

FOOTBALL: Oak Ridge delivers late against Clear Creek

By Rob Tate, Staff Writer Updated 9:54 pm CDT, Saturday, September 26, 2020



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Oak Ridge running back Alton McCaskill (4) runs for a 99-yard touchdown during the fourth quarter of a non-district high school football game at Woodforest Bank Stadium, Saturday, Sept. 26, 2020, in Shenandoah.

SHENANDOAH — Oak Ridge senior Alton McCaskill's heart skipped a beat. But a few seconds later, he was off to the races and putting away Clear Creek in the process.

McCaskill, an uncommitted Division I recruit, busted a 99-yard touchdown heading north down the Woodforest Bank Stadium turf late in the fourth quarter Saturday evening to extend his team's lead. The War Eagles went on to claim a 18-7 win in the non-district contest.

McCaskill's long run was setup by a huge defensive effort by the War Eagles (1-0). Pinned at the 1-yard line with Clear Creek trying to take the lead late in the fourth

quarter, Oak Ridge forced a fumble and sophomore Jacob Harris came away with the ball.



"They've been making big plays," McCaskill said of the defense. "When the offense has been going three-and-out, they played hard all game."

On the first play of the ensuing drive, McCaskill nearly got pushed back into the end zone for a safety. But he earned the yard to gain to keep those two points off the board for the Wildcats.

"I felt like I pushed it up," McCaskill said. "I tried to stay up so they wouldn't call the safety."

On the next play, he left everyone in the dust.

"I flushed it and I took it to house," McCaskill said. "I was really proud of my O-line. It was a team effort, and we were getting things done. It was amazing."

Oak Ridge coach Mark Schmid was pleased with the push up front to break McCaskill, who totaled 229 yards on the night, into open space.

"We knew that they were going to load the box and they were going to penetrate," Schmid said. "We challenged our offensive linemen to get a push and our running back to get a push. He got enough to get out of the end zone on first down. On second down, he busted it wide open."

Oak Ridge led Clear Creek 10-7 at halftime. Scott Hickey caught a 24-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Nick Osborne in the first quarter for an early lead.

The score remained 7-0 until the Wildcats took advantage of an Oak Ridge mistake.

Clear Creek recovered a fumble and set up its ensuing drive at the Oak Ridge 44. Junior running back Jeremiah Crum capped an eight-play drive with an 8-yard touchdown up the middle at the 7:31 mark of the second quarter.

Each of Clear Creek's sustained and successful drives came off mistakes by Oak Ridge's offense. That included the drive where the Wildcats nearly took the lead when Lane Brewster made an interception..

"The scoring opportunities that Clear Creek had was the result of turnovers by us," Schmid said. "Outside those situations, (the defense) played lights out. The kids played hard. What a testament to lining up, playing every down and not giving up. You get a fumble at the 1-yard line and two plays later, we take it 99 yards to blow the game open."

The tie in the second quarter didn't last long.

Using sophomore Steve Smedley at quarterback, the War Eagles moved down into field goal range for junior Fernando Cedillo. Cedillo made a 30-yard attempt to put his team up 10-7 at the 4:35 mark.

Schmid alternated between Osborne and Smedley throughout the game. The War Eagles threw for just 56 yards. Junior Jahron Jones added 45 yards on the ground.

Oak Ridge got sacks from junior JaQuavius Pierce and senior Jaylon Wyatt. Senior Arizona commit K.C. Ossai paced the linebackers early with three stops on the first series.

Crum ran for 78 yards for Clear Creek.

It was the first season-opening win for Oak Ridge since 2017.

"We've been working," McCaskill said. "We deserve it, if you ask me. My teammates and everyone put on some weight this summer, and we adjusted to the corona(virus) deal. It showed here."

Schmid credited his team for pressing through during an abnormal offseason due to COVID-19. Even Saturday's game was delayed from Friday after Clear Creek dealt with Tropical Storm Beta earlier this week.

"We had no spring training and a weird summer, weird start of the school year," Schmid said. "We just really started playing real football two weeks ago. Everything was kind of

touch and all that. So you would expect things to not be very polished and there would be lots of issues. I saw those things tonight, but I also saw kids just lining up to play and giving it their all. If we get that every week, we've got a chance."

The subject of racial injustice in the United States was also prevalent this summer. Several of the Oak Ridge players peacefully protested by taking a knee during the pregame national anthem.

"To be honest, we've talked about a lot of stuff," Schmid said. "But we never really talked about what we'd do in this situation. I respect the kids and things like that. This should be something that we will talk about and things like that. It was not something that was expected. It was just something that they did."

Oak Ridge has a quick turnaround Thursday with a 7 p.m. game against Stratford at Tully Stadium.

Clear Creek travels to Deer Park Friday night.

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