

Middleboro grinds its way to EFL championship game, 27-7

By Ron Dziergowski

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RANDOLPH — The Middleboro Cobras advanced to the Eastern Football League's title game, grinding past the Randolph Oilers, 27-7, Sunday afternoon at a cold and wet Randolph Memorial Field.

Middleboro's ability to control the line of scrimmage, both offensively and defensively, was the big story of this semi-final matchup.

The Cobra offensive unit opened huge gaping holes for running back Kelly Brooks (134 yards rushing and 3 touchdowns) while its defensive counterpart completely stymied the Oilers' offensively, limiting Randolph to 65 total yards.

"We got great interior line play," said Middleboro coach Dave Harrison. "Our game plan was to throw the ball, but the weather forced us to change our strategy."

"We decided to keep the ball on the ground, and the offensive line came through. I'm also especially pleased with the way we played defensively."

Middleboro was the recipient of the game's first big break when defensive back Bill Royal pounced on an Oiler fumble early in the first quarter. Quarterback Bob Barrett engineered a 41-yard scoring drive, capped off by Brooks' 2-yard TD run.

Dave Hickey booted the conversion giving Middleboro a quick 7-0 lead.

Late in the opening period, Cobra defensive back Tom Conn tipped a Bobby Witt aerial, and alert Royal picked it off, giving Middleboro great field position at the Oilers' 35.

However, the Randolph defense stood its ground, forcing Middleboro to settle for a 40-yard Dave Hickey field goal attempt.

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When the kick sailed wide, Randolph had dodged a bullet and was still down by only seven.

Midway through the second quarter Randolph found itself with its back against the wall. Middleboro's Dave Hickey unloaded a booming 60-yard punt, giving the Oilers the ball at their own 10. After gaining only one yard in three cracks at the Middleboro defense, Bobby Witt was forced to kick the ball away from his own endzone.

In what was probably the game's biggest play, Witt took the snap from center and uncorked a pass to Paul Cavallo. The pass fell incomplete and Middleboro took over at the Randolph 11.

"Bobby felt there was too much pressure being put on him," noted Oilers' coach Tom Pileski. "He decided that he couldn't have gotten the punt off and tried for the completed pass."

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Middleboro wasted little time in converting its golden opportunity, scoring three plays later when Dave Moitoso blasted over from the seven. The PAT failed and the Cobras carried a 13-0 lead into the locker room at the half.

Middleboro pushed its lead to 20-0 in the opening minutes of the fourth quarter. Behind the solid blocking of offensive linemen John Korzeniowski, Bob Moitoso, Mike Halpin, Jim O'Keefe, and Bob Minkle, Middleboro marched 52-yards, culminated by Brooks' 1-yard scoring plunge. Hickey's PAT gave Middleboro a commanding 20-0 lead with 14:15 left.

Randolph scored its only points of the game on the ensuing kick-off. Jay McGee fielded Kyle Tufts' kick on his own 10, broke through a wave of tacklers at his 40, and raced down the near sideline for an electrifying 90-yard TD run. Rollie Locke's PAT cut the Cobra lead to 20-7.

Middleboro responded by driving 57-yards in 11 plays for its final TD of the day and chewing five minutes off the clock in the process. Brooks' third touchdown accounted for the 27-7 final score.

"They (Middleboro) simply took it to us," added Pileski. "They've played great defense all year and today was no exception."

Middleboro now has a week to get ready for its championship tilt next Saturday (7:30 p.m.) with undefeated Marlboro at Marlboro.

"We're going to have to mix it up offensively," stated Harrison. "We know just how tough Marlboro can be."

For Randolph, the loss puts a damper on what otherwise was a storybook season. The Oilers completed its best EFL season ever (8-3) including six wins in a row to open the campaign.