

Sports

Pirates plunder Rams' hopes for upset, win 13-3

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SPORTS EDITOR

Late in the third quarter, Winston-Salem State defensive end William Hayes blew past the right tackle and batted a pass in the air, only to watch Hampton quarterback T.J. Mitchell catch the football and fall forward two yards.

It was just that kind of game for the Rams (4-6) as they fell 13-3 to Hampton (9-1) at Armstrong Stadium in Hampton, Va., on Oct. 28. Every time it seemed the Rams were about to make a big play, they came up just short.

"Offensively, on every drive we made mistakes at crucial points," said head coach Kermit Blount.

Those mistakes included two failed fourth-down attempts in the red zone and a Monte

Purvis interception from the Hampton's 9-yard line. The Rams also struggled on third-down, going 4-15.

Hampton struck first, nickel-and-diming the defense down the field, where Mitchell hit receiver Marquay McDaniel with a 12-yard touchdown strike. Andrew Paterni's extra point made the score 7-0.

Despite the effectiveness of the Rams running game, WSSU was unable to put the ball in the end zone. Twice the Rams got inside the Hampton 10-yard line but failed to score, losing a yard on fourth-and-one and throwing an interception to Hampton cornerback Travarous Bain.

Even as the offense sputtered, the defense held the vaunted Pirates offense to largely in check. Pinned inside their own five-yard line with just under a minute left, the Rams were forced to punt, giving the Pirates great field position. Hampton gladly took advantage, using two completions from Mitchell to McDaniels to set up a 25-yard Paterni field-goal with five seconds to go in the half, making the score 10-0 at intermission.

In the second-half, the Pirates used their running game to secure their victory. After adding another Paterni field goal and going up 13-0, Hampton running back Alonzo Coleman entered the backfield. Coleman, a three-time 1,000-yard rusher, came into the game needing just 90 yards to become the MEAC all-time leading rusher. After missing the first half, he needed just 10 carries to break the record. Coleman finished with 91 yards, breaking the record with about two minutes to go in the fourth quarter. Coleman now holds conference records for yards (4,144), touchdowns (57), and points (342).

"It's great any time you can break a record and get a win," Coleman said afterwards.

Despite Coleman's record-breaking performance, the Rams actually out gained the Pirates, 202-192. The Rams were led by Brandon McCrae, who gained 99 yards on 15 carries.

The Rams only points of the afternoon came courtesy of a 36-yard Chad Oakley field goal with 6:38 left in the fourth quarter. But it was too little, too late as the Pirates milked the clock, allowing the Rams only one more pos-

session before running out the clock.

With both running games being pretty equal, it was the passing game that proved to be the difference. Hampton quarterback T.J. Mitchell, starting his first game in place of Princeton Shepherd, played a superb game, completing 17 of 27 passes for one touchdown. Purvis spent much of the game dodging Pirate defenders, and finished 4-of-14 passing with an interception.

Despite the loss, WSSU's defense continued to play lights out, as it allowed only its third touchdown in the last twelve quarters. Nate Biggs led the Rams with 14 tackles.

With their win against St. Augustine College on November 4, WSSU has a chance to finish its first Division I-AA season with a 5-6 record. But as Blount readily points out, the Rams should actually be even better.

"We gave away the Florida A&M game, we had a chance to win the game against Bethune-Cookman, and we had a chance to win (against Hampton) last week," said Blount. "We're taking it one game at a time now. All we are looking for is a win."

Rams hammer Falcons 26-6

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As he watched his team stand on the field at Bowman Gray Stadium with their helmets held in the air, Rams head coach Kermit Blount could not help but crack a smile.

While his offense struggled for much of the day, his defense forced four turnovers and scoring a touchdown to defeat the St.

Augustine Falcons 26-6 on Saturday, Nov. 4.

"We shut the field down and made it a short field," said Blount, who tied Thomas "Tank" Conrad on the all-time wins chart at WSSU with his 81st victory.

On the third play of the game, Duane Smith's pass was intercepted by Rams line-

backer Thadeus Griffin and returned 30 yards for a touchdown. On their next possession, backed up in their own end zone, the Falcons hiked the ball over Smith's head, resulting in a safety, and giving the Rams a 9-0 lead before the offense even stepped on the field.

Once again backed deep into their own territory, the Falcons handed over the ball. Linebacker Juan Corders ripped the ball from receiver Eric McLaughlin, and defensive end William Hayes recovered. However, the Rams were not able to capitalize on the turnover as Chad Oakley missed his first field goal of the season.

The problems continued to mount for the Falcons. After going three-and-out, punter Robert Boone was taken down in the backfield, once again giving the Rams excellent field position. This time, the Rams put it into the end zone as Monte Purvis found senior Stan Wright for a five-yard touchdown, and the extra point gave the Rams a 16-0 lead.

Just before the half, the Falcons finally caught a break. Orville Pass III's fumble on the punt return gave the Falcons the ball on their own 47. Two plays later, Smith hit McLaughlin for a 58-yard touchdown pass. The Falcons' failed two-point attempt made the score 16-6 at the half.

In the third quarter, the Falcons gave the Rams excellent field position, after another bad snap on the punt gave the Rams the ball deep in Falcon territory. This time the Rams were able to muster out a field goal, giving them a 19-6 heading into the fourth quarter.

Just when it seemed that St. Augustine was poised to get back into the game, they again shot themselves in the foot. WSSU cornerback Deron Middleton picked off Smith's pass in the end zone to stop the Falcons. A 41-yard touchdown run by Brandon McCrae put the nail in the coffin with six minutes to go in the fourth quarter.

The Rams won the game, despite gaining

fewer first downs than the Falcons (10-12) and be out gained in total offense (166-158).

"It doesn't matter what the offense does," said Griffin, who scored the first touchdown of his career. "It's our job to stop the other team from scoring points. We did it and we won."

Saturday was senior day for the Rams. Senior receiver Stan Wright, one of nine seniors on the team, scored his final touchdown at Bowman Gray.

"If I'm in a position to make a play, I want to try to make it," he said of his second quarter touchdown. He also said the fact that it was his final home game had not yet sunk in.

The win moves the Rams' record to 4-6 with one game remaining in their first division I season. The Rams will finish up the season on Nov. 18 with a road game against former CIAA and future MEAC rival, Norfolk State University.



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