

'Rocks' rally over UA keeps Coffman perfect

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Sweat dripping down his face after playing on an unseasonably warm October Friday night, Dublin Coffman senior quarterback Zack Stoudt talked about his state of mind following the host Shamrocks' hard-fought 31-24 overtime victory over Upper Arlington Oct. 5.

"It was a great win, to go into overtime against UA like that," he said. "All I thought about (heading into overtime) was winning. We didn't play as well as we wanted, but the defense played great. I'm very excited about this win."

Added Coffman coach Mark Crabtree, in an apt description of the whirlwind contest: "We ran through the gamut of emotions, especially in the fourth quarter -- up, down, up, down."

The see-saw battle tipped Coffman's way in the second half as the Rocks rallied from a 17-7 halftime deficit, withstood a potential game-winning, last-minute field goal attempt by UA, and finally prevailed on Trey Fairchild's 4-yard touchdown sweep around the left side in overtime.

Needing a touchdown to tie on their OT possession, the Bears faced a fourth-and-8 on the 18, but quarterback Braden Layer was hit from behind on a blitz, knocking the ball loose and knocking out UA's final chance to extend the game.

"We knew we just needed to put some pressure on him, and not let him sit back there and throw to an open guy," Crabtree said.

"It was a great game between two great teams," said Mike Golden, UA's coach. "Both teams made mistakes and both teams took advantage of those mistakes. Unfortunately for us they made the most of it at the end."

A back-and-forth third quarter featured three turnovers -- two on consecutive plays -- and two Coffman scoring drives that knotted the game up at 17. At the start of the fourth, Coffman faced a third-and-26 and Stoudt appeared to find top wide out Jake Stoneburner for a 47-yard touchdown strike, but the play was wiped out on a penalty and Coffman had to punt.

UA muffed the punt, though, and Coffman recovered at the Bears' 34-yard line. After senior running back Jared Phillips (21 carries, 112 yards) took two handoffs to the 20, Stoudt connected with Stoneburner on a slip screen that the receiver took to the end zone, and this time it was not called back.

Trailing 24-17, UA marched down the field on its ensuing possession, moving the ball 67 yards on 13 plays in a drive that chewed up six minutes and nine seconds. The Bears picked up three third-down conversions, and junior running back Tommy Farwick scored from the 1 with exactly four minutes remaining to tie the game at 24.

Three plays later, a Coffman fumble set the Bears up on their own 45 with 3:22 left. Farwick had a long TD run called back on the first play, but UA was still able to move the ball down to the Coffman 15. But Jared Sylvester's 32-yard field goal attempt was blocked with 39.1 seconds remaining, and Coffman capitalized on its new life in the first extra period.

"We've got to be able to block for a field goal," Golden said.

Coffman moved down the field with ease on its opening possession of the game, going 62 yards in eight plays on a drive finished with a Stoudt 15-yard touchdown pass. Stoudt went 5 for 5 on the series for 45 yards.

But UA dominated the rest of the half, holding Coffman's high-octane offense to minus-4 yards and three three-and-outs, while the running back combination of Farwick (22 carries, 101 yards) and fellow junior Alex Drake (25 carries, 133 yards) grinded out yards and touchdowns.

Farwick scored from a yard out to tie it at 7, and Layer floated a pass to Drake off of a play-action fake for a 19-yard score to make it 14-7 in the first. UA recovered a muffed punt on Coffman's 24 right before halftime, and Sylvester knocked in a 30-yard field goal as time expired.

Coffman improved to 7-0 (2-0 OCC Buckeye Division) and plays at Hilliard Davidson Friday, Oct. 12, while the Bears fell to 5-2 (1-1 Buckeye) and return home for a matchup with Westerville North the same night.

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--*Mike Golden*