

MOUNTIES

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Kings Mountain then launched what appeared may be a game-clinching touchdown drive. With Joe Chambers getting big yardage on sweeps and C.J. Belcher hitting the middle for the tough yards, KM worked the ball to the R-S 26 before losing a fumble.

On Central's first play, KM defensive back Anthony Dalton intercepted a pass at the KM 25.

This time, though, the Mountaineers couldn't establish a ground game, and with 1:50 left were forced into a fourth and three punt situation. Again, the center's snap sailed high. Randall was able to leap and catch it, and stepped to the right to avoid a heavy rush. He got off a 42-yard punt that rolled dead on the R-S 25 with just 1:12 remaining.

Littlejohn hit Jared Guffey with an 11-yard out to stop the clock at 1:01, and then on a long pass that was up for grabs down the KM sideline, the Hilltoppers' Steven Gosnell out-jumped the KM defense and stepped out of bounds at the KM 21 to stop the clock. A personal foul penalty against the Mounties gave R-S a first down at the 11.

With R-S out of time outs, Littlejohn first tried to find a receiver in the right flat, but threw incomplete with 44 seconds left. Fullback Chris Murray rambled to the KM seven and R-S had to hurry to the line of scrimmage to spike the ball on third down.

Facing fourth and seven with 21.2 seconds remaining, the Hilltoppers called on Thompson for a potential 25-yard field goal. He was kicking at a slight angle at the left hash mark, and under a heavy rush missed about two feet to the right. A huge celebration ensued, but KM players and fans did not see the yellow flag that had been thrown for roughing the kicker, and R-S got another opportunity for a 21-yard attempt with 18.3 seconds on the clock.

Again, the Mountaineers gave an all-out rush and Thompson missed again on an identical kick. KM got the ball on the 20 yard line with 12.3 seconds remaining, and quarterback Michael Roberts touched his knee down to end the game.

Other than the late defensive stands, the key to victory for the Mounties once again seemed to be keeping the opponent's offense off the field. KM kept the ball for over 28 minutes compared to just under 20 by R-S, and KM ran 78 plays to 49 by R-S.

Kings Mountain appeared to be going for a TD on its opening

drive, moving to the R-S 14 before McLaughlin pounced on a fumble by Chambers.

The two teams then traded interceptions for awhile, with Leon Staton stopping the Hilltoppers' first drive with a pick at the 37, and R-S's Tyson Wright returning the favor on the very next play by picking off a Roberts pass at the KM 46. Then, KM's Neil Scott out-jumped R-S receiver Gosnell in the end zone to put down a potential R-S score.

After that, KM drove consistently downfield behind the running of Chambers, Belcher and Leon Staton before facing a fourth and five at the R-S seven. Randall came on and kicked a 24-yard field goal to put KM up 3-0 with 10:06 left in the half.

R-S settled down, too, and drove the ensuing kickoff 68 yards with Littlejohn covering the final two around left end. Thompson's PAT put R-S up 7-3.

The Mounties then drove 70 yards to score on a 9-yard keeper to the left by Roberts, who faced an R-S defensive back McLaughlin at the two and drove him into the end zone for a 10-7 KM advantage at halftime.

R-S Central drove the second half kickoff 64 yards to take a 14-10 lead on a six-yard run by Murray, but that was about all the offense they could muster until their late drive that almost paid off with a victory.

Kings Mountain drove the ensuing kickoff 60 yards for what turned out to be the clinching score, a one-yard sneak by Roberts with 5:25 left in the third period.

KM missed a golden opportunity to pad the lead by forcing East into a three-and-out, but a potential touchdown pass was dropped in the end zone.

The Mountaineers felt they should have had the game in hand long before the wild finish.

"The first drive of the game we were moving the ball good and fumbled, and we drove deep late in the game and fumbled again, and those two were critical," said Lloyd. "We had a dropped pass in the end zone that could have given us a cushion, but that's football. But we ended up making the plays when we had to."

The turnovers, he said, could have been partly caused by slick footballs but he also gave the R-S defense a lot of credit.

"R-S did tackle the ball," he said, "but the ball was probably more slick than in a normal game. We have to do a better job of securing the ball when we're running downfield. We have to realize where tacklers are coming from and cover the ball better."

Lloyd was proud of the way his defense responded to the last-second challenge.

"We put a lot of pressure on their kicker," he said. "We definitely gave a great rush on both

kicks and put a lot of heat on him. I believe if he had kicked it up the middle we would have blocked it. That had a lot to do with him pushing them to the right."

The bad thing about the ending for the Mounties was that defensive end Tony Barnette, one of their top defensive players, suffered a season-ending knee injury.

"He came off the edge and got near the kicker and a guy came up the middle and fell into the side of his leg," Lloyd noted.

Lloyd said the Mounties will have to move some players around this week to take up the slack. Austin Miller may step over to Barnette's position and Brandon Davis and Bobby St. Martin will be counted on heavily to take up the slack at linebacker. Bryant Petty may move up from strong safety with Michael Heston moving to free safety and Leon Staton to strong safety.

"We've got some moves we can make but we're running out of some players now," Lloyd said. "We can't afford to get anybody else injured."

Burns will be the Mountaineers' toughest opponent to date. The Bulldogs have improved tremendously since early in the season.


"They're strong in all areas," Lloyd said. "Obviously, their defense has been stout but

they've developed a good running game and solid passing game. They're a well-rounded team that's definitely going to be tough to beat. This is a team that could do well in the playoffs."

The key for a KM victory will be containing quarterback Keron Phelps and running back Varan Hamrick. Hamrick gained over 200 yards rushing and Phelps had 96 in only seven carries in last week's win over East Rutherford.

"They run out of the shotgun spread and one of those guys is usually running with the ball," said Lloyd. "We have to eliminate their big plays and their good plays. If we can do those things we can hang around."


Kings Mountain has lost six of the last seven games to the Bulldogs, with the last KM victory being 49-21 in 2001 at Gamble Stadium.



Re-Elect Rodney Gordon

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I want to take this opportunity to thank each one who voted for me during the last election. It has been my honor to serve you during the past two years. It is time for another election and I want to ask you for your support and vote again this year.

As a native of Kings Mountain I have a deep desire to see this City continue to grow, prosper, and stay economically strong. In order to accomplish this thorough planning and research on all issues will be required. I am committed to continue the planning and research as I have in the past two years and to seek input from my fellow citizens.

By being optimistic and realistic we can secure Kings Mountain's future for generations. We must be proactive and respond to the City's needs to be successful. There are a lot of good plans on the horizon and I would like to be a part of making them become a reality.

Please exercise your constitutional right by visiting the polls and voting on November 6, 2007. I ask for your vote and support on election day.

Thank you, Rodney L. Gordon

For more information visit my website www.rodneygordon.com

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