

## Young Musketeers improve throughout 42-7 loss at WW

Written by George Browning

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The Eastern High School football team had to deal with adversity before the 2012 season started when three seniors quit the team just days before the season-opener against West Washington.

One of those seniors, Kaleb Nicholson, returned and after sitting out the first half, helped right the Musketeer ship in the second half. Unfortunately for Eastern it was too little too late as they couldn't recover from a 34-0, eventually losing 42-7.

"We had three seniors quit on us in the middle of the week and all the work that we had done for the prior three weeks to get ready for this game was kind of thrown out the window," said Musketeer Head Coach John Dablow. "That was really a junior varsity team playing in the first quarter."

Eastern fell behind 14 minutes a little more than two minutes in the game.

The first quarter consisted of four lost fumbles and an interception.

Things started to turn around in the second quarter when the EHS defense kept the Senators from scoring late in the first half.

Then in the second half Nicholson's return, combined with several big plays by another senior Jordan Huntley lit a fire under the Musketeers.

Huntley ended a West Washington drive with an interception. He then caught several passes in a key drive where Eastern moved the ball inside the Senator five.

"Jordan played great for us," Dablow said. "We put him in a bunch of different spots. He played tightend, outside linebacker, inside linebacker and he probably even played guard.

"Nicholson was a bit of a spark for us, as well, after sitting out the first half."

The Musketeers' drive eventually stalled thanks to another fumble.

Both coaches acknowledged Eastern was a different team in the second half.

"I am really impressed with the way my guys responded the last three quarters," Dablow said. "I told them at halftime our goal was to go out and compete and just be a better team than we were in the first half. I think we did that."

West Washington Head Coach Phillip Bowsman agreed.

"Nicholson got them going a little bit," Bowsman said. "I am not going to say we played bad and they didn't do anything good because they did. It looked like at halftime like they decided to battle the rest of the game. Sometimes when you are down big you can see what your team is made of and you challenge them to play with heart. I think they did that.

"We didn't play great in the second half but Eastern did some nice things and they now have something to build off of for next week."

West Washington scored on their first play from scrimmage and then used five plays to score again after Eastern fumbled on their first play.

Before they could catch their breath, the Musketeers were down 14-0.

Four more fumbles in the opening quarter and an interception led to 20 more unanswered first half points.

In the end, Dablow said youth and turnovers were the difference.

"Anytime you play as many freshman and sophomores as we had to play tonight, you are not

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going to win," he said. "West Washington is a very good team, a well-coached team and a disciplined team. With their offense we can't afford to give them as many extra possessions as we did."

In just one half of play Nicholson led the team in rushing.

He had eight carries for 93 yards.

The Musketeers only score came with 26 seconds remaining when senior Luke Terry scored from two yards out and Jordan Omerso kicked the PAT.

Like West Washington, the Musketeers turned over the offense to a sophomore quarterback. Austin Roberts was 4 of 9 with one interception and 19 yards.

Dablow said Roberts played well considering it was his first varsity action.

"I think Austin did a very good job," he said. "He managed the game and did everything we asked him to do. He made some nice roll-outs and we've got to see if maybe we need to do more of that."

The Musketeers fell to 0-1 and must now prepare for a Mid Southern Conference game against Clarksville.

Dablow wouldn't go as far to say the game against the Generals was more important than the one against West Washington, but said his team needs to focus on improving each week.

"This was pretty important. It will be one they talk about for the rest of their lives, but the Clarksville game is important because it's a conference game. Every game will be a learning experience and we have to keep getting better. We are young, but if we continue to work and improve, we are going to be OK!"

Friday's game will get underway at 7 p.m.