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Former Liberalite stars in Stillwater loss.
Sand Springs beats Stillwater in final seconds

by: Christopher Shelton

When Stillwater High took a three-point lead with just over two minutes left, a win against Sand Springs appeared likely for the Pioneers.

But the Sandites clawed their way to a 4th-and-8 situation at the Stillwater 10, in easy field-goal range. However, it didn't come to that thanks to two straight Pioneer mistakes. Stillwater committed back-to-back offsides penalties to give Sand Springs a first down and an opportunity to make a final lunge to the end zone.

The Sandites did so with six seconds left in the game to win 45-41 Friday night at Pioneer Stadium.

SHS coach Rusty Atkins said the score didn't reflect his Pioneers' hustle and effort.

Sophomore quarterback Jerame Littell was an outstanding 26-for-35 — 74.3 percent — for 388 yards and four touchdowns. His most active target in the effort, sophomore wide receiver Jesse Vester had six receptions for a staggering 206 yards — an average of 34.3 yards per catch — and three touchdowns.

The running game wasn't as key for Stillwater's offense Friday, but senior running back David Pierson still racked up 91 yards on eight carries and for a pair of TDs.

"It's always a tough loss," Atkins said. "Any loss is a tough loss, but the kids played really well. They fought really hard. The score is not indicative of how hard the kids played, but a little bit of luck always helps. That's what happened. I'm really proud of the way the kids hustled."

But the Pioneers weren't all solid at home Friday. Their first bobble came six minutes into the first quarter, when Littell threw an interception to Sandite Devlin McVicker, who ran the ball 68 yards for Sand Springs' first score.

Stillwater already had a touchdown at that point, so they moved forward tied at seven. The teams battled back and forth through the contest, and Stillwater spent the majority of the game within a touchdown of Sand Springs, and even took the lead against the Sandites five times.

Despite the numbers Littell, Vester and Pierson put up, the loss still stings, and there's another point to focus on: The future.

"For us, it's really not about numbers," Atkins said. "It's about getting better. District play is just around the corner. Everybody is hurting a little bit, but it's a good hurt because you know they care. When you have kids that care, you'll go a little bit further than what you anticipate. I think some of the young kids grew up this evening, and that's what's encouraging."

Littell had a second interception in the fourth quarter, but the Pioneers managed to get the ball back on a fumble, forced by Pioneer sophomore Paul Wilson. Stillwater turned that drive into a score when Pierson found a hole and dashed for an 18-yard rush to put the Pioneers up 41-38.

That joyous lead wouldn't keep, however. With eight lead changes through Friday night's bout, it seemed more like a game of hot potato than a football game. And the Pioneers were holding the ball when the clock ran out.

"That's the way games go," Atkins said.

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