



Mulvane gridders Caleb NeSmith (35), Sylar Swaney (8) and Brit Ericson (4) swarm over Wellington runner; Mulvane lost the game and a 4A playoff berth

Cats Finish 5-4

Turnovers Bring Season To End

In the end, it wasn't the ending they were hoping for.

The Mulvane High School football team went into Wellington Thursday night, Oct. 27, with a chance to qualify for this year's Class 4A playoffs. Too many turnovers, though, resulted in a 28-13 loss, ending the Wildcats' season with a record of 5-4, including 2-3 in AVCTL Division III.

"I thought we matched up very evenly with Wellington," said Mulvane head coach Daye Fennewald. "This was a winner-take-all game for a playoff berth. We had our destiny in our own hands, but those turnovers were eventually too much for us to overcome. We didn't convert enough of our scoring opportunities."

Things appeared to start well for Mulvane. The Wildcats took the opening kickoff and drove downfield, taking the ball inside the Wellington 20. A fumble ended the threat, though, as it did on Mulvane's next possession, which also ended in Wellington territory.

Meanwhile, Mulvane's defense contained Wellington's offense on their first two possessions, forcing punts on both. On Mulvane's first play of their third possession, the 'Cats fumbled the ball away again, and the host Crusaders recovered on the Mulvane 22-yard line. That set up Wellington's first score, a four-yard run by tailback Nate Keller, giving the Crusaders a 7-0 lead after one quarter.

Wellington added a two-yard TD run by Keller on their next drive, increasing their lead to 14-0. The Wildcats got their offense restarted on their next possession, with junior John Knight taking a pitch sweep over the left side, cutting back to the middle of the field, and scoring on a 54-yard run to make the score 14-7. Mulvane made a defensive stop on fourth down at the Mulvane 10 in the final minute of the half, and the 'Cats were only down seven at the half.

"We were a bit lucky to only be down 14-7," said Fennewald. "We knew had a chance to win yet. We just had to figure out how to take the momentum back."

Mulvane	0	7	6	0-13
Wellington	7	7	7	7-28

Scoring

Touchdowns—Mulvane: John Knight 2 (54, 45, runs). Wellington: Nate Keller 3 (4, 2, 51, runs), Calder Cody (1, run).

Points after touchdowns—Mulvane: Brit Ericson (kick). Wellington: David White 4 (kicks).

TEAM STATISTICS

	Mulvane	Wellington
First Downs	9	16
Rushing Yards	198	281
Passing Yards	29	82
Total Offense	227	363
Pass Completions	4	6
Pass Attempts	12	12
Passes Intercepted	0	0
Fumbles Lost	4	1
Punts/Average	3/33	5/29
Penalties/Yards	2/32	4/47

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing

Mulvane—John Knight 8 carries-138 yards, Caleb NeSmith 11-52, Sage Swaney 3-12, Ryan Herrig 15- (minus 4). Wellington—Nate Keller 24-220, Lars White 5-23, Brandon Rusk 5-16, Danny Dawson 3-16, Calder Cody 10-5, Matt Rinehart 1-1.

Passing

Mulvane—Ryan Herrig 4 completions-12 attempts-29 yards-0 INT-0 TD. Wellington—Calder Cody 5-11-70-0-0, Tanner Ybarra 1-1-12-0-0.

Receiving

Mulvane—Brit Ericson 1 reception-13 yards, Jacob Hatfield 1-13, Huldon Tharp 1-6, Caleb NeSmith 1- (minus 3). Wellington—Lars White 4-65, Calder Cody 1-12, Nate Keller 1-5.

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

Huldon Tharp 4 tackles-8 assists, Brit Ericson 4-7, Caleb NeSmith 6-5, Sage Swaney 3-5, Matt Carden 3-5, Sylar Swaney 6-2, Andrew Myers 1-5, Kyle Womacks 0-4, Jacob Parker 1-0, Chad Blackwell 1-0, Jacob Hatfield 0-1.

Fumble recovery—Brit Ericson.

They found a way early in the third quarter. After forcing a three-and-out on Wellington's opening possession of the second half, Mulvane scored on their first play from scrimmage, a 45-yard run by Knight. A bad snap on the extra point kept Mulvane behind, 14-13, but the Wildcats seemed to be building up steam.

After forcing another three-and-out, Mulvane got the ball back near midfield. On their first play, though, the Wildcats fumbled the ball away for the fourth time. On the very next play, Keller broke free for a 51-yard TD run, his third of the game, and a 21-13 lead. "We lost some steam after those plays," said Fennewald. "We had the momentum until then. That was really the ballgame right there."

Any chances Mulvane had for a comeback were stuffed when Wellington finished off a fourth-quarter drive with a one-yard TD sneak by quarterback Calder Cody. "Our offense isn't exactly geared for come-from-behind rallies," said Fennewald. "Also, once we got behind 21-13, we started to doubt ourselves a little. We just couldn't sustain any long drives in the second half. Because of that, our defense was on the field too long."

Knight led Mulvane with 138 yards rushing on just eight carries. Fullback Caleb NeSmith added 52 yards on 12 carries. Quarterback Ryan Herrig was 4-for-12 passing for 29 yards. Herrig completed passes to Brit Ericson, Jacob Hatfield, Huldon Tharp, and NeSmith. On defense, Tharp was in on 12 tackles while Ericson and NeSmith had 11 each, with Ericson adding a fumble recovery. Sage Swaney, Sylar Swaney, and Matt Carden each added eight tackles.

The Wildcats were just 3-6 last season, and they improved on both sides of the ball in 2005, especially on defense. The Wildcats will return more than half of their starters next season. Among those graduating are Ericson, NeSmith, Sage Swaney, Hatfield, Kyle Womacks, Jacob Parker, Kyle Miller, Logan Frazier, Brock Kendall, Derek Leach, and Darrin Allen. The future also looks bright because the freshman team went 6-2, the 7th-graders went 5-2, and the 8th-graders went 7-0 and won the Pioneer League title for the first time in over 20 years.

"Our guys played with such intensity all season long," said Fennewald. "It was a disappointing season, losing our last two games, but our guys never gave up. We grew up a lot from last season. We didn't have any superstars, so everybody played their roles. We had great senior leadership, and we had a great attitude in practice every day. We'll have a lot coming back next year, and I think the football program in Mulvane is in good shape for the next few years."

AVCTL III-IV Football Standings Division III

Team	League		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
xy--Augusta	5	0	8	1
y--Rose Hill	4	1	9	1
y--Wellington	3	2	7	2
Mulvane	2	3	5	4
El Dorado	1	4	2	7
y--Buhler	0	5	2	7

Division IV

xy--Andale	5	0	10	0
y--Andover Central	4	1	6	4
y--Andover	3	2	5	5
y--Kingman	2	3	4	6
Clearwater	1	4	2	6
Circle	0	5	0	8

(x--clinched division title)
(y--qualified for Class 4A playoffs)

Results from Oct. 27

Wellington 28, Mulvane 13
Rose Hill 31, Belle Plaine 15
Augusta 49, Andover Central 14
Buhler 14, Clearwater 7
El Dorado 21, Circle 20
Andale 55, Haven 8
Wichita Collegiate 28, Andover 24
Kingman 20, Nickerson 0