

## Second-half rally sends West Perry football to 28-12 win

By: Deven Whitfield • Perry County Times • November 1, 2012

Somehow, this West Perry football team keeps finding a way to win.

Trailing 12-7 at halftime against a better-than-expected Gettysburg defense that held West Perry to just 164 first half yards, the resilient Mustang squad pitched a second-half shutout, put up 21 points, and rolled to its seventh win on the season.

"This was a good test for our kids," head coach Al Ream said. "We got down early and had to fight back. It showed the character these kids have; I was very proud of the way they played in the second half."

Overall, the first half had very little excitement until the final minutes of the second quarter. Up until the last two minutes of the half, West Perry had a total of 80 yards on 24 offensive plays (3.3 yards per play). Gettysburg faced a similar dilemma, with just 127 yards on 28 plays - 4.6 yards per play.

"We got to the field a little late and had to hurry to get out there to play," Ream explained of the slow start. "We didn't have our focus early, which allowed Gettysburg to gain confidence and forced us to come from behind."

Gettysburg, who led 6-0 after a 48-yard touchdown sprint by Jordan Nye, fumbled on their own 22 yard line with just 53 seconds remaining in the half.

After junior cornerback Chase May recovered the loose ball, Zach Smith tossed a perfect deep ball to junior wideout Nate Sites for his first career varsity touchdown. Ryan McMillen added the extra point to put the Mustangs up 7-6.

Gettysburg responded however, with a 47-yard touchdown strike from Jesse Stouch to J.J. Colbert to grab a 12-7 halftime advantage.

West Perry opened the second half with the ball, but were forced to start at their own 10

when the kick returner slipped and fell out of bounds.

What ensued was one of the best - and most important drives of the season for the Mustang offense.

Chewing 6:46 off the clock, the Mustang offense methodically moved the ball into scoring range, and capped off the 15-play, 90-yard drive when Smith bounced in from the two. Smith, who struggled with accuracy in the first half, went 5-of-6 on the drive for 61 yards.

"We told the kids at halftime, 'We're only down by one score. We're going to go down and score, and get the ball back and put it out of reach,'" Ream said of the second half drive. "The offensive line took charge which opened up the passing game."

That drive seemed to energize the Mustangs defense, who stopped Nye on a fourth-down attempt in the red zone.

West Perry then erased any doubts on the first play of the fourth quarter when Smith rolled to his right, and connected with Keeghan Morrison in stride. Morrison then outraced the entire Warrior defense for a 77-yard score - the longest scoring play of the season.

Kurtis Riders added a 3-yard scoring run - capping off a 10-play, 59-yard drive later in the fourth quarter to officially put the game out of reach.

"In the first half we were an 8-cylinder car running on two-and-a-half, and in the second half we were rolling on all eight," Ream joked.

Gettysburg had two more scoring opportunities, but interceptions by May (his second on the night) and Morrison sealed the 28-12 final score.

Smith, who started the game just 2-of-10 for 31 yards, finished the night 16-of-27 for 300

yards - his first 300-yard game of the season and third of his career.

“Zach was just hurrying his throws and overthrowing receivers early,” Ream said. “But he got that worked out and was very sharp in the second half.”

Helping Smith reach 300 yards was Morrison who grabbed just six passes, but translated them into a career-high 192 yards. May made a career-high eight grabs for 63 yards, while Sites finished with 45 yards and a touchdown.

Up next for West Perry (7-2) is a critical home game against the Northern Polar Bears (also 7-2 overall). With a win, the Mustangs clinch their first playoff appearance since 2006. Northern has won 10 straight in the series, and leads 15-5 all-time.

### **Mustang notes**

Through week nine, West Perry maintained its hold on 14th in the district power ratings. Northern was seeded 15th.

Smith’s touchdown pass to Morrison was the 50th passing touchdown of his career.

Although the passing game was key, West Perry still managed 98 rushing yards, including 82 from Rider. Smith was held to just 13 yards on eight carries, but did score his 16th rushing touchdown on the year.

The West Perry defense, which forced five Gettysburg turnovers, was led by Rider with 14 tackles. Linebackers Kyle Boose and Luke Knouse each made 10 tackles. Senior corner Collin Sheaffer grabbed his first career interception on the Warriors’ first pass attempt.