half, as Forrest claimed the opener, 55-24.

Forrest seniors Chris Davis and Tayton Swift, each had an outstanding night with a total of 248 yards, quickly moved the ball down the field, with Liam Bell getting the first touchdown of the game seven minutes in on a one-yard dart across the goal line.

It didn't take long for the Eagles to respond. Elijah Fearnas was unstoppable as he ran for a 98-yard kickoff return.

Kolton Daniel completed the two-point conversion, giving Eagleville their only lead of the night.

Soon after, in an emotional turn of events for the Rockets, Forrest senior Brenton Burchell



Eli Bell pulls away from the Eagleville defense and scores for Forrest.

went down with a leg injury on a short carry.

Following the 30-minute delay, the Rockets showed their tenacity. Swift returned to the field with a 57-yard carry and Davis following up with a 10-yard dash to the end zone.

Adding the Gavin Grissom extra point, Rockets lead 14-8 with

3:16 left in the first quarter.

Eagleville couldn't round out the quarter, though.

On a fourth down with only 1:10 remaining, an Eagle punt was returned 59 yards by Eli Bell, with the momentum rising for the Rockets.

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Raiders rally past Cornersville in 2nd half

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LYNNVILLE — It's not how you start a game, but how you finish, and that's a lesson the Cornersville Bulldogs learned the hard way in their 2022 opener.

Despite a strong showing that bled well into the third quarter, untimely penalties, turnovers and players plagued with cramps ultimately proved the Bulldogs undoing in a 31-20 loss in the Battle of Buford Station at Richland on Thursday night.

"I didn't do a good enough job getting us ready to go. That falls on me as the head football coach," first-year Cornersville coach Shelby Waddell said.

Things got off to a promising enough start for the Bulldogs as Blake Estes picked off a pass by Richland quarterback Bryce Miller and returned it inside the Raider 10-yard line.

But the drive stalled and the Bulldogs were unable to convert on fourth and goal, turning the ball over on downs.



Cale Adcox hauls in a pass from quarterback Blaine Woodard and takes it 40 yards to the house for a touchdown.

Richland took the ensuing drive to mid-field and milked over three minutes off the clock before several Bulldogs broke into the backfield and blocked a punt, once again giving the Bulldogs prime field position.

This time, Cornersville took advantage of the short field and junior Ben Franklin capped the drive with a seven-yard touchdown run with 3:29 to go in the opening frame.

Richland answered

in short order with a 13-yard touchdown pass to Bryce Miller, knotting the game at seven following the successful kick after.

After taking the following kickoff to the Raider 40-yard line, it was a perfect pass by quarterback Blaine Woodard to Kale Adcox that went 40 yards to the end zone as the clock read 0:00 in the opening frame.

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Ben Franklin (33) finds a crease and scampers forward for a big pickup for the Bulldogs. He finished with 120 yards on 20 carries in Thursday's opener at Richland.