

Football Comes Out On Top In Turnover-Filled Game

Posted: Saturday, October 20, 2007

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The UW-Eau Claire football team gave up the ball four times, but UW-Platteville turned it over on six occasions during a 40-33 Eau Claire win.

The Blugolds rebounded from last week to improve their Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) record to 3-2. The overall record is now 6-2, while Platteville's stands at 2-5. The Pioneers are 1-3 in conference games.

The turnovers were key in the game, as Platteville threw four picks and fumbled twice, all of which led to 27 Blugold points. Eau Claire fumbled once and threw three interceptions, which led to 13 of Platteville's points.

The first costly Pioneer turnover occurred on their first drive. After a Blugold three-and-out, Platteville started its series at the Pioneers' 20. Four plays in, quarterback Joe Burkeland fumbled and **Sam Cummings** (Sr.-Rochester, MN/John Marshall) recovered at Platteville's 47. A 14-yard pass to **Cory Sartorelli** (So.-Appleton/North) during a third-and-9 kept the drive alive before **Mitch Schaeuble** (Sr.-Wrightstown) found **Chris Hull** (Sr.-Blaine, MN/Spring Lake Park) for a 10-yard touchdown strike. The extra point was blocked.

On the first play following the kickoff, the Pioneers again coughed up the ball as Burkeland couldn't handle a shotgun snap. **Chris Below** (Sr.-Antigo) pounced on it at the Pioneers' 19. Sartorelli again kept the march alive with a fourth-and-1 conversion at the 10. On the third down following the conversion, Sartorelli went 9 yards to make it 13-0 Blugolds.

The Pioneers got on the board in their next drive. They went 55 yards in seven plays and ended the drive with a 2-yard pass from John Akim, who switched in and out with Burkeland all game long. The extra point went wide left as the scoreboard read 13-6.

Eau Claire returned the turnover favor in its next drive when Schaeuble threw a pick two plays in. Ben Lusted returned it 10 yards to Eau Claire's 22. A 13-yard pass interference penalty provided most of the Pioneer offense, but a 1-yard run from Mike Genslinger on the first play of the second quarter tied it up 13-13.

Platteville's next drive also resulted in points, but for the defense. Akim had two incompletions in a row from his own 20 before throwing an interception to **Craig Polifka** (Jr.-Kewaunee) at the Pioneers' 43. Polifka made his way from the right sideline to the left and scampered for a 43-yard touchdown. The Blugolds were up 20-13 with 11:57 left in the half. After the kickoff, Akim threw another pick on his next pass attempt. **Brent Weber** (Sr.-Rice Lake) grabbed this one at Platteville's 47, but no points came from it.

At 8:09, Eau Claire started a drive at its 31. In the second play of the series, Schaeuble threw an interception to Brandon Willger, who brought it 13 yards to the 20. Platteville settled for a 32-yard field goal to get within four.

Following a 49-yard kickoff return by Polifka, Sartorelli carried the load during a 12-play, 46-yard march. He rushed for 33 of the yards and Schaeuble found **Tony Hull** (Sr.-Blaine, MN/Spring Lake Park) for a 6-yard score as the Blugolds went up 27-16.

After the half, Platteville got the kickoff. However, Akim threw another interception on the third play. Defensive lineman **Matt Ebner** (Jr.-Mindoro) plucked the ball out of the air and had a clear path to the end zone. The 31-yard return made the scoreboard read 34-16.

The next Platteville drive went better for the Pioneers. Aided by a 42-yard run by Burkeland on third-and-4 from Eau Claire's 44, Platteville drove it in on a 2-yard plunge from Genslinger.

Eau Claire then put on an 11-play drive and got to the Pioneers' 20. Platteville then intercepted a third down pass from Schaeuble and took it to Platteville's 43. After 39 yards, Platteville kicked a 35-yard field goal to make it 34-26 with 59 seconds left in the third.

With 13:23 to play in the fourth, Eau Claire started a drive at the Pioneers' 30 due to partially blocked punt on

Platteville's fourth down. The Blugolds replied with three points of their own on a 30-yard field goal by **Craig Kolb** (*So.-Marshfield*). Tony Hull, the fourth-string quarterback, was under center for this drive and the rest of the game with Schaeuble on the sidelines for precautionary measures.

Kolb had another field goal, a 27-yarder, at the 3:07 mark when Eau Claire got good field position following a failed fake punt.

With 1:19 to go, Akim kept hitting his receivers on a five-play, 90-yard scoring drive that finished with a 17-yard touchdown pass. Eau Claire recovered the onside kick and to preserve the 40-33 final score.

Platteville outgained Eau Claire 361-to-254, which is the fifth win Eau Claire has in which the opponent outgained the team. The Blugolds only had 74 yards in the air to 237 for the Pioneers. The Eau Claire rushing attack had 180 yards to 124 from Platteville.

Sartorelli ran for 119 yards and a touchdown while Schaeuble went 7-for-18 with 74 yards, three picks and two scores.

Weber, Ebner, and Polifka had the four interceptions, with Polifka adding a fourth-quarter snag to go with his early scoring return. Cummings and Below recovered the fumbles.

Eau Claire has a bye week next, but will then travel to 20th-ranked UW-Stevens Point on Oct. 20.

Eau Claire-Platteville Box Score

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