

Friday Night Football Frenzy



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53

VS

42



Photo Credit: Tony Adams / Belton Journal

Crazy chapter in Belton-Ellison rivalry ends in Tigers' 53-42 win



By Tony Adam
Belton Journal

Over the past several years, games between the Belton Tigers and Ellison Eagles have ended up in wild finishes, some high scoring like Belton's 86-55 win in 2018 and some lower, like the 22-12 game in 2021.

On Thursday night at Tiger Field, the pendulum swung closer to the 2018 version.

Belton sandwiched touchdowns around an Ellison

score in a 2:59 span in the third quarter and got 33-yard insurance field goal from Corin Ramesar to give the Tigers a 53-42 victory for their first win on the opening night of District 10-5A-II play.

"We are 1-0 in district. That was our goal," Belton head coach Brett Sniffin said. "We got it done. We have a lot of clean up, with a sloppy first half and a lot of penalties on us. We made some mistakes and dropped some balls early. We made up for them later. You can't have that every time.

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We overcame it, but we need to be a little cleaner. It's the coach talking in me talking but trust me: we're happy we're 1-0."

Evan Dowling helped put the Eagles on the board first with a three-yard touchdown run off an option pitch from Marlyn Smith. Graham Chambley blocked Diego Castillo's extra-point try, which kept the score at 6-0 with 7:17 left in the first quarter.

After the Eagles held the Tigers to a three-and-out on their first drive, The Tigers halted an Ellison drive on fourth down and five at the Belton 38, as Azian Wilkinson swatted away a pass in the end zone to force a turnover on downs with 54 seconds left in the first quarter.

The Tigers answered with a 63-yard drive that at up over five minutes. On fourth and goal at the 1-yard line, Will Shepard blast across the goal line for Belton's first score. Ramesar's extra point put Belton on top 7-6 with 7:03 remaining in the first half.

Belton's defense came up with a three-and-out to give the offense the ball back at their 33-

yard line.

The combination of Shepard-to-Gavin Ross connected for two big plays on the ensuing drive: a 28-yard completion and 42-yard TD reception. Ramesar's extra point extended Belton's lead to eight with 5:03 left in the opening half.

Ellison scored on their next drive, as Smith connected with Prince Hall for a 64-yard touchdown pass. Castillo's extra point brought Ellison to within a point. Six plays into Belton's next drive, Demetrius Perry scooped up a Tiger fumble and raced 50 yards to put Ellison back on top. Castillo's extra point made the score 19-14 with 2:28 left in the first half.

The Tigers' next drive resulted in a touchdown, as Shepard scored on another fourth down conversion this time from 16 yards out. Ramesar's extra point gave Belton a 21-19 advantage.

Ellison's bid to take a halftime lead failed when a Hail Mary pass was swatted away in the end zone.

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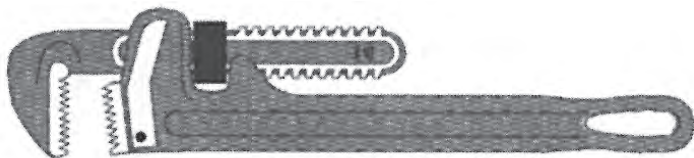
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Smith scored on Ellison's opening possession of the third quarter, as his 18-yard run put the Eagles out front. Following a Tigers' pass interference call on the Eagles' two-point try, Smith hit Tyler Reed on the second try to give Ellison a 27-21 advantage with 7:50 left in the third quarter.

Belton answered with a seven-play scoring drive with a Shepard one-yard run. Ramesar's extra point went through the uprights to give the Tigers a 28-27 lead. In the process, one of the Eagles roughed Ramesar, which

gave the Tigers a kickoff at the Ellison 45.

Ramesar executed a perfect onside kick that was recovered by Anthony Garcia at the Ellison 35. On the next play, Shepard found Ross for a 35-yard touchdown strike. Ramesar's extra point put the Tigers up by nine, 36-27, with 4:36 to play in the third.

After a Laboris Creaugh 50-yard run on Ellison's next play from scrimmage, Smith's one-yard run and Castillo's extra point with 3:16 to go in the third pulled the Eagles back to within

two points, 36-34.

Two plays into the next drive, Shepard found Gino Zecca on a halfback screen, and Zecca was flanked by a convoy of Belton blockers on his way to a 70-yard touchdown reception. Ramesar's point gave the Tigers a nine-point lead, 43-34 with 2:31 to go in the third.

Belton's defense came up huge on the next Ellison series, holding the Eagles to a three-and-out. A mishandled punt snap and subsequent punt created a loose ball in the end zone that Chambley scooped up for a touchdown. Ramesar's extra point made the score 50-34 with 1:37 left in the third.

Ellison answered with a 50-yard drive in the early stages of

the fourth quarter. Dowling's eight-yard run and two-point conversion pulled the Eagles back to within eight points with 7:58 to play.

The Tigers held the ball on their final drive for 6:03. On fourth down and seven at the Eagles' 35, Shepard found Zecca on another halfback screen for a backbreaking 22-yard reception and first down. Three plays later, Ramesar's 33-yard field with 1:35 to play made it a two-score game.

Ellison held the ball for nine plays over the final 1:35 but could not find the end zone.

Belton will travel to Waco to take on University on Friday night (Oct. 17) at the Waco ISD Complex.

