

Gryphs Take Eastern Crown

By CLIFTON BARNES

Jess Eberdt and Company went to work in the second half Friday night after being behind 7-0 to lift the Gryphons past Pine Forest 25-22 and claim the Eastern North Carolina 4-A football crown.

The Gryphs travel to Charlotte to play Western 4-A champion East Mecklenburg for the State 4-A title tonight.

Eberdt overcame the rain and the Pine Forest defense with a 19-25 performance for 247 yards. He completed 12 of 14 passes in the second half for 174 yards and two touchdowns. Mike Lewis caught 8 of those final half passes and 12 total passes for 160 yards and a touchdown.

"Jess and Mike were just super," said Rocky Mount head coach Walt Wiggins. "They were unstoppable."

The Gryphs fell behind early in the game when halfback Gerald Sykes took in a score from 22 yards out on the first Pine Forest drive. A couple of defensive letdowns proved fatal on the drive but from there on out the defense went nearly flawless.

Three holding penalties stopped Rocky Mount drives inside the 30-yard line as the teams went into halftime with Pine Forest up 7-0.

With 3:13 left in the quarter Pine Forest broke back on top 14-7. Speight punted out to the 47 when the Gryphs could not move and Sykes cut outside, broke loose and rambled all the way.

Eberdt brought his team right back on the next series. Starting at the 30, Eberdt hit Lewis three times to carry the ball to the opposing 19, and a pass interference penalty gave the Gryphs a first at the nine.

Two plays later, the Gryphs were called for holding and Dee Whitley separated his shoulder which will hamper his playing tonight.

The rain stopped early in the second half and the Rocky Mount offense got on track. The defense stopped Pine Forest on its first drive of the half and the Gryphs came back down the field to tie the game at 7-7.

Eberdt hit Dee Whitley for six yards to the 44 for a first down. On third and nine from there he found Whitley again for 15 yards down to the enemy 43. On a couple of runs and a personal foul gave the Gryphs a first down at the 14. Eberdt hit Lewis for 12 down to the two yard line. Sylvester Cooper went over from there with 8:14 left in the third quarter. Rocky Speight's point after tied it at 7-7.

On the next play Eberdt hit Lewis at the 11. Lewis dashed for the goal and dove into the endzone. Speight's kick was blocked making it 14-13 with six seconds left in the period.

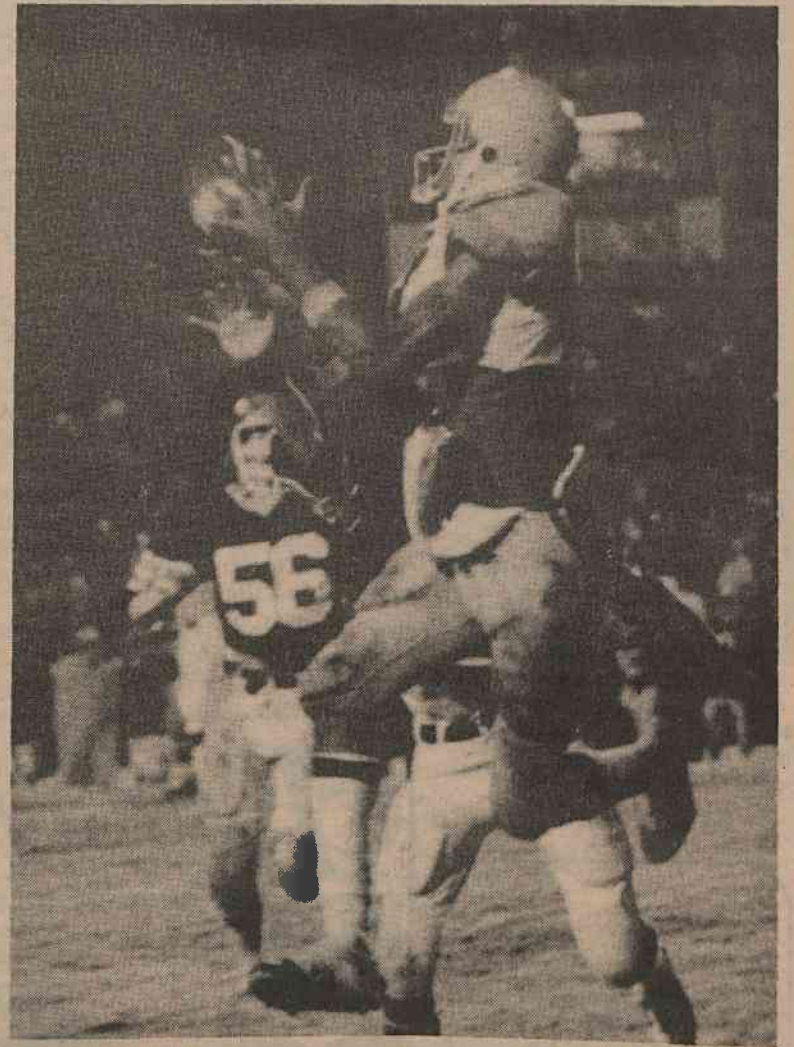
In the fourth quarter, Dennis Battle recovered a fumble to give the Gryphs the break they needed at the Pine Forest 33.

On just the second play, Eberdt hit the open tight end, Terry McKnight, who shuffled into the endzone for a 19-14 lead. The two point try failed with 5:54 remaining.

Rocky Mount held Pine Forest on fourth down at their own 39 and took over. Eberdt hit Lewis on a 29-yard pass to the 22. After another holding call, the Gryphs went to the ground on runs by Victor Thorne and Rodney Birth before Birth scored the clinching touchdown from the one. The score stood at 25-14 with 1:46 left.

Pine Forest made it close at 25-22 with 1:06 left on a long pass to Sykes and a two pointer. But Battle recovered the onside kick and Eberdt ran out the clock for the win.

"This team showed tremendous heart tonight," said an overwhelmed Wiggins after the celebration had begun to settle down. "All season long we have been the underdogs and the underrated team. Now we are the team in the state playoffs. Maybe people will start looking at Eberdt and our other players and give them credit for what they can do and how they do it—they have a lot of heart."



Mike Lewis catches a Jess Eberdt aerial at the 11 before scooting into the end zone to pull the Gryphs to within one at 14-13.

FAMILY RECREATION
Mon. Fri.
10 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Sat. 12-11
YELLOW BRICK ROAD
Game Room
217 Tarboro St.
(Across from Edgecombe Tech)
Recreation:
Pinball, Foosball, Pool
Hockey, TV Games.
Snacks:
Sandwiches, Soft Drink,
Other Snacks
(No Alcohol Allowed)

Sharpe's
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Mon.-Tues.-Thurs. 10-5:30
Fri. 10-6 Sat. 10-5
155 S. E. Main St.

Ancient Of Days Schedule
The Ancient of Days — 123 Western Ave. is open every Friday and Saturday night from 8:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. All RMSH students are invited to attend.
Dec. 2—Suncast Dec. 3—Singing Evangels
Dec. 9—Bridge
Dec. 16—Rick Eldridge
Dec. 23—Richard & Laura Dunagan
Dec. 31—Wayne and Ruth West

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