

Bulldogs edge Rockets, 17-14, despite dominating stats

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FOOTBALL

The statistics didn't lie in Brighton's 17-14 football win Friday night against visiting Westland John Glenn.

The host Bulldogs outgained the Rockets by nearly a 3-1 margin, but still needed a fourth-quarter touchdown by Dave Pearson with 9:53 left in the game to advance in the Class AA-Region III playoffs.

Glenn bows out at 8-2 overall, while Brighton improves to 9-1.

The Bulldogs also stymied Glenn's standout running back Reggie Spearmon, holding the 5-foot-9, 185-pound senior to 60 yards in 15 carries.

"We looked to stop (Spearmon)," Brighton coach Bill Murray said. "We felt if we could take him out, along with their quick passing game, we could take that offense, as we were fairly successful tonight."

Spearmon entered the game with a season total of 1,610 yards, but Brighton, blitzing from all angles, jammed the line of scrimmage and limited the Rockets to a mere 108 total yards.

"Brighton has a chance to make a run in the playoffs," Glenn coach Chuck Gordon said. "Their defense is outstanding. They have speed and size."

"The more I watched them on film the more I was impressed," Brighton quarterback Erik Moss was accurate and effective using a two-step drop.

The 6-foot-4, 200-pound senior, the heir apparent to the much-heralded Drew Henson, completed 14 of 23 passes for 203 yards.

"Their quarterback is outstanding," Gordon said. "He was very patient. And they protected the quarterback. We sent guys at him, but we just couldn't get to him."

It was a defensive battle for one quarter, but Moss began finding his receivers late in period, directing an eight-play, 80-yard scoring drive.

Pearson, a 6-3, 245-pound senior committed to Michigan, rambled in from 5 yards out just 31 seconds into the second quarter for a 7-0 Brighton lead.

Chris Niles, who booted the extra point, then nailed a 42-yard field goal with 6:17 remaining in the half for a 10-0 Bull-

dogs advantage. Meanwhile, Glenn didn't register its initial first down until its final drive of the half.

Spearmon cut loose on a 32-yard draw play and senior quarterback Nick Hudson hurled a 26-yard scoring pass to Eric Jones, who outwrestled Brighton defense Jason Jakubowski in the end zone for the ball with just under 23 seconds left.

The TD catch by Jones followed by Nick Paddock's extra point pumped new life into the Rockets, who had been stonewalled by the aggressive Brighton defense.

Glenn then came up with a big defensive stand in the third quarter when sophomore Daniel Smitherman tripped Pearson from out under his feet on fourth-and-goal from the Glenn 2 with 3:23 left in the third quarter.

Still trailing 10-7, Glenn went three-and-out on successive possessions, but took the lead when 6-3, 223-pound junior tackle Ben Harris picked off an errant Moss pitchout and raced 63 yards for a touchdown with 57 seconds left in the period.

The Harris play stunned Brighton.

"There was a mix-up in the backfield," Murray said. "Basically, the running back who was supposed to get the pitch got confused and didn't look for it, and it ended up being a broken play."

The Rockets, ahead 14-10 after Paddock's kick, appeared primed for the victory.

But Brighton, which gained 308 total yards on the night, answered by marching 76 yards in 12 plays as Moss hit passes of 10, 9, 9 and 17 yards.

"We had confidence we could move the ball because we had, and we felt we had been the stronger team all game," Murray said.

Pearson's game-winning touchdown run with just under 10 minutes to play proved to be the difference.

"I think we were ready to play football tonight," Murray said. "If we played hard, I thought we had an opportunity to control this game if we could stop their speed. We rode that defense to

the win." Glenn got the ball back two more times, but couldn't sustain any offense.

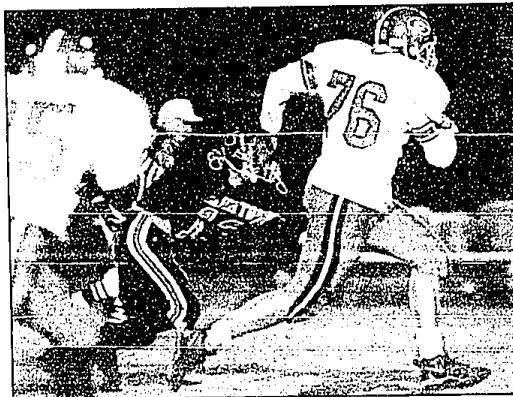
"Given the type of defense we were playing, I was confident we could stay in the game," Murray said. "I thought our defense was outstanding. We were able to come up with big plays and keep a real fine offense in check."

Brighton then took the ball over with 4:28 left and ran out the clock by rushing for three first downs.

"They kept blitzing every gap and it was very frustrating," said Spearmon, a three-year performer who also played in the secondary. "No team had given us problems like them. They had a good game plan."

"And he (Moss) was a good quarterback. He did a good job of spreading the defense out."

A three-year starter, Spearmon leaves Glenn as the school's all-time single season and career rushing leader.



Scoring play: John Glenn defensive lineman Ben Harris ran 63 yards for a touchdown Friday after intercepting a Brighton pitch on a broken play. The touchdown gave Glenn a 14-10 lead in the second half, but Brighton came back to win the AA playoff game, 17-14.

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