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Broncos triumph over Leander Glenn

By Aries Ramos
Belton Journal

Lake Belton wasted little time showing its firepower Friday night against Leander Glenn, using a mix of explosive plays and defensive takeaways to take a 28-17 lead into halftime.

After a promising opening drive stalled with a missed field goal, the Broncos' defense quickly flipped the momentum. Glenn fumbled deep in Lake territory, and Johnathan Russell pounced on the loose ball to give the Broncos prime field position. One snap later, quarterback

Reese Rosenbaum found Brock Von Racjs in stride for a 25-yard touchdown strike, putting Lake Belton up 7-0 with 7:39 left in the first quarter.

The defense stayed aggressive on the next series. Gavin Stewart read the quarterback perfectly and came up with a leaping interception, setting Lake Belton up again deep in Glenn territory. On the very next play, Zion Harness took a reverse, cut back across the field, and juked two defenders on his way to an 18-yard touchdown run, extending the lead to 14-0 with just over six

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minutes to play in the first.

Glenn briefly seized momentum with a 75-yard kickoff return that set up a short touchdown run from its quarterback, trimming the deficit to 14-7. After a quick Lake Belton punt, the Grizzlies struck again late in the quarter with a 27-yard scramble from their signal-caller, tying the game 14-14 after one period.

The Broncos answered with composure in the second quarter. Jessiah James connected with Zion Harness on a 51-yard strike down the sideline to ignite another scoring drive, which Reese Rosenbaum capped off moments later with a 6-yard touchdown pass to Luke Phillips, reclaiming the lead at 21-14 with 10:09 left in the half.

The Lake Belton defense came up clutch again midway through the quarter when Evan Lazott fell on a Glenn fumble near midfield. The offense capitalized on the turnover with

an eight-play, 69-yard march highlighted by tough running from Arrington Alexander and a 29-yard completion from Jessiah James to Luke Phillips. Reese Rosenbaum finished it off with a powerful 1-yard touchdown run, bulldozing through a defender to make it 28-14 with just over four minutes left before the break.

Glenn added a late field goal following a strong defensive stand from Lake Belton that featured a tackle for loss by Gavin Stewart and a pass breakup by Cooper Arnold, closing the half with the Broncos leading 28-17.

Through two quarters, Lake Belton's balance had stood out — a steady rhythm on offense, timely turnovers on defense, and plenty of energy on both sidelines as the Broncos looked to close out strong in the second half.

The Broncos wasted no time turning up the pressure after halftime. Glenn fumbled the

opening kickoff, and Lake Belton recovered at its own 46 yard line. Although that drive ended with an interception, the defense quickly forced a stop, and another Glenn fumble gave the Broncos the ball back near midfield with 6:44 remaining in the third.

Lake Belton took advantage. Behind running back Arrington Arnold, the Broncos powered downfield with a series of tough runs and short passes. A quick screen to Christian

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Onchweri and another first down set up a 17-yard reverse by Zion Harness for a touchdown with 4:40 left in the third quarter, stretching the lead to 35–17.

Glenn tried to respond, aided by a long kickoff return that put the Grizzlies at the Lake Belton 31. But once again, the Bronco defense stiffened. After a tackle for loss by Eavn Lazott Glenn's drive ended in an interception by Cope, who returned it 26 yards to halt the scoring threat with two minutes left in the third.

The defensive stand sparked more points for Lake Belton. Early in the fourth quarter, quarterback Reese Rosenbaum found Logan Winkler in the end zone for a short touchdown pass to push the lead to 42–17. The play came after another Glenn turnover and a personal foul

penalty that set the Broncos up inside the 10-yard line.

Lake Belton's defense continued to shine, recording a sack by Caleb Chandler and another interception by Braxton Cope midway through the fourth quarter. Glenn finally managed a short touchdown run with 7:04 remaining to cut the deficit to 42–23, but it was too little, too late.

With just under two minutes to play, Lake Belton added an exclamation point. After recovering a Glenn fumble near their own 15-yard line, Zyien Dupree took the handoff and raced 85 yards to the end zone, sealing the 49–23 victory and sending the home crowd into celebration.

After the game, head coach Brian Cope praised his team's poise, adaptability, and

commitment to playing a full four quarters.

"I'm proud of these kids to go compete for 48 minutes," Cope said. "Really proud to see the excitement that they had for their teammates at the end of the game when our 2s got in on both sides. I thought our operations on both sides were really, really good tonight."

Cope credited his defense and special teams for creating the turning points of the game.

"We had some trick plays they even stopped one of them, and I was upset about that. But we wanted to stay aggressive all night. Even when we were up 42-something, we still threw a fade route to take a shot. That's the mindset these kids have, and that's the mindset of our staff."

Cope noted how meaningful it was to see his backup players close the game strong.

"Those kids show up every day at 6 a.m. on Monday and Tuesday, 6:30 on Wednesday. They deserve to be out here in front of our home crowd," Cope said. "The celebrations were genuine — genuine love and excitement for their teammates. If you can do that, you can build something special."

Lake Belton outscored Glenn 21–6 in the second half and forced four turnovers after halftime, using their depth, discipline, and physicality to secure a statement win in district play.

"In this district, it's an every Friday night deal," Cope said. "We'll enjoy it tonight, get back to work tomorrow, and be ready to go again Monday."

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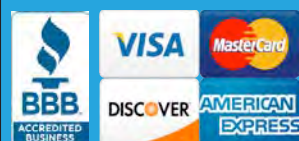
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