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## FOOTBALL: Montgomery knocks off Oak Ridge after big start

By Rob Tate, Staff Writer Published 10:23 pm CDT, Thursday, October 15, 2020



### IMAGE 1 OF 44

Montgomery defensive end Jamael Jefferson (45) reacts beside safety Travis Brown (10) after missing a interception opportunity during the fourth quarter of a non-district high school football game at Woodforest ... more

**SHENANDOAH** — Montgomery got a huge spark it needed early and rode that the rest of the way Thursday night in a non-district win against Oak Ridge.

The War Eagles were two yards away from an early first quarter lead, but Montgomery senior cornerback Josiah Gaetani picked off a pass and returned it 100 yards to the end zone.

Montgomery kept the lead from there and won 38-13 at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The interception was Gaetani's fourth of the year as he's been a standout of a Bears secondary that didn't have much experience coming into the season.



"That was huge," Montgomery coach John Bolfin said. "They were ready to go in there and take the lead and he picks it off at the goal line and returns

it 100 yards. Momentum is a big deal and that was certainly a game changer."

Montgomery (2-2) has already matched last year's win total just four weeks into the season. The War Eagles' best start since 2017 came to an end as their three-game win streak was snapped.

The teams have met three times since 2016 with Montgomery winning two of those occasions.

Oak Ridge (3-1), without running back Alton McCaskill, wide receiver Scott Hickey and were briefly without wide receiver Landon Lightsey in the first quarter. Lightsey, The Courier's Player of the Week from last weekend's games after scoring twice and gathering 116 yards against Humble, left during the first series after taking a hard hit after a reception.

A couple plays after that, Gaetani was blazing down the left sideline to the end zone.

"We took our first possession straight down the field and we had the ball at the 2-yard line," Oak Ridge coach Mark Schmid said. "We were getting ready to go in and go up 7-0 and we throw an interception and it gets returned for a touchdown. From that moment on, it was kind of an uphill battle for us."

Lightsey returned in the second quarter and sparked the offense with two receptions to set up the War Eagles' lone points of the half.

At the 6:09 mark of the second quarter, sophomore running back Camden Morgan scored on a 17-yard jet sweep to put Oak Ridge on the board. A bad snap on the point after made it 7-6 Bears.

On the first play of the ensuing drive, Montgomery junior Jalen Washington burst through the middle of the field for a 67-yard score.

The Bears were missing their 380-yard receiving yard star from last week's loss to Crosby in senior Tre Harden so establishing a balanced offensive game was in the cards for the Bears.

"We knew we were going to have to nickel and dime them and be patient running the ball," John Bolfig said. "Throwing the ball in the flats and go to short passing game to keep drives alive which I thought we did a good job of that."

Montgomery added a 21-yard field goal by Nick de Las Alas for a 17-6 lead at halftime.

The Bears struck again in the third quarter. Junior quarterback Brock Bolfig found senior Jaden Bradley on an 18-yard connection at the 3:20 mark to extend the lead to 24-6.

Oak Ridge scored late in the third quarter after Diego Trujillo recovered a muffed punt at the 16-yard line to set up great field position. War Eagles sophomore quarterback Steve Smedley found Jaquale Harrison for a 15-yard score.

The War Eagles then recovered a fumble on the ensuing kick as senior Julio Rangel raised his hand with the ball out of the pile. The War Eagles were forced to punt after three plays on the ensuing drive before the end of the fourth quarter.

"The takeaways on special teams were big," Schmid said. "It gave us an opportunity to claw back into it. We took advantage of one and didn't take advantage of the other. There were some opportunities there."

The Bears went up 31-13 with over nine minutes left as senior receiver Jacob Sandegren helped put together a strong drive. He had a 56-yard catch and run on third down to extend the drive and then later caught a 24-yard pass from Bolfig to maintain a comfortable lead.

Sandegren, who led the Bears in receiving with 87 yards, took a lot of pressure off Montgomery on that score, which was a beautiful catch, after three straight offensive possessions for Oak Ridge.

"We were in total control of the game and we fumble a punt and then fumble a kickoff," John Bolfig said. "All the sudden we're back in the game. To come back and have that drive....we had the pick play (by Sandegren), I think we got another first down and then got the play in the end zone. Jacob's one of those guys...he'll go get the ball. He has an extra burst to go get it."

Ben Smith scored a 15-yard touchdown for the Bears with 29 seconds left.

Montgomery came in averaging just over 36 points per game. Oak Ridge, meanwhile, was allowing just 16 points per game during its three-game win streak.

"Those were very hard fought points for the most part," John Bolfig said. "We knew they'd be tough defensively. We had to earn everything we got. But I thought our kids did a great job just playing every play."

Adavion Johnon led Montgomery with 111 yards rushing on 13 attempts. Jalen Washington 101 yards on 15 attempts. Brock Bolfig was 14 for 23 for 179 yards.

Bolfig was proud of the defense effort. Oak Ridge had just 218 yards of total offense.

"Defensively, I thought we just played lights out tonight," John Bolfig said. "I know they were missing their No. 1 back (Alton McCaskill). We were missing our No. 1 receiver (Tre Harden). I just felt like our kids really got out there and played hard."

Oak Ridge got 86 yards receiving by Lightsey. Quarterback Nick Osborne threw for 122 yards.

"Give credit to Montgomery," Schmid said. "They have a good competitive football team and Coach Bolfig and his staff do a great job. They've been in our district before I knew they were going to be a well-coached football team."

Both teams are on a bye next week and return on the following Thursday to start district play.

Montgomery hosts Fulshear to begin District 10-5A (Div. II) at MISD Stadium while Oak Ridge begins 13-6A play against Conroe at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The War Eagles had some key injuries that were out against Montgomery and will have time review game film more extensively.

"I told the kids that football teams can handle this situation one of two ways," Schmid said. "You can use it to grow from it and prove and get better and motivate yourself. The other way is it can fester and tear you apart and you don't ever recover. The good thing about it is we get to decide how we handle this."

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