

Fast start propels Parkway past Live Oak

Written by Hal Braswell

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The Parkway Panthers raced to a 20-0 lead early in the second quarter against Live Oak en route to a 36-13 win in the first round of the Class 5A state football playoffs Friday night at Preston Crownover Stadium.

The No. 7 seed Panthers (10-1) will travel to No. 23 Hahnville (6-4), a 25-21 upset winner over No. 10 St. Paul's, in the second round Friday.

While Parkway ended up beating Live Oak by 23, it was only a 10-point game near the midpoint of the fourth quarter.

Turnovers and missed opportunities dug Live Oak into a hole from which they could not escape. Both teams had trouble holding onto the ball — Live Oak through interceptions and Parkway through fumbles.

Eagle Coach Barry "Tut" Musemeche said a key turning point in the game was in the waning minutes of the first half, when the Eagles failed to score after getting the ball inside the Parkway 1. An illegal procedure call and then a Parkway interception ended the scoring threat to leave the halftime score 23-7.

"Not scoring when we had the ball on the one-foot line hurt," Musemeche said. "With us getting the ball to start the second half, we had an opportunity to get it down to one score heading into the fourth quarter."

Starting Live Oak quarterback Michael Claverie was knocked out of the game with 4:44 remaining in the second quarter with Live Oak down 23-7, and was unable to return until the fourth quarter. Wesley Howard filled in at quarterback with several long runs and a pass that set up a scoring opportunity just before halftime, but he also had several interceptions.

On the night, the Eagles had seven interceptions, with three coming late in the game after the outcome had already been decided.

But some killed scoring drives for the Eagles and others set up scores for the Panthers.

"The difference in the game was our defense," said Parkway coach David Feaster. "Obviously there were turnovers our defense came up with, but they did a tremendous job of not letting Live Oak get outside. Live Oak all season has done a good job of confusing people with their offensive sets."

Parkway got on the scoreboard with a sneak by quarterback Brandon Harris for a 7-0 lead with 4:25 remaining in the first quarter. Following a Live Oak punt to its own 47, Parkway took advantage of the short field and Harris went off right tackle on a four-yard run for a 14-0 lead with 41 seconds remaining in the first quarter.

An interception set the Panthers up at the Eagle 25. Two plays later, running back Brian McGuffee scored from 2 yards out but the PAT was no good for a 20-0 Parkway lead.

On the ensuing kickoff, Jarrett Williams returned all the way to the Parkway 4, and eventually Claverie was able to sneak in from one yard away to make the score 20-7 with 9:29 remaining in the second quarter.

Parkway then added a 27-yard Avery Shoebridge field goal for a 23-7 lead.

The third quarter was scoreless, with much of the quarter given to turnovers and penalties.

On the night, Parkway was flagged 17 times for 161 yards, while the Eagles were whistled nine times for 69 yards.

Early in the fourth quarter, Howard scored a TD for Live Oak. A fake PAT backfired, but the Eagles were within 10 at 23-13.

McGuffee and Marcus Harper scored late touchdowns to help Parkway seal the victory.

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Live Oak completed just six of 21 passes for 122 yards passing, and ran 26 times for 111 yards . All told, the Eagles had 237 yards of total offense, compared to 352 for Parkway.

Note: Musemeche was briefly handcuffed by Bossier City police before the game but he wasn't arrested.

The action resulted from a dispute over when the Live Oak team was supposed to leave the field before the game to allow the Parkway band access to perform. After several requests by the PA announcer and Parkway officials to leave the field about 20 minutes before kickoff, Bossier City police at Preston Crownover told Muscheme he must leave the field. He was eventually put in handcuffs and escorted off.

Parkway principal Dr. Nichole Bourgeois told local media that the pregame and halftime schedules were discussed with Live Oak administrators over several emails during he week. She said Live Oak officials would not agree to the pregame itinerary set by her, and she knew that something might happen before the game Friday night and was prepared for it.

She called the actions of Musemeche "unsportsmanlike" and "unprofessional."

"We just wanted to finish our warmup," Musemeche told the Baton Rouge Advocate. "I really don't want to say a lot. But it was well before the time we needed to go to the sideline. I'm fully versed in the LHSAA rules and would never do anything against them. ... I was just going by what the officials told me beforehand."