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Area Showdown: Sulphur Springs, Bastrop meet in offensive battle

THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2010 13:17 BY DON WALLACE, NEWS-TELEGRAM SPORTS EDITOR

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The playoff quest for the Sulphur Springs Wildcats continues Friday at they meet Bastrop in a battle of powerful offenses.



Sulphur Springs defensive coordinator Matt Young congratulates Wildcat linebacker Joe Scott (42) at the end of the 56-52 thrilling win over Jacksonville. The Wildcat defense will be tested Friday by Bastrop. Staff photo by Luis Noble

Sure, the defenses will have a say about the eventual outcome. But it's the high octane attacks of the Wildcats and Bears which grabs the headlines.

Both teams come into the Class 4A Division II playoff game averaging more than 40 points a game. The teams collide at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Waco Midway's Panther Stadium.

The Bears and Wildcats are both coming off high-scoring comeback wins. Jacksonville held a 21-0 lead early, but the Wildcats rallied to down the Indians 56-52 in a thriller played in Tyler's Rose Stadium.

"The positive thing is we won the game," Sulphur Springs head football coach Greg Owens said rubbing his hand across his scalp. "We went from being 21 down to being 21 points ahead. The game was really too exciting for me. You survive and you move on."

Owens said, "We never let up, we played with passion and heart. We made plays and got momentum back on our side against Jacksonville. That's the way it is going to be in the playoffs. Both teams can score and you have to be able to handle it. Playoff games are a roller-coaster ride. The team with the fewest penalties and mistakes usually wins."

Against Jacksonville, Wildcat quarterback Justin Owens completed 20 of 34 passes for 320 yards and two scores, he also ran for 65 yards and three key touchdowns. Kendrick Daniels paced the rushing game with 117 yards and two scores. The Wildcats had 508 total yards in the game.

While Sulphur Springs was winning in Tyler, the Bears playing in Waco against Corsicana, came up with 21 third quarter points as they rallied for a 55-34 win over the Tigers in the bi-district round.

In that game Bastrop quarterback Josiah Monroe completed 26 of 41 passes for 501 yards and four touchdowns, he also ran 20 times of 170 yards and two more scores.

"These guys are good, they find ways to win," Owens said. "They're down from 5A to 4A, they have been in big time games before. We will have our hands full. They know what they are doing."

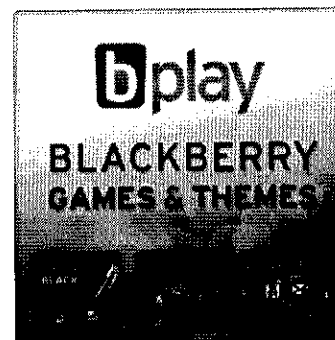
Bastrop operates from the spread attack, throwing the ball 60 percent of the time.

The team doesn't throw that many screens. They prefer a quick hitting attack. The Bears also are not afraid to go deep.

"Monroe makes it all go, he's a guy about 5-10 or so, and he's a good runner with a rocket for an arm," Owens said. "He throws a great deep ball and has three good receivers. He's like a little Michael Vick. He's carried their ball club. When they were 5A, he was Newcomer of the Year as a sophomore and last year was Offensive MVP in 5A."

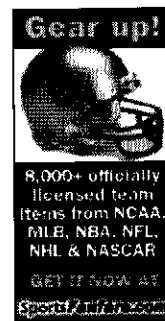
The coach continued, "We can't let Monroe get comfortable, we want to put him in a bind. We'd like for him to make mistakes, force him into some turnovers."

Robert Nunn is known as the speed receiver using his 6-2 frame to get open. Mason Foytik and Trae Bunton are possession receivers.



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Owens said, "They like to throw it, but they have a pretty good running game. They throw it to set up the run. Monroe can run, but most of the yardage he gets is not off a designed play, but from scrambles. They make things happen. They're more offensive-minded and explosive than they are on the defense."

The Bastrop defense has surrendered 273 points a game. They operate from a 3-4 formation.

Owens said he unsure how the of Bastrop would approach the game with Sulphur Springs.

"I have seen tapes where they laid back and other times when they blitz a lot," Owens said. "They rotate kids in and out."

Owens said, "The game will come down to putting points on the board, limiting mistakes and penalties. We can't have dropped passes and mistakes like we did against Jacksonville. We have to make the most of our scoring opportunities."

Sulphur Springs will travel to Waco Friday by bus, the trip will also figure into how the Wildcats play.

"We have a three hour bus ride and we will lose some spring in our legs," Owens said. "We have to get out and get moving when we get to Waco. But that is all about the playoffs."

Owens said, "We've had a pretty good week of practice so far. Monday, we were a little sluggish, but that's because we played Thursday last week and we gave them some days off. Now we are back to the regular week."

Owens said he likes the way his team is playing and thinks they will be up to the challenge of another big playoff game.

"Our guys know what is at stake, we want to keep playing," Owens said. "We have to get defensive stops and be focused on playing good ball and not making mistakes. Turnovers, as always are a key. We need to hang onto the ball and force a few turnovers from Bastrop. It should be a good high school game."

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