

Motivated Golden Bears too much for 'Cats

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Upper Arlington had lost six straight football contests to Buckeye Division rival Hilliard Davidson, including a 17-0 setback in last year's regional semifinals, and that fact wasn't lost on UA senior Nolan Kleinhenz and his teammates.

"We were all looking forward to (playing Davidson) during conditioning in the summer," he said after the Golden Bears' 14-6 victory Friday, Sept. 28. "We were doing extra sprints for this game and that really motivated us. It was a very important win."

It was Kleinhenz, an outside linebacker, who recovered a fumble at the Davidson 30-yard line on the Wildcats' opening possession of the second half, and that set up a 1-yard Alex Farwick touchdown run to give UA the 14-6 edge.

Both teams' defenses dominated the action, as UA recorded only 150 yards of total offense and Davidson 204, but it was the Golden Bears who made enough plays to keep Davidson's triple option attack out of the end zone.

"Defensive ends and tackles had to defend the dive, us outside linebackers had the quarterback, and the rest of the guys had to defend the pitch," Kleinhenz said. "We did what we were taught to do and that was play team football."

Davidson had two scoring opportunities in the fourth quarter but came away empty-handed both times. A low snap on a UA punt gave the Wildcats field position in UA territory, and Davidson drove to the 9 before stalling and missing a 36-yard field goal attempt.

The Wildcats then forced a three-and-out and got the ball back on their own 31 with over eight minutes left. Quarterback Connor Dietz scrambled 35 yards to the UA 34, and later in the drive the Wildcats faced a second-and-5 from the 6.

But a delay of game pushed them back to the 11 and the drive ended on a fumbled snap on fourth-and-10. With just over two minutes left, UA was able to run the clock out and improve its record to 5-1, while Davidson fell to 4-2.

"I knew it was going to be real physical and be a real fight," UA coach Mike Golden said. "We made some mistakes to keep them in it, but not enough to let them win."

"They're a good football team," said Davidson assistant Ryan Aleshire, who acted as head coach while Brian White served a one-game suspension after being ejected from last week's game.

"Any time you play UA, you know it's going to be a tough, hard-fought game. I don't know if we played up to our capabilities. We drove the ball pretty well at times but just couldn't put it in the endzone, and that's a testament to their defense. Our boys played pretty hard but we just couldn't finish things."

The Golden Bears capitalized on a seven play, 50-yard drive in the first quarter to take a 7-0 lead behind a 13-yard touchdown run by Alex Drake. Davidson countered with a 13-play, 65-yard drive that chewed up seven minutes, but had to settle for a 27-yard Colby Catlett field goal to cut it to 7-3.

Momentum seemed to shift to Davidson's side when UA fumbled trying to run out the first-half clock, which allowed Catlett to hit a 41-yard field goal as time expired. But the turnover to start the second half killed that momentum.

"We were on a down when they kicked the field goal, and when they returned the favor, it was huge," Golden said. "To get that much momentum to start a half was great, and it made us feel confident and I think it made them a little unsure."

UA hits the road Friday, Oct. 5, for another tough test against Dublin Coffman, while Davidson plays host to Reynoldsburg.

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