

Cats Pull Away

'Army' To Rescue In Belle Plaine

As far as "second chances" go, this is it for the Mulvane High School football Wildcats, and Friday, night, Oct. 15, they made the most of it.

The District season started at Belle Plaine for the MHS Wildcats and Coach Dave Fennewald's troopers pulled away in the second half for a 42-26 triumph over the host Dragons in the first meeting between the two schools in modern history. Belle Plaine moved into Class 4A this year.

The win left the Cats in a familiar position. They are 1-0 in the three-game, end-of-the-season series to determine which two teams from District 10 will advance into the 1st round of the Kansas football playoffs. Wellington and Rose Hill are the other two teams in District 10. The Wildcats will travel to Rose Hill Friday night, Oct. 22, for their biggest game of the year to date with a chance to nail down one of those two qualifying spots with a victory. Game time at Rose Hill is 7 p.m.

The Wildcats continued to make a statement on offense. The team racked up 485 yards total offense, most of it on the ground against the Dragons. That included three 100-yard rushers. Fullback Caleb NeSmith had his biggest night ever, going 139 yards in 22 carries. Sage Swaney posted 103 yards in just five carries and quarterback Logan Sorensen carried it 13 times for 137 yards.

After a sticky first half, Coach Fennewald called on "the army." "At halftime, we felt like we should have been up 21-0 but it was only 14-12, so we decided we were just going to run it right at them because we didn't think they could stop our

ground game and we were right," said Fennewald. "We have a formation called 'army,' which is a double tight end running formation which they seemed to be having trouble stopping. We decided to go away from what we had been planning and decided to just 'army it' the rest of the way."

That strategy smoothed out the bumps. After Belle Plaine scored to make it 18-14, Mulvane's first possession of the 2nd half was critical and the Cats marched down the field in 10 plays and scored on a 25-yard jaunt by Sorensen to reclaim the lead, ripping off five or six yards every snap. That made it 21-18 and MHS was on its way.

"Our defense started playing better after intermission and our offense really started clicking," said Fennewald. "We got the ball back and had another drive to make it 28-18.

"That halftime change was really big because they scored just before the half and all the momentum going for them," said Fennewald. "Once we scored to make it 28-18, we started feeling more confident and made that momentum work for us. It reestablished our offense."

It also gave the Wildcats their first back-to-back victories of the 2004 campaign and linked their record to 3-4. The Dragons tumbled to 3-4, too.

"I think Belle Plaine wanted to make this a big rivalry because they came out really fired up and ready to play us," said Fennewald. "It was really one of those tough games for us. Playing a smaller school, we were in a no-win situation. If we win, we should have won against a smaller school. They are not a bad football team, either. They play in a very good conference (Central Plains League) and they have a big offensive line."

But on the 1st possession, Mulvane marched about 70 yards for a touchdown. Sorensen took it 33 yards on the game's 1st play, then pitched a strike to Matt Myers for a 34-yard TD pass before the everyone was even settled in their seats.

Belle Plaine came back and went for it on a 4th and one-foot near midfield. The Dragons didn't make it but the play sent a message. "You know they weren't going to hold anything back," said Fennewald.

After driving to BP's five, Mulvane stalled out and tried a Myers field goal but it missed. Then came a strange one. After the Dragons punted, Mulvane had the ball near midfield and on the first play, a Dragon intercepted a pitch in the Mulvane backfield and raced untouched 40 yards for a score. "I don't think I've ever seen that happen," said Fennewald, noting the ball was intercepted

in mid-air.

Another halftime change on defense made the Wildcats more effective. "We decided to just have our people 'bear crawl,'" said Fennewald. "That means having your linemen get down and just make piles. Your linebackers then can see the counters and make the stops. The linemen did a great job."

Mulvane's defensive linemen were Kyle Miller and Carl Jones, Emery Thieme, Joe Correia, Mason Leonard and Jody Shook.

That left linebackers J.D. Hansen and Jason Wohlford free to make the stops. Myers led the team in tackles with two solos and 11 assists. Hansen had 11 tackles as did Sorensen. NeSmith had nine stops and Wohlford finished with eight.

Myers had a pretty good all-around night. He was 6-for-6 in point-after tries, caught one TD pass and led the team in tackles with 13.

The Cat coach is high on the MHS offense, which is showing signs of peaking at the proper time—playoff time. "I don't think people realize how young these guys are," said Fennewald. "We have had nine kids starting on offense who hadn't played much offense, but I think they are starting to figure it out. We're not blowing a lot of assignments and we're protecting the ball. We're not having the fumbles we had earlier in the year.

