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Growing with the Community

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Friday, Sep. 25, 2009

Roos defeat Paschal 35-28 in come-back thriller

Brent Shirley

For three quarters of Thursday night's district opener on the road against Paschal, the Weatherford football team struggled to find a rhythm. The offense turned the ball over four times – two fumbles and two interceptions – and the defense surrendered 28 points.



Weatherford quarterback Mitchael Rucker scores the winning touchdown in Thursday's 35-28 road win at Paschal. Rucker ran for three touchdowns and added another passing. (Photo by Brent Shirley)

But the final 12 minutes belonged to the Roos. Weatherford woke up and owned the fourth quarter, scoring three straight touchdowns to complete a 35-28, come-from-behind victory. The Roos (3-2, 1-0) trailed 21-7 early in the third quarter and 28-14 entering the fourth.

"No question, it was one of the craziest fourth quarters I've coached," said Weatherford coach Kenny Wheaton. "I'm proud of the players. We will take it."

Quarterback Mitchael Rucker scored Weatherford's first touchdown of the fourth quarter on a one-yard sneak to make the score 28-21 in the Panthers' favor. The Roos defense stopped Paschal's next drive, giving Weatherford's offense a chance to tie the score. With a little more than four minutes left in the game, the Roos needed to go 89 yards to score.

"We know that we have it in us to play well, we have just waited too long to pull it out," said Weatherford fullback Jaren Gentry. "We knew that the defense got a big stop, so we knew we had to come out and execute. We weren't thinking about how far we had to go. We just saw the green field ahead of us, and we knew we needed to get into the end zone."

Weatherford systematically marched down the field, with Rucker and slot backs Trooper Reynolds and Colton Kamper breaking long runs. Gentry capped the drive and tied the score with a six-yard touchdown run with 50 seconds left in the game.

"Mitchael [Rucker] told me to keep moving my feet, and that's what I did," said Gentry, who crossed the goal line with two defenders hanging on his jersey. "I just kept driving. No one was going to stop me."

Weatherford – which turned the ball over four times on two fumbles and two interceptions in the first three quarters – got a break on the next kickoff. Paschal fumbled, the Panthers' only turnover of the game, to give the Roos the ball on the Paschal 30-yard line.

"When I saw the fumble, my heart was pumping, and I thought 'it's time to go now,'" Rucker said.

With 44 seconds left in the game, Weatherford had time to move the ball into field-goal range, but Rucker didn't give Roos kicker Josh Blanton a chance. Rucker ran to the right, broke away from the Paschal defenders, and ran down the sideline for a touchdown on the Roos' first play of the drive. Blanton nailed the extra point, his fifth of the game, to make the score 35-28.

"It took great character for the players to keep fighting like they did," Wheaton said. "They stepped up when they needed to. I was pretty upset at halftime, but we talked about staying positive with a green light."

Weatherford finished the game with 367 rushing yards. Kamper, Rucker, and Gentry all had more than 100 yards on the ground. Rucker also had a 25-yard passing touchdown, which he threw to Kamper in the first quarter. Weatherford's other score came on a one-yard quarterback sneak from Rucker in the third quarter.

Weatherford has 15 days off before its next game. The Roos will play Abilene at home on Oct. 9.

Check back tomorrow for a photo gallery from Weatherford's comeback win.

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