

# Phoenix falls to Tusculum in home opener

**Kristin Simonetti**  
Reporter

It isn't often that you see the Elon offense register rushing yardage in the single digits. But it happened Saturday night.

A stingy Tusculum College defensive line yielded just eight rushing yards to the Phoenix as the Pioneers dominated Elon 17-3. Tusculum, a NCAA Division II school, earned its sixth win against Division I-AA opponents under head coach Frank DeBusk with their defeat of Elon.

"Our defensive football team played awesome tonight," DeBusk said. "We gave up some plays, but when we had to count on our kids, they stepped up and made plays."

Tusculum's offense thrived against a weak Phoenix pass rush;

quarterbacks Tony Colston and Carson Bradley passed for 292 yards. Tailback Chris Mosley rushed for 114 yards, a beneficiary of a brutish Pioneer offensive line that manhandled the Phoenix front four.

Phoenix quarterback Anthony Crews threw for 225 yards, two for 70- and 66-yard gains. But he also tossed three interceptions that ended promising drives. Stan Smith caught six passes for 89 yards.

The Phoenix set the tone for the game on its very first play from scrimmage, a rush by Rashaud Palmer for a loss of three yards. After a delay of game penalty, an incomplete pass and another pass short of a first down, the Phoenix kicked the ball away.

"They gave us all kinds of fits with their pressure," Phoenix

head coach Al Seagraves said. "They were an excellent defense. We knew that going in that [defense] is the strength of their team. More than anything else they out-quickened us up front."

Mike Warren welcomed Colston to the game with a sack on second down in Tusculum's first series. But Colston converted third down and 22, and the Pioneers got on the board following Dylan Mason's 28-yard field goal.

In the second quarter, Crews found Smith for a 66-yard completion to the Tusculum 20-yard line, bringing the Phoenix inside the Pioneer red zone for the first time in the game. William Rawls' 31-yard field goal tied the game at three with just over six minutes left in the first half.

Tusculum responded with a five-play, 59-yard drive that ended with Patrick King's eight-yard touchdown run. Mason's extra point made the score 10-7 with one minute 46 seconds remaining in the half.

Momentum seemed to shift to the Phoenix sideline early in the second half, when Anthony Harris punched the ball out of Bradley's grasp on fourth down. Wesley Wheeler recovered and the Phoenix received the ball on Tusculum's 36-yard line.

The rushing game that seemed to elude the Phoenix in the first half came back in spurts on this drive, with Palmer and Chad Nkang alternating carries. Crews carried the ball to the Tusculum one-yard line. On third and one, Crews handed the ball to Palmer who pushed to within inches of the goal line. Seagraves opted to go for the touchdown on fourth down and the Pioneer defense dragged Palmer down for a loss of a yard. Tusculum took over on its own two-yard line.

"We just couldn't get anything done," Crews said of the Phoenix's offensive struggles.

The teams traded possessions until Anthony Harris intercepted a Bradley pass at the Elon nine-yard line. Harris returned the ball to the Elon 28-yard line. Crews



Tim Rosner / Asst. Photo Editor

The Phoenix were stopped twice in the red zone and turned the ball over three times as the Tusculum defense overpowered Elon.

launched a pass to true freshman Dan Crews for a 70-yard gain on second down, bringing the Phoenix to the Tusculum two-yard line. But the Phoenix would fail to score again, with Crews unable to connect with Zak DeBusk on fourth down and one.

"Not only did [Tusculum's defense] do it once, which is unheard of, they did it twice," Frank DeBusk said of his defense. "Those two stands are the reason we won the game."

The Phoenix forced another punt and began a drive in Pioneer territory but Larry Hollins halted the drive, intercepting a Crews pass on third down. Bradley and the Tusculum offense stalled at the Elon 24-yard line and attempted a 42-yard field goal. Eddie Bell blocked the kick and the Phoenix took over at its own 25-yard line.

Crews was intercepted again on the second play of the drive. Tusculum took advantage of the

Phoenix's third turnover of the night and scored on Mosley's two-yard rush, putting the Pioneers up 17-3.

"We played a good team and we lost to a good team," Phoenix linebacker Calvin Sutton said. "[The fact that Tusculum is] Division II doesn't matter. We've just got to get ready for next week."

The Phoenix travel to Hempstead, New York this weekend to face Hofstra University. The Pride currently hold an 0-2 record with losses to Marshall University and the University of Maine.

Both Elon and Hofstra have faced opening weekend power schools and come off disappointing losses, making Saturday's match-up a must win for both squads.



Tim Rosner / Asst. Photo Editor

Elon's defense struggled to shut down the Pioneers offense Saturday night. The Phoenix defense allowed 114 rushing yards and the defense allowed Tusculum to gain 292 yards in the air.

Contact Kristin Simonetti at [pendulum@elon.edu](mailto:pendulum@elon.edu) or 278-7247.