

FOOTBALL: Oak Ridge capitalizes on Conroe turnovers

By Justin Maskulinski, Staff writer Updated 7:52 am CDT, Friday, October 30, 2020



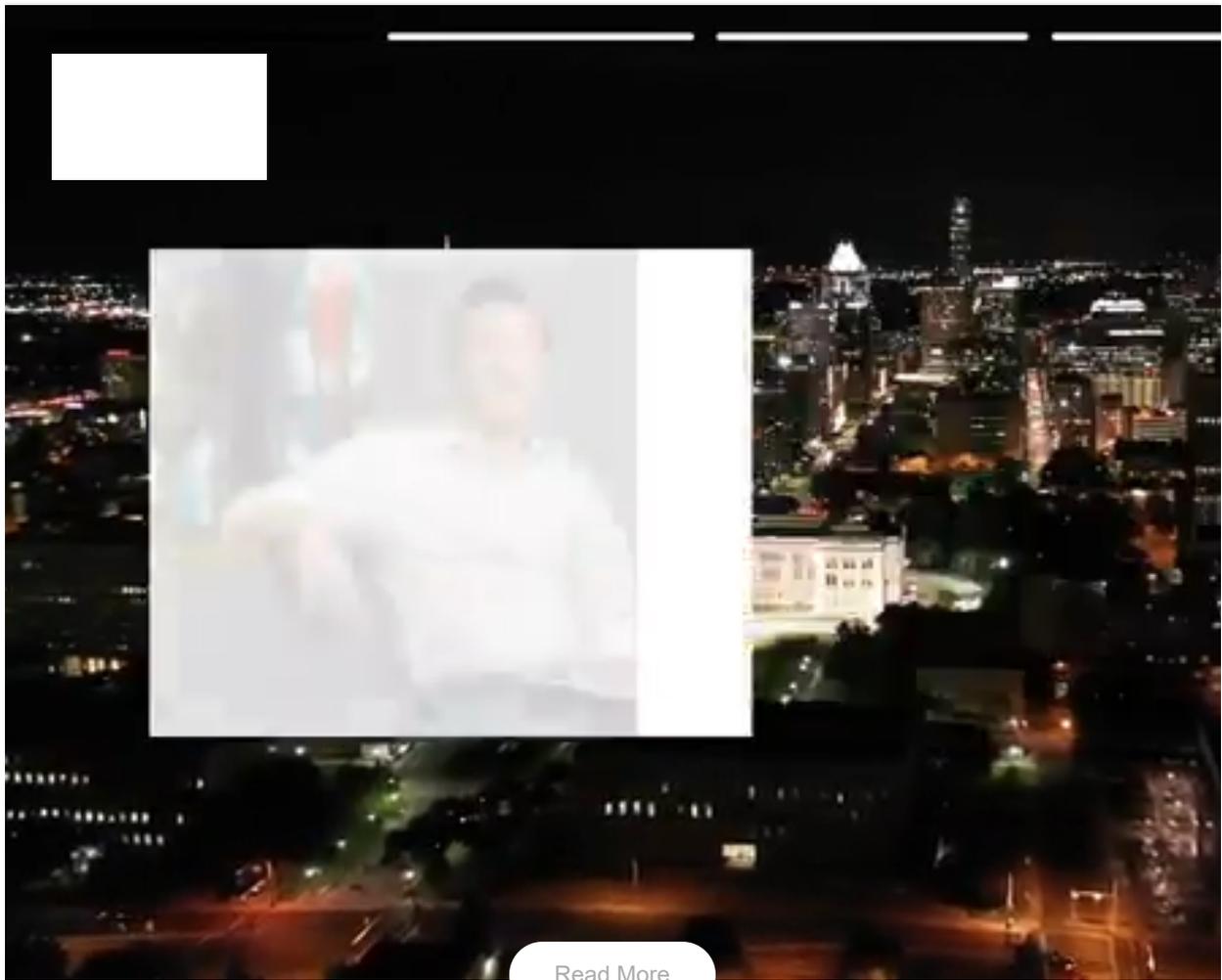
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Oak Ridge quarterback Sammy Keith (7) reacts after recovering a fumble by Conroe running back Conroe Zayden Kimple during the second quarter of a District 13-6A high school football game at Woodforest Bank ... more

SHENANDOAH — Turnovers were the story Thursday night at Woodforest Bank Stadium as Oak Ridge and Conroe opened District 13-6A play.

