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Published: August 29, 2009 03:53 pm 

**Roos open season winning last-second thriller**

**Greg Webb**  
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THE COLONY — The game was not always pretty as the Weatherford Kangaroos opened their 2009 campaign against The Colony Cougars Friday, but the Roos' final drive, and the end result, was an absolute work of art to the fans, coaches and players in Roos' blue. Junior slotback Tyler Henderson's dive over the goal line, culminating a 15-yard run after taking a pitch from quarterback Michael Rucker, secured the win for the Roos, 34-31.

Leading for most of the game, the Weatherford boys fought back from a third-quarter deficit, shutting down the Cougars' resurgent offense in the final period to set up the come-from-behind victory. Recovering from the adversity of turnovers had been a goal of the Kangaroos squad, a pinnacle they finally reached in the non-district contest.

"We've been sharing the stories with the guys for the three years I've been here, about coming back to win a close game," said Weatherford head coach Kenny Wheaton. "But it's a situation that you have to experience, and once you do, you always believe."

"And so finally, after three years, it happened tonight."

Setbacks during the match were plentiful, as the Roos lost four fumbles, allowing the Cougars to get back into the game. Weatherford had built up a 28-12 lead midway through the third period and seemed poised to turn the contest into a blowout.

The Colony took advantage of the turnovers in quick succession, scoring three touchdowns in a span of just over six minutes on the legs of Cougars running back Michael Jackson, who "moonwalked" 130 yards on the night on 26 carries.

After taking the lead early and holding it for nearly 34 minutes, the Roos found themselves behind, when Jackson jumped over the line for the final yard, giving The Colony a 31-28 lead with 11 seconds left in the third.

"[Our fumbles] were some of the worst adversity I've ever seen," Wheaton said. "But we stayed positive and that was the key. It got bad there at the end [of the third quarter], but we hung in there."

"I'm so proud of these kids for not losing their composure, and the coaches, too. We also had some penalties that hurt us. But the main thing is they overcame the obstacles, and that's the bottom line."


Weatherford dominated the first quarter of the game, drawing first blood just over two minutes into the contest after defensive back Dustin Donaldson picked off a pass from Cougars sophomore quarterback Garrett Simpson. When a penalty negated Donaldson's romp to the goal line, the Roos set up shop at the Cougars' 29 yard-line. After three runs up the middle by Weatherford fullback Jaren Gentry netted 19 yards and a third-and-five situation, Rucker rolled right and threw a 10-yard touchdown strike to slotback Colton Kamper.

The Roos scored again from good starting field position after a high snap to The Colony's punter saw him trapped behind the line of scrimmage. Despite a holding penalty, Weatherford took the ball into the end zone six plays later on Rucker's 1-yard keeper.


Weatherford's first ball-handling miscue proved costly when, toward the end of the opening period, Cougars' defensive back Jordan Downey picked up a Roos fumble and returned the pigskin 98 yards for a touchdown.

After the Roos lost the lead at the end of the third, the fourth quarter saw both defenses stiffen in the ensuing possessions. Weatherford put together a 9-play drive that ended when a fourth-and-two play came up short. After the Cougars were forced to punt, Weatherford braced for what would be their final possession, taking the ball on their own 21 yard line. The drive predominately featured the senior Gentry, who carried four times in the 10-play drive, picking up 45 yards and netting a first down every time he touched the ball.


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WHS junior slotback Tyler Henderson heads for paydirt in his 15-yard touchdown run in the closing seconds of Weatherford's win over The Colony, Friday night. The Roos won, 34-31. **KAY BIGGS/DEMOCRAT PHOTO/** (Click for larger image)

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"We just stayed focused on that last drive," Gentry said. "We kept telling each other 'green light, green light.' We're a much better team this year and felt like we could pull it off, and we did."

On the scoring play, Rucker was swarmed quickly by a pair of Cougars defenders immediately after pulling the ball from Gentry, but still managed to unload the pitch accurately to Henderson's waiting hands.

"I definitely think it helped free up [Tyler] on the pitch," Rucker said, "because one of the guys on me was supposed to key on [Henderson]."

"I think it really helps that we are better this year at focusing on the next play, no matter what just happened, good or bad."

The Roos will bask in the glow of a very emotional comeback win to begin their season, but will need to prepare soon for another road trip, which pits them against the Arlington Lamar Vikings next Friday. But all the preparation in the world, and focusing on the next opponent, will not abate the feeling that the team and coaches will enjoy from the season-opening win.

"I'm happy for them, to feel what I've felt as a coach," said Wheaton, "of how great it is to win a game like they did. They've worked hard and they deserved it. We came into this game with some confidence and just think this win put a stamp on it, tonight."

Weatherford 34, The Colony 31

1st 2nd 3rd 4th

WHS 14 0 14 6 — 34 TCHS 6 6 19 0 — 31

#### Scoring plays:

##### First quarter

W - Colton Kamper 10 pass from Mitchael Rucker (Josh Blanton kick) 9:42

W - Rucker 1 run (Blanton kick) 5:41

TC - Jordan Downey 98 fumble return (kick failed) 1:56

##### Second quarter

TC - Nate Ponton 19 pass from Garrett Simpson (pass failed)

##### Third quarter

W - Trooper Reynolds 3 run (Blanton kick) 9:28

W - Chris Martinez 37 pass from Rucker (Blanton kick) 7:55

TC - Michael Jackson 5 run (run failed) 3:17

TC - Jackson 4 run (pass failed) 1:24

TC - Jackson 1 run (Nate Fox kick) 0:11

##### Fourth quarter

W - Tyler Henderson 15 run (kick failed) 0:08

#### Team stats:

WHS TCHS

First downs 20 12

Rushing 52-317 31-129

Passing 2-5-0-47 7-16-3-75

Punts 0-0 2 - 34.5

Fumbles-lost 5-4 1-0

Penalties 8-69 4-40

#### Individual leaders:

WHS - Rushing: Jaren Gentry, 16-114, Rucker, 17-69; Kamper, 8-69

Passing: Rucker, 2-5-0-47. Receiving: Chris Martinez, 1-37; Colton Kamper 1-10-1.

TCHS - Rushing: Michael Jackson, 26-113. Passing: Garrett Simpson 7-16-3-75.

Receiving: Nate Ponton, 3-39-1; Beau LaFave, 2-39.



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