

Crushing Ground Game

Little Drama As Cats Clinch Berth

So much for drama.

The Mulvane High School football team clinched the Class 4A-District 12 title with a 49-14 win at Douglass Friday night, Oct. 20. The Wildcats' win, combined with Wellington's 48-20 win over Belle Plaine, clinched the district for Mulvane with still one game left to play. That means a first-round playoff game at home, at least. The Wildcats are now 6-2 overall, 2-0 in district play.

"We spent the week in practice emphasizing improvement on an individual basis," said Wildcat head coach Dave Fennewald. "We've been playing well this season, but it seemed like we'd been playing at the same level for the last few weeks. We were working a lot on individual techniques at each position, offense and defense, and we saw some of the improvement we were looking for."

Playing time was one thing every Wildcat on the roster saw. In the first half, the first-string offense seemed to move the ball at will, and the defense was its usual stingy self.

On the first possession of the game, the Wildcats picked up two early false-start penalties, but they converted a third-and-long with a 15-yard completion from Ryan Herrig to Aaron Elston. That would set up a one-yard touchdown plunge by Huldton Tharp, and Jesse Pierce's extra point gave the 'Cats a 7-0 lead.

It would quickly become a recurring trend for Mulvane. After forcing a Douglass punt, it took Mulvane just three plays to score. Herrig found John Knight in the end zone for a 31-yard touchdown pass and a 14-0 lead. On the first play of their next possession, Tharp broke loose for an 84-yard TD run.

The 'Cats kept it exclusively on the ground after that, but they spread the wealth around. Chad Blackwell, Tyler Oblinger, and Herrig picked up first downs on the next drive, and Knight scored on a 12-yard sweep to make it 28-0. On the fifth possession, the Wildcats got big runs from Tharp and Herrig before Elston scored from 10 yards out to make it 35-0 with four minutes left in the half.

The reserves were gradually shuffled in

during the third quarter. Junior Quinton Smith got into the act, scoring on a 17-yard run to make it 42-0. In the fourth quarter, the Bulldogs got on the board with a three-yard TD keeper by Skylar Travis. Mulvane drove down the field one more time, with Smith scoring again from six yards out to make it 49-7. Douglass put the last points on the board with a four-yard run by Clay Shaft.

"We had a chance to work on some offensive plays that have needed work for us," said Fennewald. "We got in a lot of quality reps. Also, we kept our starting offensive line in the game longer to give our reserve backs a chance to run behind them. The biggest factor for us in this game was our team speed. Our skill players were simply faster than theirs. It was good to see everyone get some playing time. Our kids didn't look past this game. They were sharp, focused, and intense for four quarters."

Mulvane ran for a jaw-dropping 513 yards, which is the most for MHS under Fennewald. Tharp carried the ball 16 times for 200 yards, all in the first half. Smith gained 100 yards on just nine carries. Knight had five carries for 82 yards, and Elston had 54 yards on only four carries. Overall, 10 different Wildcats carried the ball. Herrig's completions to Elston and Knight were his only two pass attempts of the game.

The Wildcats also had many players involved on defense. Altogether, 25 different Wildcats were credited with at least an assisted tackle. Chance Swaney made 10 tackles, Tharp had nine, Albert Hixson eight, and Smith and Pierce seven each. The 'Cats also got six stops each from Levi Hein, Danny Schneider, and Matt Carden, who also had a sack and a blocked kick. William Bird added a sack. Oddly, the Wildcats did not force a turnover in the game. Mulvane had one turnover and nine penalties for 65 yards.

The Wildcats will wrap up their regular season on Senior Parents' Night tonight (Oct. 26) in their district finale against Belle Plaine. The opening kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

After that, the 'Cats will turn around and host a first-round Class 4A playoff game Tuesday night, Oct. 31, at 7 p.m. against the District 11 runner-up. That will be the winner of tonight's Andover-Andover Central game. Since the playoff game is a KSHSAA event, no family or student passes will be honored.

Mulvane	31	14	7	7-49
Douglass	0	0	0	0-14-14

Scoring

Touchdowns—Mulvane: Huldton Tharp 2 (1, 84, run), John Knight 2 (12, run; 31, pass from Ryan Herrig), Quinton Smith 2 (17, 6, runs), Aaron Elston (10, run), Douglass: Skylar Travis (1, run), Clay Shaft (4, run).

Points after touchdowns—Mulvane: Jesse Pierce 7 (kicks), Douglass: Kasper 2 (kicks).

TEAM STATISTICS

	Mulvane	Douglass
First Downs	18	11
Passing Yards	513	124
Running Yards	46	123
Total Offense	559	247
Pass Completions	2	6
Pass Attempts	2	14
Passes Intercepted	0	0
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Penalties/Yards	9/65	1/15
Points/Average	1/32	5/38

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Running

Mulvane—Huldton Tharp 16 carries-200 yards, Quinton Smith 9-100, John Knight 5-82, Aaron Elston 4-54, Chad Blackwell 3-27, Tyler Oblinger 3-23, Ryan Herrig 3-23, A.J. May 3-4, Mitchell Simon 3-1, Jordan Goch 1 (misses 1). Douglass—Skylar Travis 15-67, Clay Shaft 11-34, Patrick B.-9, Donalton 2-7, Wallace 1-11, Preston Giesen 2 (misses 6).

Passing

Mulvane—Ryan Herrig 2 completions-2 attempts-46 yards-1 TD-0 INT. Douglass—Skylar Travis 6-14-123-0-0.

Receiving

Mulvane—John Knight 1 reception-31 yards, Aaron Elston 1-15. Douglass—Jesse Hayes 4-112, Preston Giesen 2-11.

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

Skyler Travis 2 tackles-8 assists, Huldton Tharp 1-8, Albert Hixson 3-5, Quinton Smith 1-6, Jesse Pierce 2-5, Levi Hein 0-6, Matt Carden 0-6, Danny Schneider 0-6, John Knight 1-4, Mitchell Simon 3-4, Jesse Myers 0-4, Jacob Snider 1-3, Chad Blackwell 3-6, Tyler Oblinger 1-2, Carlos Galvan 1-2, Brexton Higgins 0-3, Tyler Springer 0-3, William Bird 1-1, Ryan Herrig 0-2, David Kraft 0-2, David Love 0-2, Kyle Adams 0-1, Ryan Melusack 0-1, Matt Clark 0-1, Michael Gutierrez 0-1.

Blocked Kicks—Matt Carden.

QB Sack—Matt Carden, William Bird.