

Oilers go back to drawing board

Fall to Blitzin' Bears, 26-7



Jacob Belcher

Randolph Oilers' running back J.T. Nickley finds a hold in the Brocton Bucs defense earlier this season. Nickley scored the Oilers' lone touchdown Sunday night in the squad's 26-7 home loss to the Western Mass Blitzin' Bears.

By Alan McCall

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RANDOLPH —

The game plan for the Western Mass Blitzin' Bears was simple. Run the draw play, and dare the host Randolph Oilers to stop it. Most of the time, the Oilers could not contain the Bears' Corey Ferguson, who rushed for 161 yards and two touchdowns from the sprint draw formation, leading the visitors to a 26-7 non-league win Sunday night over at Randolph High School.

The loss extended the Oilers winless season, dropping their record to 0-7.

"We knew when they (Western Mass) were running the draw play, but they were more physical than us up front and they were able to execute their plays," Oilers head coach Ed Penn said. "Most of our struggles this season have been on the line. We are young and inexperienced and teams have just been more physical." The Oilers have clearly missed the presence of crushing offensive tackle T.D. Thompson who has missed the last four games.

Randolph helped the losing cause by misfiring on solid scoring opportunities, while also being whistled for 11 penalties, four of them being critical unsportsmanlike conduct infractions.

"We shot ourselves in the foot too many times tonight with bad penalties, and for the second week in a row we could not score on first and goal," Penn said. "They capitalized on our mistakes, but we could not take advantage of their mistakes."

The Bears (5-2) wasted no time pouncing on the Oilers first miscue. On Randolph's third play of its opening series, a bad snap in shotgun formation over quarterback Ryan Myers' head rolled toward the end

zone. The Bears' Sean Crower won the race to the loose ball, covering it in the end zone for a Western Mass touchdown. Dejaun Brown ran in the two-point conversion for the stunning 8-0 lead.

The Bears returned the favor on their next possession. After an Oilers' punt put the Bears at their own 22-yard line, a botched handoff popped into the arms of the Oilers' John Marquardt, who took the gift 18 yards to the 7-yard line. J.T. Nickley ran into the end zone on the next play, and James Flaherty's point-after-attempt made it an 8-7 score.

The charity bowl continued later in the quarter as Randolph gave prime real estate back to the Bears on a fumbled snap in punt formation. From the 15-yard line, the Springfield-based squad used four plays to extend its lead with quarterback Rob Steed sneaking over the goal line from three yards out. Randolph stopped the conversion attempt, keeping the score at 14-7.

Western Mass took advantage of some more home team hospitality to take a 20-7 lead into the half. First, Darius Rohn intercepted a pass at midfield and returned it to the Randolph 12-yard line. Then two consecutive unsportsmanlike conduct penalties on Randolph brought the ball to the 7-yard line. An offensive holding call backed the Bears to the 17-yard line before Ferguson ran the sprint draw play to the end zone with 8:23 to play.

The Oilers' attempt at a late quarter score ended when Myers completed a 17-yard pass to Matt Trainor on fourth down at midfield, but they needed 18 yards for a first down, and fell short. Western Mass drove to the Randolph five-yard line on the ensuing possession, but a key sack by Marquardt spearheaded a valiant goal line stand for the Oilers.

Randolph was given another opportunity to get back in the game in the first minute of the second half, being handed a first-and-goal at the 3-yard line after a snap over the Bears' punter's head. But on the first play, Myers was hit as he attempted to hand off to Charles Thomas, causing the ball to squirt loose. Nickley finally recovered the ball for the Oilers at the 24-yard line. Nickley got 15 of those yards back on a screen pass from Myers, but the drive ended with two incomplete passes. The Oilers' defense came up big at the goal line later in the quarter as Marquardt again came up with a loose ball and returned it 33 yards on a fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line.

"Our defense was put in difficult situations because of our turnovers, but they stepped it up and made some big plays," Penn said. "They have been playing very well in the last few games."

Western Mass put the game away with a 32-yard scoring run by Ferguson in the fourth quarter.

The Oilers have the long weekend off, and return to their Eastern Football League schedule Saturday, Sept. 8, against visiting Clinton at Randolph High School. The game begins at 7 p.m.

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