

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL - WEEK 2 HURRICANE TOPS NITRO 28-14

Publication: THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE

Published: Saturday, September 05, 2009

Page: 1B

Byline: TOMMY R. ATKINSON STAFF WRITER

HURRICANE - Hurricane's Tyler Pate answered the call Friday night.

The 5-foot-10, 160-pound junior took over at quarterback in the first quarter and led the host Redskins to their first win, a 28-14 victory over **Nitro**. A crowd of about 1,800 attended the Class AAA Mountain State Athletic Conference matchup of teams that lost their season openers last week.

Pate completed 8-of-17 passes for 114 yards with a touchdown and no interceptions. He also turned in scoring runs of 19 and 14 yards. Pate, who entered Friday on the third series, played under center for about five minutes in last week's season-opening loss to Winfield.

"I just knew I had to step up for this team and lead them," said Pate. "Get down the field and score. When I went in there I felt pretty confident. I felt confident in my teammates. My line blocked really good. We haven't beaten **Nitro** in a while [and] it feels good."

Senior Luke Briggs started for Hurricane and went three and out on the first series then threw an interception on the second series. **Nitro** senior Mark Chandler returned the pick 82 yards for a score and a 7-0 lead. Briggs didn't play the rest of the game after the miscue, even though he wasn't injured.

"We have two good quarterbacks," said Hurricane coach Willis May. "I just thought we needed to go with the second one. I've always said I'm going to give them both a chance."

"It was Tyler's turn. Tyler did an excellent job of coming in and leading the team and getting the job done. He had his faults, too. He put the ball on the ground a couple of times."

Pate's first two series ended with punts, but on the next one he hit junior wide receiver Roger Turner with a 32-yard scoring toss as the Redskins tied it at 7-all with 11:49 left in the second quarter.

Pate directed scoring drives on Hurricane's final two drives of the opening half in taking a 21-7 edge at halftime.

Turner, who finished with 100 yards on nine carries, set up the first TD with a 62-yard run on the first play of the drive. Three plays later, junior running back Jayson Wolford bulled in from 5 yards out as the Redskins took the lead for good at 14-7 with 2:53 left in the second period.

Redskins senior Cody Steffick blocked a punt, setting up the offense at the **Nitro** 28-yard line with 55.6 seconds to go before intermission. Pate gashed the Wildcats defense three plays later with a run right up the middle for a 19-yard TD and a commanding 21-7 edge.

After the Hurricane defense forced a **Nitro** turnover to start the third period, Pate engineered an 11-play drive that ended with his 14-yard scamper for a 28-7 lead with 3:57 left in the third quarter. The Redskins wouldn't score again, but their defense kept the Wildcats at bay.

Nitro (0-2) fumbled on its next drive, and then after driving to the Redskins' 12, Turner intercepted Wildcats senior tailback Alex Taylor's halfback pass attempt.

The Wildcats finally put a drive together and senior Zach Cloxton hit Chandler with a 5-yard scoring pass to cut the deficit in half at 28-14 with 3:55 to go in the fourth quarter.

Nitro junior Dalton Hall recovered the onside kick, but Hurricane senior defensive back Cam Cooper intercepted Chandler after he drove the Wildcats to the Redskins' 26 to end the threat and lock up the victory.

"It's always nice to get the win especially against **Nitro**, which we have had trouble with," May said. "I've had awful good teams get beat by **Nitro**."

Chandler was held in check after exploding on Hurricane last season in Nitro's surprising 42-41 win, which went a long way toward knocking the Redskins out of a home-field spot in the playoffs. He burned the Redskins for 298 passing and three TDs and 108 yards and three scores rushing, and returned an interception 66 yards for a TD.

This time around Chandler threw for just 17 yards with a pick and added 59 yards on 12 carries. **Nitro** committed four turnovers and only managed 156 yards of total offense.

"It seemed like we just kept stepping on our own toes," said first-year **Nitro** coach Bob Gobel. "A big difference over last week was that it was down to the wire, but they didn't quit trying. There's things that can be fixed."

Reach Tommy R. Atkinson at tatkinson@wvgazette.com or 304-348-4811.