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'Cats See Overtime Heartbreak Against PHC

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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

The atmosphere was electric Wednesday night at Charles Bland Stadium, as the Dexter Bearcats faced off against the Park Hills Central Rebels in Regional Playoff action. The Bearcats already held a 37-27 victory over the Rebels in the second week of the season, but Park Hills was able to squeak out a 29-28 overtime win to advance in the playoffs and end the Bearcats' record-setting season.

Head coach Aaron Pixley was disappointed with the season-ending loss, but was proud of his team's 'never say die' performance in the contest.

"[It's a] very tough loss; there's a lot of disappointed kids over there," Pixley said after the game. "They played their hearts out, and I'm proud of their effort."

The Bearcats came out a little flat, but slowly picked up the intensity as the game went on. The defense bent a little too much early in the game, and the Rebels capitalized, racking up 319 rushing yards on the Bearcats.

"We had Park Hills in 4th and short situations all night long, and just couldn't get off the field," Pixley said. "Offensively, we were out of sync early. Both the offense and defense played better as we got going, but Park Hills did a great job of doing what they do and pulling out the win."

Offensively, Dexter was led on the ground by QB Cody Stevens, with 113 yards on 23 attempts and a touchdown. Josh Overall had 38 yards and a touchdown on 11 carries; Alex Cliff pounded out 43 yards and one touchdown on 7 carries.

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Through the air, Stevens was 8-15 for 168 yards and one touchdown. Tyler Miller led the Bearcat receivers with 98 yards on 3 catches and a touchdown; Overall caught two out of the backfield for 23 yards. Cody Neldon had one catch for 23 yards.

Cliff led the Bearcat 'D' with a season-high 18 tackles, while Nick Summers had 13 and Jake Lee had 12. Neldon and D.J. Dowdy each had drive-killing interceptions in the contest, with Neldon's providing a much-needed 'shot in the arm' to wake up the Bearcats in the first half.

The Bearcats didn't punt during the contest - electing to 'go for it' on fourth down - but couldn't convert on any of their 4 attempts.

"We were just trying to extend it; we picked up a couple big first downs, got them to jump once on 4th and inches. It just seemed like when we went for it on fourth down, we just didn't get it," Pixley added. "It wasn't for a lack of effort tonight - all of my guys played hard, we just came up short."

The 'Cats never had a lead during regulation, but always kept it a one-possession game and tied it up with a Stevens TD run with 2:40 left in the contest - set up by a huge 38 yard pass to Miller.

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overtime, Cliff - pushing a pile of 6 Rebels - punched in a touchdown from 2 yards out to give the 'Cats a 28-21 lead.

The Rebels' one-two punch of Derek Mitchell (32 att., 150 yds., 3 TD's) and Cody Harrison (12 att., 114 yds., 1 TD) cut up the Bearcats throughout regulation, and they went back to their workhorses in overtime. Mitchell punched in a touchdown from 5 yards out to bring Park Hills within a point.

The Rebels lined up in their familiar Power-I set; Hunter Courtois faked a handoff up the middle to Mitchell and rolled right to get the two-point conversion and the win.

“We just got caught on the play fake there,” Pixley said of the play. “It was a good play call - we were just a little late getting there.”

With the loss, the Bearcats end the 2011 campaign with a 9-2 record - the first nine-win season during Coach Pixley’s tenure at DHS. The ‘Cats will lose 18 seniors - 16 of them either started or saw extensive playing time - this season, and Pixley had nothing but great things to say about the big group.

“I’ve got so many [seniors],” he said. “All of my seniors have benefited this program one way or the other. Every one of them have busted their butts in the weight room and played extremely hard.”

“Most of them have been a big piece of the puzzle here on our team, and have played extremely well. It’s taken a lot of hard work, and I’m very proud of my seniors,” he continued. “Hopefully they’ll look back on this season someday and see all the good things and not focus on the ending.”

For a full breakdown of the game’s stats, click here.

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