

WILDCAT DEFENSE STIFLES TARLETON IN 27-6 SECOND-ROUND WIN

Central Holds Texans to Minus-14 Rushing Yards; Morgan Throws for Career-High 287

ELLENSBURG, Wash. (Nov. 21) -- The Central Washington defense held Tarleton State to minus-14 yards rushing and senior **Cole Morgan** (Seattle/Ballard HS) threw for a career-high 287 yards as the top-ranked Wildcats defeated the visiting Texans, 27-6, in a NCAA Division II Football Championship Second Round game before a standing-room-only crowd at Tomlinson Stadium on Saturday afternoon.

The Wildcats (12-0) earned the first 12-win season in the program's history by defeating Tarleton State, and earned a match up with second-ranked Northwest Missouri State (11-1) in next Saturday's national quarterfinal round at Tomlinson Stadium. Tarleton's season ended with a 10-3 record.

Central's defense, which entered play ranked first in Division II in scoring defense and second in total defense, held a potent Tarleton offense to just 178 yards and two field goals. The Wildcat offense did its part to complement the 21-point win, racking up 409 yards of offense including Morgan's career-best passing day and 122 total rushing yards -- 101 by senior **Randall Eldridge** (Lynnwood, Wash.).

Neither team scored on either of its first two possessions, and a costly interception by Morgan on Central's second drive (including its first into the red zone) kept the Wildcats off the board. Tarleton's ensuing 58-yard return on the interception gave the Texans possession at the CWU 26, but a strong defensive stand by the hosts held Tarleton to four offensive yards on six plays and forced them into a 39-yard field goal by Garrett Lindholm.

After a 43-yard kick return by **Jerome Williams** (Seattle, Wash./Ballard HS) gave Central the ball at midfield, the Wildcats needed just three offensive plays to reach the end zone, with a 48-yard scoring pass from Morgan to **Johnny Spevak** (Edgewood, Wash./Puyallup HS) giving them a 7-3 lead.

The Central defense continued to stand up the Tarleton offense, which had totaled 530 yards in its double-overtime win in the first round at Texas A&M-Kingsville last week. The Wildcats bottled up the Texans' running game and collected their first of two takeaways for the contest with a fumble recovery early in the second quarter deep in Tarleton territory. A personal foul penalty advanced the ball to the two-yard line and Eldridge scored on his second carry from there to push the margin to 14-3 with just over 10 minutes remaining in the first half.

Tarleton had a 10-play, 48-yard drive on its next series, but Central came up with a big stop on fourth and one to force the Texans into a 31-yard field goal try from Lindholm, which trimmed the margin to 14-6. Central scored once more before halftime, as senior **Garrett Rolsma** (University Place, Wash./Curtis HS) made a 27-yard field goal to push

the score at the intermission to 17-6.

The Wildcat defense, which had allowed just 10 third-quarter points in 11 regular-season games this year, held true to form in Saturday's postseason opener by keeping Tarleton off the scoreboard in the period. Ironically, the third quarter was the only period in which the Texans had positive rushing yards for the game, gaining 12 on four carries. Central scored just three points in the period as Rolsma added a 30-yard field goal on the Wildcats' second drive after halftime.

Eldridge, a first-team all-Great Northwest Athletic Conference selection who charted his second 100-yard game of the season, capped the game's scoring and sealed the victory in the fourth quarter with a three-yard touchdown run with 7:57 left.

Central more than doubled Tarleton offensively with 409 yards to the Texans' 178. The Wildcats also excelled on special teams, where Rolsma averaged one more yard per punt (41.3) than Tarleton's Kyle Hopf (40.3) and Williams totaled 168 return yards between punts (88) and kickoffs (80). The Wildcats also had 17 first downs to Tarleton's nine and had nearly a 12-minute advantage in time of possession.

Morgan and Eldridge were Central's offensive leaders, while Spevak upped his career touchdown total to 54 with his 48-yard second-quarter scoring grab. He finished with 97 yards on five catches and Eldridge added 68 receiving yards on five grabs out of the backfield. And despite missing a pair of field-goal attempts Saturday, Rolsma (328 career points) overtook Spevak (326 points) for the school's career scoring lead in an on-going battle.

Defensively, senior linebacker **Prince Hall** (Moreno Valley, Calif.) led the Wildcats with nine tackles while fellow backer **Adam Bighill** (Montesano, Wash.) added eight. Bighill and **Taylor Breitzman** (Valley Springs, Calif./Calaveras HS) both had fumble recoveries, while Breitzman also forced a fumble as part of his four-tackle outing. Senior **Ryan Dyer** (University Place, Wash./Life Christian Academy) had a pair of quarterback sacks to account for both of his tackles in the game.

Tarleton's running back tandem of Evan Robertson (26 yards) and Roderick Smith (minus-6 yards) were held to just 20 net yards rushing after entering the game averaging better than 70 rushing yards per game each. Top receivers Devin Guinn and Jahmeel Hobson, both of whom edged past the 1,000-yard mark for their seasons, were held to just 104 receiving yards on four catches by the Wildcats, with 59 of those coming on one pass play to Hobson.

Central Washington will now turn its attention to second-ranked Northwest Missouri State, which has advanced to the NCAA Division II national championship game each of the past four years. The kickoff between the Wildcats and Bearcats will be at noon Pacific Standard Time next Saturday (Nov. 28) at Tomlinson Stadium in the national quarterfinals.

NOTES: The 12th win this season set a new single-season school record for the program. Central had won 11 games in a season three times previously (1984, 1990, and 2002) ... Central held an opponent to minus rushing yards in a game for the fourth time in 12 outings this season ... The Wildcats will be making their second national quarterfinal appearance in the past three seasons when they host Northwest Missouri State. CWU lost to top-ranked Grand Valley State in the 2007 quarterfinals ... Rolsma converted on two of four field goals Saturday, and his first miss from 25 yards was the first unsuccessful try in 26 career attempts between 20 and 29 yards ... Adding to his list of records, Spevak broke the school's record for career playoff receiving yards (553) and tied the career playoff receptions record (38).

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

NCAA DIVISION II FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SECOND ROUND

#1 Central Washington 27, #12 Tarleton State 6

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	Score	
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Tarleton State.....	3	3	0	0	- 6	Record: (10-3)
Central Washington..	7	10	3	7	- 27	Record: (12-0)

Scoring Summary:

1st 04:07 TARLETON - Lindholm,Garrett 39 yd field goal, 6-4 2:12,
TARLETON 3 - CWU 0

02:33 CWU - Spevak,Johnny 48 yd pass from Morgan,Cole
(Rolsma,Garrett kick), 3-50 1:26, TARLETON 3 - CWU 7
2nd 10:16 CWU - Eldridge,Randall 2 yd run (Rolsma,Garrett kick), 2-15
0:50, TARLETON 3 - CWU 14

06:03 TARLETON - Lindholm,Garrett 31 yd field goal, 10-48 4:03,
TARLETON 6 - CWU 14

01:39 CWU - Rolsma,Garrett 27 yd field goal, 8-71 4:24, TARLETON 6
- CWU 17

3rd 08:07 CWU - Rolsma,Garrett 30 yd field goal, 6-69 2:39, TARLETON 6
- CWU 20

4th 07:57 CWU - Eldridge,Randall 3 yd run (Rolsma,Garrett kick), 9-67
4:58, TARLETON 6 - CWU 27