



Mulvane players Brit Ericson (4), Sage Swaney (22) and Huldun Tharp (34) swarm over an Augusta runner in Cats' 1st game

Home Opener Friday

Nothing 'Special' In Wildcats' 1st Game

Any level of football can be broken down into three simple areas: offense, defense, and special teams.

For the Mulvane Wildcats, the offense was expected to be its strength. The defense was expected to be improved. It was the third area, however, that hurt the 'Cats the most in their season opener at Augusta Friday night, Sept. 2.

Two blocked extra points and two Augusta special-teams touchdowns were among the biggest reasons for Mulvane's opening 32-19 loss to the host Orioles in the AVCTL Division III opener for both teams. "Special teams was the biggest factor in this game," said Wildcat head coach Dave Fennewald. "We just didn't do much right in that area. It hurts enough to give up one touchdown on special teams, much less two. It's especially frustrating because we spend 20 minutes a day in practice just working on special teams."

The first score came about halfway through the first quarter, when Mulvane punted the ball away to Augusta's Joe Habiger. Habiger found a crease and returned the punt 56 yards for a touchdown and a 7-0 Oriole lead.

Early in the second quarter, Mulvane opted to punt on fourth down inside the Augusta 35-yard line. The punt only went 12 yards, and on the next play, Augusta's Ben Emond broke loose for a 78-yard scoring run to make the score 13-0.

Later in the quarter, Mulvane got on the board with a four-yard scoring plunge by fullback Caleb NeSmith. The extra point was blocked, leaving the score at 13-6. One bad special-teams play was quickly followed by another, as Augusta's Matt Nordman picked up the ensuing kickoff and ran it back 77 yards for another Oriole touchdown. Augusta would lead 19-6 at the half.

"At worst, we should've been tied at the half," said Fennewald. "At best, we could've been ahead 6-0. Augusta's a quality team and, except for those big plays, we were hanging right with them."

The 'Cats started to gather momentum early in the second half. Less than two minutes in, senior John Knight broke free on an option and blazed 67 yards down the sideline for a touchdown, and Brit Ericson's extra point cut the lead to 19-13. A few plays later, Syler Swaney intercepted an Oriole pass in Augusta territory. Eventually, Mulvane faced a fourth-and-goal from the 15, but quarterback Ryan Herrig hit Tyler Oblinger for the tying touchdown pass. The extra point was blocked once again, but the score was tied now, 19-19.

Good news, right? Not exactly.

"When that extra point was blocked, it was like we didn't even score," said Fennewald. "You could just see everyone on the sidelines just deflate. We should've had the lead, and little things like that can sometimes have a big effect."

It showed. Augusta needed just three

plays to take the lead back, with Zach Payton rumbling 37 yards for the go-ahead score, and it was suddenly 26-19. Later, in the fourth quarter, another Oriole scoring drive ended with a one-yard plunge by Emond for the final score of the game.

The game stats really didn't reflect the end result. Mulvane rushed for 280 yards, including 123 on just 12 carries by Knight and 75 yards on 10 carries by Sage Swaney. In his first varsity start, Herrig was 5-for-12 passing for 44 yards and ran for 47. Knight had three catches for 25 yards to go with Oblinger's 15-yard touchdown catch. NeSmith rushed for 35 yards and caught a pass for four yards.

Defensively, Knight led the team with seven total tackles. The Wildcats also got six stops each from Andrew Myers, Brit Ericson, and freshman Huldun Tharp. Along with Syler Swaney's interception, the 'Cats also got fumble recoveries from Ericson, Tharp, and Knight. NeSmith blocked an extra point.

"I was very happy with our defensive play," said Fennewald. "On defense, we played as physically as we have in about three years. Andrew played very well in his first start at defensive end. Huldun's learning on the job as a freshman, but he's just going to get better. On offense, I thought Sage had his best game ever. He ran very hard and blocked well. Ryan made good decisions in his first game running the option."

"At this point last year, I didn't think we could be a good team," Fennewald added. "This team has a chance to be good. Obviously, there are things that we still need to work on, but the talent and the potential are there. The secondary did a much better job supporting our run defense. We made some plays, but we gave up too many. Overall, though, based on what we've already seen, I think these guys can be a good team."

The Wildcats play their home opener at Lyle Couch Field Friday night, Sept. 9, when they host AVCTL III opponent Buhler. The game is scheduled to kick off at 7 p.m.

Mulvane	0	6	13	0-19
Augusta	7	12	7	6-32

Scoring

Touchdowns—Mulvane: Caleb NeSmith (4, run), John Knight (67, run), Tyler Oblinger (15, pass from Ryan Herrig). Augusta: Ben Emond 2 (77, 1, runs), Joe Habiger (56, punt return), Matt Nordman (77, kickoff return), Zach Payton (37, run).

Points after touchdowns—Mulvane: Brit Ericson (kick). Augusta: Shawn Kuhlmann 2 (kicks).

TEAM STATISTICS

	Mulvane	Augusta
First Downs	10	6
Rushing Yards	280	284
Passing Yards	44	21
Total Offense	324	305
Pass Completions	5	2
Pass Attempts	12	6
Passes Intercepted	1	1
Fumbles Lost	1	3
Punts/Average	5/33.2	2/37.5
Penalties/Yards	4/28	5/33

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing

Mulvane—John Knight 12 carries-123 yards, Sage Swaney 10-75, Ryan Herrig 25-47, Caleb NeSmith 5-35. Augusta—Ben Emond 8-126, Joe Habiger 7-95, Zach Payton 4-42, Harrison Dreiling 7-13, Matt Nordman 5-8.

Passing

Mulvane—Ryan Herrig 5 completions-12 attempts-44 yards-1 INT-1 TD. Augusta—Harrison Dreiling 2-6-21-1-0.

Receiving

Mulvane—John Knight 3 receptions-25 yards, Tyler Oblinger 1-15, Caleb NeSmith 1-4. Augusta—Joe Habiger 1-13, Ryan Murphy 1-8.

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

John Knight 1 tackle-6 assists, Huldun Tharp 3-3, Andrew Myers 4-2, Brit Ericson 0-6, Tyler Oblinger 2-3, Sage Swaney 1-4, Caleb NeSmith 2-3, Kyle Womacks 1-3, Jesse Pierce 1-2, Syler Swaney 1-2, Matt Carden 1-1, Chad Blackwell 1-1, Ryan Herrig 0-1.

Fumble recovery—Huldun Tharp, Brit Ericson, John Knight.

Interception—Syler Swaney.

Blocked kick—Caleb NeSmith.

AVCTL III-IV Football Standings

Division III

Team	League		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Rose Hill	1	0	1	0
Wellington	1	0	1	0
Augusta	1	0	1	0
Mulvane	0	1	0	1
Buhler	0	1	0	1
El Dorado	0	1	0	1

Division IV

Team	W	L	W	L
Andale	1	0	1	0
Andover Central	1	0	1	0
Andover	1	0	1	0
Kingman	0	1	0	1
Circle	0	1	0	1
Clearwater	0	1	0	1

Results from Sept. 2

Augusta 32, Mulvane 19
Rose Hill 35, El Dorado 2
Wellington 14, Buhler 0
Andover Central 33, Clearwater 0
Andale 42, Circle 8
Andover 27, Kingman 7

Games Friday, Sept. 9

(All games start at 7 p.m.)

Buhler at Mulvane
Rose Hill at Circle
Augusta at El Dorado
Wellington at Andover
Andover Central at Andale
Kingman at Clearwater