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Warriors beat Mavs, stay in playoff hunt

By **CLIFF COATS**
Special to the Leader

Friday night Coach Anthony Wood and his Westwood Warriors (5-3, 3-2) played the part of the visiting team against Coach Robert Wilcox's McNeil Mavericks (2-6, 2-3) at the Round Rock ISD Athletic Complex. Both teams call the facility home but they rotate which team is defending the home side each year.

The Warriors came into the game off a 45-17 rout of the Georgetown Eagles while McNeil was still recovering from a hard-fought 21-14 loss at the hands of the Stony Point Tigers.

Westwood and McNeil both started out the game with strong defensive efforts but the Warrior's offense, led by sophomore quarterback Ben Johnson, overwhelmed the Mavericks for a decisive 31-8 victory.

"We played a complete game tonight," Wood said. "We're very pleased with what happened tonight. Our kids played tough and we're all proud of them. The game out, took care of business and did what they were supposed to do.

"Our defense played great. We almost had another shutout but we gave up an offensive touchdown which is unfortunate but you couldn't ask for a better night than our defense gave us."

"We played a complete game," Johnson said. "Our coaches talk about if you play every play like it is your last you're going to go out there and win. We did and we went out there, got the job done and brought home the win."

McNeil opened up play from its own one-yard line and quickly fed the ball to starting running back Adrian Smith. After a couple hard-fought first downs on the ground, McNeil quarterback Cole Smith found Cooper Lewis for a 51-yard gain, moving the ball down to Westwood's 23-yard line. Switching back to Smith, the Mavericks managed to press the Warriors back to their 17-yard line and went for it on fourth-and-one. The Warrior defense shut down the attempt and took control of the ball for the first time in the game.

Westwood's initial offensive effort was squelched when running back Princeton Collins fumbled after a decent gain out to Westwood's 32-yard line. The Mavericks went back to their ground attack but thanks to a string of tackles and then a timely interception from Warrior linebacker Eric Dehoux, Westwood was back in business after a couple first downs by McNeil.

Behind the running of quarterback Ben Johnson and Collins, Westwood was able to move the ball past midfield into Maverick territory. Dominic Middleton, Caleb Flucker and Ryan McCluskey led the Maverick defense on a stingy stand which forced Westwood to send out Jordan Williamson, who nailed the 45-yard field goal to make the score 3-0 with 9:21 left to play in the second quarter.

On McNeil's next possession, Westwood's sophomore defensive back James Ingram was able to haul in an interception on a tipped ball and the Warriors took over on their own 48.

From there, the fleet-footed Johnson quickly put together two long scrambles moving the ball all the way down to the two. Two plays later Johnson crossed over with a one-yard touchdown run. Williamson's extra point made the score 10-0 with 6:18 left in the half.

Kyler Fry made two excellent tackles for Westwood to make a third and long situation but Smith was passed to Terrell Smith for the first down at the 39.

Thanks to the tackling of Patrick Onderick and Jake O'Neal, McNeil was forced into a fourth-and-two. Quarterback Smith executed a quick kick that pinned Westwood on its own 10.

Once again Johnson and Collins went to work rushing for Westwood, moving the ball into Maverick territory as the closing seconds of the second quarter ticked



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away. Johnson found Forster Zeitz for a first down that moved the ball to the Maverick 27. Johnson added some more nice rushes to move the ball down to McNeil's 11 despite several penalties accrued by the Warriors' offensive line.

Johnson then found Zeitz in the end-zone for the 9-yard touchdown pass. The point after kick by Williamson gave Westwood a 17-0 lead at the half.

Both teams came out of the halftime with a renewed spirit on defense. Flucker and Theo Ross spearheaded the effort for McNeil as they cranked up the defensive pressure, swarming Johnson and forcing Westwood to punt after three straight unsuccessful run plays. Kyler Fry, Heru Martin and Parker Achord led the Warrior defense on the next possession, forcing a three and out of their own.

Johnson complete passes to his big brother Will Johnson and Zeitz to move the Warriors out to their 33-yard line and from there Princeton Collins did what he does so well -- tack on a long run for the touchdown. This time around it was a 67-yard streak down the sideline to make the score 24-0 with 6:57 still to play in the third quarter.

Three consecutive penalties by the Mavericks pinned them on their own 9 before their drive even began. On third-and-21, Smith was sacked by Heru Martin and Patrick Onderick, which forced another punt from Kevin Pike. After the punt took a McNeil bounce, Westwood took over on its own 49.

Matt Mainiero made his way into the Warrior's backfield for a shot on Johnson as he threw the ball on third-and-long, forcing the incomplete pass. Ben Hynds' punt put McNeil on their own 18.

Smith and the Maverick's offense were able to string together some first downs on their next drive including two fourth-and-short scenarios where Smith just edged over the line for the first down conversion.

After three more costly penalties on McNeil the Warriors defensive line, led by Onderick and Martin brought in back-to-back sacks on Smith to kill what was McNeil's most productive drive.

Cameron Smith and Mainiero were able to make some more plays in the backfield against Johnson and the Warriors but once again penalties by McNeil allowed Westwood to stay on the field. Sticking to the running game, the Warriors fed their running back Collins who moved the ball quickly into the McNeil red zone. Johnson was able to then break free and smashed his way into the end-zone with a 12-yard touchdown run. That extended Westwood's lead to 31-0 with 8:17 left in the game.

After Westwood's defense forced another three-and-out by McNeil, the Warriors took over on their own 44. Matt Schmerber took over at running back and Blake Balazs came in at quarterback for Westwood. After a bad snap got away from Balazs, McNeil's Flucker was able to prevent the shutout by scooping up the fumble and returning it 38 yards for the touchdown. The two point attempt from Smith found Dillion Litteral to make the score 31-8 with 3:44 left in the game.

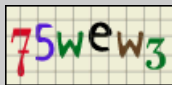
Once Westwood recovered the onsidles kick attempt Schmerber was able run the clock down to 1:08 with a series of tough runs. Williamson wasn't able to make the 45 yard field goal attempt and McNeil took over on its own 28.

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