

Oilers focus on finish, defeat Granite State

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Photos

Courtesy Photo



In a return to the city where he played his high school ball 25 years earlier, former Manchester West Blue Knight and UNH Wildcat- Left Tackle T.D. Thompson (#77), and fellow offensive linemen Kevin Clark (#51), Pierre Joseph (#64), and Brian Burns (#79) helped lead the Oilers to an important EFL victory

Manchester, NH —

Three things not found in semi-pro football: money, fame, quit.

The Randolph Oilers knew going into the season they would not get lucrative contracts or endorsement deals. The Oilers play in the Eastern Football League. They were 2-4 going into their Saturday's game against the Granite State Knights in Manchester, NH.

"We're in some good games. Sometimes we just shoot ourselves in the foot," Head Coach Ed Penn said. "We're trying to finish the season well."

A big factor contributing to the record is injuries. The Oilers have had a difficult time trying to stay healthy. It's a challenge to every football team at every level during every season.

"We've had an awful lot of injuries," said Oilers General Manager Peter O'Kane. "We don't have a lot of depth. A lot of guys play both ways."

"Guys are banged up," Penn said. "Right now we're trying to keep the guys healthy. It's a working man's league."

The team has received no help from the weather.

“There’s been a lot of 90 degree weather,” Penn said. “We’ve had guys practice with the shoulder pads off.”

Penn is in his 24th year with the Oilers and 13th as head coach. Next season will be his last.

O’Kane is happy with the way players have dealt with the challenge brought about by the injury bug this season. He mentioned the efforts of Will Price and Brian Gallo. Both players played wide receiver and defensive back against the MidCoast Falcons and each had two touchdown receptions and two interceptions in the game. Colby Gallagher, who was originally a linebacker for the Oilers, has filled in at running back this year to help compensate for the injuries.

“We’ve had some people who are really defensive players playing offense,” O’Kane said. “They do well carrying the ball. They’ve really stepped up. It’s tough to play two ways in the EFL.”

Another example of the toughness shown by the Oilers is linebacker Michael White. “Marine Mike” served in the United States Marine Corps for four years. White has played fullback, tight end, and defensive end in his first year back from duty.

Quarterback James Merrick showed his mettle in a 28-22 loss to the Boston Ravens on July 30. Merrick got sacked, “four or five times” according to O’Kane. Merrick had two touchdown passes that day.

“James really stepped up at quarterback,” O’Kane said. “James had a real big game. The kid got sacked. He kept getting up.”

Another quarterback, Ryan Myers, had a strong performance for the Oilers in a 55-20 win over MidCoast on August 7. Playing only one half, Myers completed 14 of 18 passes for 211 yards and four touchdowns. Myers was named Player of the Week for his effort, the second time he has received the honor this year.

The Oilers know they still have an outside shot at making the playoffs but doing that means they will have to focus on their next game and not look ahead to anyone else on the schedule. After Granite State, they will play their final home games of the regular season. The Oilers host Braintree on August 20 and Hyde Park on August 28. The Hyde Park game is Pop Warner Day. Pop Warner players will get into the game for free. Players must be accompanied by an adult. After the game, coaches and players will talk to the Pop Warner players.

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