"I felt all along that this team would get better as the season progressed and we have. In fact, we're probably better now at this point in the season than we were last year at this time. We have so many offensive weapons."

This is true. The Wildcats have had four different runners log 100-yard games during the season and Sorensen has had a number of 100-yard passing games.

After NeSmith's one-yard plunge put the Cats at 28, Swaney rambled 17 yards for a score and John Knight added the final TD on a one-yarder to make it 42-18.

Now things get big. "That's right," stressed Fennewald. "The next two weeks are real big. We watched the Rose Hill-Wellington game films and those two are pretty good. Wellington just seems to have a way to get good things to happen (Wellington won that game by a 28-20 score). Our kids, though, have a great attitude, the same one they have had since week No. 1. We're the underdogs (against the Rockets), so we can relax and play the game and see what happens."

A victory at Rose Hill assures the Cats of being in the playoffs as either the No. 1 or No. 2 team. Game time at Rose Hill is 7 p.m. Friday night, Oct. 22.

Mulvane	7	7	7	21	42
Belle Plaine	0	12	6	8	26

Touchdowns—Mulvane: Matt Myers (34 pass from Logan Sorensen), Jason Wohlford (3 run), Logan Sorensen (25 run), Caleb NeSmith (1 run), Sage Swaney (17 run), John Knight (1 run). Belle Plaine: Harlin Murie (40 run with fumble), Cody Holland (2 pass from Kyle Rands), Drew Brown (2 run).

Points After Touchdown—Mulvane: Matt Myers (6 kicks), Belle Plaine: Adam Alonzo (2 run)

TEAM STATISTICS

	Mulvane	Belle Plaine
First Downs	20	13
Total Yards	485	352
Yards Rushing	437	275
Yards Passing	48	77
Passes Attempted	7	8
Passes Completed	3	3
Passes Intercepted By	1	0
Punts/Average	1	2/32.5
Fumbles Lost	1	1
Yards Penalized	54	80

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing
Mulvane: Caleb NeSmith 22 carries 139 yards, Sage Swaney 5 103, John Knight 6 39, Logan Sorensen 13 137, Jason Wohlford 10 19, Belle Plaine: Jason Dimayan 13 101, Harlin Murie 16 102, Drew Brown 7 22, Adam Alonzo 9 50

Passing
Mulvane: Logan Sorensen 3 completion 7 attempts, 48 yards 0 interceptions 1 TD, Belle Plaine: Kyle Rands 3 5 77 0 1

Receiving
Mulvane: Matt Myers 1 catch 34 yards, John Knight 1 7, Caleb NeSmith 1 10, Belle Plaine: Harlin Murie 1 10, Cody Holland 1 27, Nick Jianfortom 1 13

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

Matt Myers 2 tackles-11 assists, J.D. Hansen 0 11, Logan Sorensen 2 9, Caleb NeSmith 1 8, Jason Wohlford 0 8, Sage Swaney 2 6, John Knight 3 4, Mason Leonard 1 4, Kyle Womacks 1 1, Carl Jones 0 2, Jody Shook 0 2, Kyle Miller 0 1. Interceptions—Caleb NeSmith. Fumble Recoveries—Sage Swaney

Ark Valley-Chisholm Trail League Football Standings

Division III

Team	League		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Wellington	4	0	7	0
Augusta	4	1	6	1
Mulvane	2	1	3	4
Rose Hill	2	2	3	4
Buhler	1	4	1	6
El Dorado	0	5	1	6

Division IV

x-Andover Central	5	0	7	0
Circle	4	1	5	2
Andale	2	2	4	3
Andover	2	2	3	4
Clearwater	1	3	2	5
Kingman	0	5	0	7

x-clinched AVCTL-IV championship

Games Friday, Oct. 22

SECOND ROUND-DISTRICT GAMES

Mulvane at Rose Hill, 7
Belle Plaine at Wellington, 7
Andover Central at Douglass, 7
Independence at Augusta, 7
Circle at Collegiate, 7
El Dorado at Andover, 7
Buhler at Haven, 7
Clearwater at Andale, 7
Pratt at Kingman, 7

Results Friday, Oct. 15

Mulvane 42, Belle Plaine 26
Wellington 28, Rose Hill 20
Augusta 49, Douglass 0
Collegiate 27, El Dorado 0
Circle 14, Andover 7
Andover Central 63, Independence 0
Andale 26, Buhler 7
Haven 20, Clearwater 0
Chaparral 19, Kingman 16