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'Cats Get Tough Win At Park Hills

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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

PARK HILLS -- The Dexter Bearcats had a big task ahead of them Friday night as they traveled north to battle the Park Hills Central Rebels. The 'Cats came out on top after a hard-fought, albeit sloppy, contest, 37-27.

The game was a tale of two halves. The 'Cats offense was scoring almost at will, and the defense was dominant, in the first half. Midway through the third quarter, however, the 'Cats seemed to just lose their steam. They couldn't move the ball on offense; they gave up 20 unanswered points on defense - it was almost like the big 30-7 lead going into halftime woke up the 'sleeping giant' of Park Hills.

Offensively, the 'Cats running attack wasn't as potent as it was against Ste. Gen., but it didn't have to be: the Bearcats had some success moving the ball through the air this time around.

"We really executed well on offense in the first half. We have a hard time coming out sometimes, I felt like we were a little flat on that first drive, but after that we settled in," head coach Aaron Pixley said. "We have to come out with more energy than what we did tonight. Our offense executed well, I thought the passing game worked well. Cody [Stevens] made some big plays scrambling in the second half - I think we had a third and twenty-something, and he would up scrambling for a first down there."

Senior quarterback
Cody Stevens was

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12-30 for 132 yards, four touchdowns, and one INT. Stevens' favorite target in the contest was Tyler Miller - seven receptions for 78 yards and three TD's - but Pixley was pleased with the performance of the entire receiving corps.

"Cody and Tyler have a good relationship with each other, and they made some plays together," Pixley noted. "Chase Young had a huge catch on the bomb there that was called back, and we hit some short passes to Cody Neldon for some good games. Jake Lee got in the mix tonight, threw some to him. We don't really care who catches the ball, we just want people to execute. I'm proud of them for making some plays."

"For the most part, we ran the ball pretty good. We got into some situations where we had to throw, and we had some backs get dinged up a little bit, so we did what we had to do."

On the ground, Josh Overall was good for 96 yards on 13 carries. Stevens contributed 65 yards on 10 carries and a touchdown. Wideout Cody Neldon also earned 34 yards on the ground this week.

Runningback/Linebacker Nick Summers didn't dress in the second half due to a shoulder injury, but both Pixley and team physician Bobby 'Doc' Jibben noted that it was a precautionary measure.

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Jake Lee (No. 88) and Garrett Wray (No. 5) hold onto a tackle while a host of teammates swarm in.

The 'Cats were plagued by penalties during the third quarter - every time they would break a good play, a flag would get thrown.

"You start off, offense was making some good positive plays. It seems like in the span of six plays there, we had three ten or fifteen yard penalties, and we were backwards - that just spoils good, positive plays," Pixley noted. "It's tough to work from first and twenty."

The Rebels came as advertised - they were big, they were physical, and they tried to dictate the tempo of the game on the ground. Senior linebacker Alex Cliff was flying around the field, recording 13 tackles in the contest.

“[Park Hills] did a good job of running the ball on us in the second half and keeping the ball away from us,” Pixley said. “We knew they wanted to eat up the clock - we had a nice lead coming out into the second half, and we had some good plays in the second half, but we were inconsistent and had too many penalties. We just shot ourselves in the foot too many times.”

“We were sort of working against ourselves instead of working against Park Hills. I’m proud of our kids - we played hard. We were sloppy at times on a very hot and muggy night, but we gutted it out and got the *W* against a good team.”

Looking ahead to next week, the ‘Cats will return to Charles Bland Stadium to play host to the Sikeston Bulldogs. Pixley noted the outstanding speed of the squad, and said his team would have to tackle well to be able to get another victory.

“They’re possibly the best team on our schedule. Very, very fast, I’m sure they’re physical, and they attack on defense,” Pixley said. “We’re going to have to play extremely well. We can’t play with a lot of penalties like we did tonight. We need to be better at taking care of the football and not turning it over. We’ve gotta tackle - we were at the point of contact several on defense tonight, we just didn’t do a very good job of tackling. We’ve got to shore that up and get better next week. “

Kickoff for Friday (Sept. 9) night’s game is set for 7:00 p.m.

For a full breakdown of the game's stats, [click here](#)

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