

By Alan Stewart
Special Correspondent

Usually the third time is the charm. For Eastern, the magic number was 11.

The Musketeers hadn't defeated Corydon Central on the gridiron in 10 previous tries, but came through big Friday night in the 11th varsity matchup between the two clubs in a 28-19 Mid-Southern Conference road victory.

In the win, Eastern (2-3, 2-2 MSC) got 76 yards on the ground from sophomore Brandon Tanny and a balanced 48 yards rushing and 41 yards receiving from senior Parker Wallingford to knock off the host Panthers, which haven't won a game since September 23 of last year, a span of nine games.

"I thought we came out and we pressed and we made plays when we had to. We hadn't done that the first few weeks. We made some mistakes at the end that we need to clean up and I think it made the game closer than it probably should have been and we've got to clean that stuff up moving forward," Eastern head coach Luke Dean said.

The visitors got on the board when senior Oliver Adams made what his coach described as "an immediate impact" on the contest, picking off Corydon quarterback Noah Windell at the Panthers' 18 yard line and taking it to the house. Tanny's two-point conversion run gave his squad an 8-0 lead.

"(Adams) is a great player. He sat out a whole year and last week he got cleared on Wednesday and we just kind of used him a little bit last week just to kind of get him back in the feel because he hasn't played since his sophomore year because he tore his ACL in the first game against West Washington," Dean said. "He made an immediate impact with that pick-six."

Corydon answered four plays later when Windell followed three straight first-down runs by Canaan Mercer (12 yards and two 11-yard gains) with a 37-yard jaunt around right end and to the end zone. A PAT kick failed, leaving the Musketeers on top, 8-6.

Eastern's next possession also resulted in a touchdown, with Tandy diving in from three yards out with 2:30 left in the first period. The point-after run failed, however, leaving the score in favor of Eastern, 14-6, which held up to the end of the first quarter.

The lead swelled to 22-6 with a well-executed hook-and-ladder play by the Musketeers. Snapping from Corydon's 38, Eastern quarterback Todd Branaman made a short toss to Connor Marshall, who flipped back to Wallingford, who then raced down the sideline in an uninterrupted trip to the end zone. Tandy ran in the PAT to push the lead to 16.

Corydon (0-5, 0-4 MSC) had the final say in the scoring in the rest of the half, going 40 yards in six plays and capped by a two-yard run by Ben Johnson. Dylan Higginbotham's kick set the score at 22-13 at the intermission.

The margin held up until 3:33 was left in the third, when Windell had another long run for a touchdown, this time from 39 yards out. Corydon went for a two-point run, but failed, and the margin was three, 22-19, heading into the fourth quarter.

Three plays into the period, Branaman connected with Wallingford from 23 yards out. The point-after run failed, but the lead was all the Musketeers needed the rest of the way.

"It was important because after Brownstown and after last week we needed something to get our confidence back and I thought the kids did a great job," Dean said.

Eastern, which had 131 yards rushing and 60 yards receiving, gained 10 first downs in the game and Corydon, which had 10 first downs in the first half, was held to just one first down in the second half. Penalties weren't a tremendous factor, with Eastern flagged five times for 30 yards and the Panthers, which rushed for 156 yards and threw for 56 yards, were penalized once for five yards.

On Friday Eastern hosts conference co-leader North Harrison (5-0, 5-0 MSC), which is coming off a last-second victory over Brownstown Central.

“It’ll be in the trenches and we’ll have to take care of the football,” Dean said.

Eastern 14 8 0 6—28

Corydo 6 7 6 0—19

Eastern – Oliver Adams, 18, interception return (Brandon Tandy run); Corydon Central – Noah Windell, 37, run (kick failed); Eastern – Tandy, 3, run (run failed); Eastern – Parker Wallingford, 38, pass from Todd Branaman (Tandy run); Corydon Central – Ben Johnson, 2, run (Dylan Higginbotham kick); Corydon Central – Windell, 39, run (run failed); Eastern – Wallingford, 23, pass from Branaman (run failed).

Eastern senior Parker Wallingford delivers a punishing stiff-arm to the face of Corydon Central sophomore Canaan Mercer in the first half of Friday night’s Mid-Southern Conference matchup at Corydon.

Eastern senior Wyatt Perez (74) and junior Dalton Pinaire (75) whoop it up with teammates after the Musketeers knocked off host Corydon Central for the first time in program history Friday night.