

Western Oregon Edges Dixie To Go 2-0 in the GNAC

WOU Sports Information

MONMOUTH, Calif. (Sept. 19) - Third time was a charm for Kelly Morgan as he connected a 46 yard field goal with 3:34 remaining to give Western Oregon football the 17-16 win over Dixie State, Saturday at McArthur Field.

Sean Fullerton hauled in 14 catches for 164 yards, with nine of those receptions and 130 yards coming in the second half. Trevor Gates caught two touchdown passes and had 141 yards receiving on six catches filling in for the injured Sean Kauleinamoku. Josh Riddell had 402 yards through the air, completing 27-of-41 passes and two touchdowns, running his streak of games with a touchdown pass to 14.

The back-to-back wins for the Wolves (2-1) moves them atop the Great Northwest Athletic Conference standings with a 2-0 record. This was the third consecutive loss for Dixie State, who fell to 3-1 on the season and 0-1 in the GNAC.

Cornerback Miguel Gonzalez picked off a Judd Thompson pass with 7:00 left in the game to set up the Wolves' game-winning drive. WOU then marched down the field to the DSC 29 yard line in nine plays to set up the game-winning field goal by Morgan.

"I went out there told myself to relax and get my lean," said Morgan. "As soon as I hit it I knew it was going in."

Morgan had missed his previous two field goal attempts from 37 and 48 but WOU head coach Arne Ferguson did not hesitate to go to the field goal unit with the game on the line. "Morgan has shown in practice the consistency to make those kicks," Ferguson explained with a smile on his face. "After he missed those first two I had even more confidence in his third kick; the odds were in our favor."

The Western Oregon defense was outstanding, limiting the Dixie State offense to 198 yards, with just 17 on the ground and one touchdown. The conference passing leader Judd Thompson was held to just 181 yards on 44 attempts including 4-of-12 in the fourth quarter.

Andy Douglas and John Breza were the leading tacklers for the Wolves with seven apiece. Defensive tackle Sitani Tupou had a huge impact on the outcome of the game blocking Dixie's extra point attempt on it first touchdown and sacking Thompson to end the game.

The WOU offense marched the ball up and down the field all day, racking up 490 yards of total offense but it did not take full advantage of its scoring opportunities as it went 0-for-2 in the red-zone and lost a fumble on the DSC 22. The Wolves' offense converted 9-

of-19 of third downs compared to just 2-of-14 for Dixie State and held over a 13-minute advantage in time of possession (36:25 to 23:25).

"I have been glad to see people step up in these close wins," said Ferguson. "I have been happy the way the team has responded to critical situations like today with the drive, the kick and the defense in the fourth quarter."

Western Oregon got on board first with 52-yard bomb from Riddell to Gates. The Red Storm would pull to within one point at 7-6 with four minutes left in the first half as Nick Craig intercepted a deflected pass and returned it 53 yards for the score. However, the Wolves were able to maintain the lead as Sitani Tupou powered his way through the line and got a hand on the ball to thwart the extra point attempt and give WOU a halftime lead.

Right out of the half, Thompson led the Red Storm on a seven play, 73 yard drive as he scored on a one-yard quarterback keeper to give DSC its first lead. Dixie State would tack on a field goal to make it 16-7 with 6:15 left in the third quarter. The Wolves would quickly respond as Riddell once again found Gates deep for the score and pull the Wolves to within two at 16-14.

The teams would trade possessions in the fourth quarter until Morgan stuck it between the goal posts for the Wolves second straight GNAC win.

Mistakes hurt WOU as it fumbled five times (lost one), threw two interceptions and gave Dixie State 151 yards in penalty yardage.

"We can't allow things not to develop," Ferguson explained. "We have to pull back the penalties and get this fixed quickly."

The 14 receptions by Fullerton tied for second in school history and the 164 receiving yards placed him 10th. Riddell's 402 yards passing were just the fourth time a Western Oregon quarterback has thrown for over 400 yards.

This was the fifth straight win for WOU over Dixie State in the all-time series (5-0).

Dixie State	0	6	10	0	--	16
Western Oregon	7	0	7	3	--	17

WOU – Gates 52 pass from Riddell (Morgan kick)

DSC – Cragin 53 interception (kick blocked)

DSC – Thompson 11 run (Langston kick)

DSC – Langston 31 Field Goal

WOU – Gates 34 pass from Riddell (Morgan kick)

WOU – Morgan 46 Field Goal