The War Eagles forced eight of them and walked away with a 38-14 win.

"Defense played lights out," Oak Ridge coach Mark Schmid said. "Had a great game plan, and I thought we defended the pass well, which is something Conroe does extremely well. They have a great passing scheme, and the quarterback executes well and buys time with his legs. Our guys did a great job of creating turnovers in terms of interceptions and tough, physical tackles in terms of fumbles."



It was Oak Ridge's eighth straight win over Conroe, a streak that dates back to 2012.

"That's not us," Tigers coach Cedric Hardeman said. "We've got to get (the turnovers) corrected, and that's on me. We didn't come out prepared, and we've got to have better ball control. You're not going to play a quality ball club, turn the ball over eight times, and expect positive things to happen. We've got to learn from it, regroup and make sure it doesn't happen. We'll bounce back."

Oak Ridge (4-1, 1-0) forced four first-half turnovers. Lane Cromwell kicked it off with a muffed punt recovery. Dexter Green and Sammy Keith both picked off passes, and Myles Terry recovered a fumble.

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On their third drive of the evening, the War Eagles needed just one play to score. Alton McCaskill, who had

missed the last two weeks with an injury, took a toss to the right for 46 yards.

McCaskill, a three-star recruit, made up for lost time. The senior had 26 carries for 163 yards in less than three quarters of action. He also caught three passes for 21 yards and a score.

Schmid said McCaskill was one of three offensive players to return to the lineup Thursday.

"When Alton's out, it's a domino effect," Schmid said, referring to players having to switch positions when the tailback isn't playing. "Tonight, I was excited because everybody was back and healthy. Having (McCaskill) back kind of completes the offensive puzzle, and you can see what he can do with the ball in his hands."

The first half's other score came on an eight-play Oak Ridge drive that was kept alive early with a 24-yard screen pass to McCaskill on third-and-long. After the first quarter ended, Fernando Cedillo kicked a 38-yard field goal with the wind.

Conroe (3-2, 0-1) struggled offensively in the first half, totaling just 108 yards. The Tigers' defense held Oak Ridge to just three points off the first four turnovers, keeping the game within reach.

"The defense has been doing it all year," Hardeman said. "Coach (Kaeron Johnson) does a great job, and the guys play hard. We just can't put them in situations like that. We can't give them eight extra possessions on top of starting against a quality ball club. We've got to learn from it and prepare better."

Four more turnovers to start the second half proved to be costly as the War Eagles turned them all into touchdowns.

First, Terry recovered a fumble and ran it to the Tigers 15-yard line. Then a Matthew Humplik fumble recovery was taken to Conroe's 30-yard line. After that, K.C. Ossai recovered a fumble and also took it to the Tigers 30-yard line. Keith recovered a fumble on a kickoff, giving the War Eagles the ball at the Conroe 19-yard line.

"We had the short end of the field for the entire game because of (the turnovers)," Schmid said. "Our MVP tonight was our defense."

The first three times, McCaskill finished the drives. The fourth time, it was Jahron Jonas.

By the end of the third quarter, Oak Ridge led 38-0.

Conroe added two lengthy scores in the fourth quarter. Jalen Williams hit Jordan O'Neal for 61 yards and Louis Williams III for 65 yards.

Jalen Williams threw for 221 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions. He added 43 yards on the ground.

The War Eagles rushed for 273 yards as a team and passed for just 24. Jonas had 51 yards on 11 carries as Oak Ridge ran the clock in the final quarter.

Both teams are back in action next Friday at 7 p.m. Oak Ridge takes on The Woodlands back at Woodforest Bank Stadium. Conroe hosts Grand Oaks at Moorhead Stadium.

"Win or loss, you've always got to put it behind you and move on to the next thing," Hardeman said. "You've got to learn from it and make some changes preparation-wise. Sometimes ball games happen like that. It's just like life – what you've got to do is move on and control the things you can control."

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