

Well Mountaineers last week in my game report I asked where do we find the offense to compete against a Power Four rival in Pittsburg? I guess it was pretty simple for West Virginia head coach Rich Rodriguez, all he needed to do was call on 3rd string tailback Tye Edwards and ask him to have a breakout performance.

Well that is exactly what Edwards did rushing for 141 yards on 25 carries for a 5.6 yards per carry average and three BIG touchdowns including the game winner in overtime. In his first action for the WVU Mountaineers Edwards has elevated himself to legend status and will likely never have to buy another drink in the state of West Virginia for the rest of his life. It's not just that he led the Mountaineers to victory over their hated rival in the 108 edition of the Backyard Brawl it's as much how the game played out. There have been many non-descript Backyard Brawls since these two schools first began playing in 1895 when the Mountaineers claimed an 8-0 victory in Morgantown. This game will be relegated to "Classic" status for many reasons. First Rich Rodriguez's return as head coach playing the Panthers in 9/13 which of course was the score of the ill-fated 2007 loss that cost WVU a chance to play Ohio State in the National Championship game and lead coach Rodriguez to bolt for the Michigan Wolverines. Secondly the way the Mountaineers clawed their way back into this game forcing overtime and ultimately winning the game. As WVU Broadcaster Tony Caridi always says after a great Mountaineer victory "It's a great day to be a Mountaineer where ever you may be".

As for the brawl itself it was a very solid performance by the Zac Allyn West Virginia defense that kept WVU in the game until Nicco Marchiol could start working his magic late in the fourth quarter. Holding the Panthers to just 47 yards rushing and being able to sack Pitts talented sophomore quarterback Eli Holstien 4 times and pressure him about a dozen more times was a very welcome sight to see. The Mountaineer defense has actually been strong in every game and certainly played well enough to win the game last week against the Ohio Bobcats had the offense even shown a pulse in that game.

This edition of the brawl started out with the two teams feeling each other out with the 1st quarter ending 0 – 0. The Mountaineer did get on the board first at the 11:52 mark of the 2nd quarter with a 9 play 75 yard drive ending with a 12 yard Tye Edwards touchdown run and a 7-0 Mountaineer lead. After 3 consecutive scoreless possessions by both teams the Panthers got the board driving 75 yards in 7 plays

before the drive stalled at the Mountaineer 5 yard line so on 4th and goal Pitt elected to settle for a 23 yard field goal by their fine freshman kicker Trey Butkowski and with just 1:37 to go in the half it was 7-3 EERs. This brought about the controversial end to the first half when Nicco Marchiol scrambled 12 yards to the Pitt 42 as time was expiring in the 1st half there was a unnecessary roughness penalty against the Panthers so since we all know that the half cannot end on a defensive penalty that there would be a 15 yard walk off down to the Pitt 27 and WVU would get an untimed down and a field goal opportunity. However the officials claimed that Marchiol made the 1st down with on second left and that if a team doesn't have at least 5 seconds the penalty cannot be enforced until the start of the 3rd quarter. That's fine but they DIDN'T ASSESS IT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOUND HALF???? What the hell happened to the penalty?

Anyway the 2nd half started with Coach Rodriguez making a change at quarterback bringing the true freshman Scotty Fox Jr from Mentor Ohio. The youngster had a 40+ yard touchdown run the first time he carried the ball for the Mountaineers against Robert Moriss. After punting in his first series Fox led WVU oon a scoring drive in his second series set up by a 56 yard pass and run to Justn Smith-Brown down to the Pitt 3 yard line and 3 plays later Tye Edwards busted in from a yard out and WVU was in control and command of this game leading 14-3 with 8:37 to go in the 3rd quarter. However, the Pit Panthers had other ideas and on the ensuing possession 75 yards on just 5 plays highlighted by Eli Holsteins pass complete to Raphael Williams Jr. for 67 yds to the WVU 6. 3 plays later Holstein ran it in himself from a yard out and with a successful 2 point conversion the Panthers were withing a field goal at 14-11 with 6:16 to go in the 3rd quarter. At this point the way Scottie Fox Jr orchestrated a touchdown drive the last tine he had the ball and the way the WVU defense was playing I was still pretty certain WVU was still in control and would win this game. Then came the bad news, the true freshman Fox tossed interceptions on consecutive series and even though the Mountaineer defense held the Panthers out of the endzone the did collect 2 more field goals and just like that 6 seconds into the 4th quarter it was 17-14 Panthers.

On the ensuing possession coach Rodriguez decided the moment may have been a bit to big for the freshman quarterback Scotty Fox so he inserted the senior transfer from Texas A&M Jaylon Henderson at quarterback and after 8 plays on 4th and 3 at the Pitt 43 Cach Rodriguez rolled the dice and went for it but the Panthers sacked Henderson for a 10 yard loss and took over on the WVU 47 yard line. Well 6 plays later Raphael Williams Jr. 14 Yd pass from Eli Holstein made it 24-14 Panthers. And with 9:23 too go in the game I pretty much figured that the Mountaineers were just not going to be able to generate enough offense too pull this one out. Man was

I dead wrong. In on of the most stirring comebacks in WVU history and certainly the history f the backyard brawl the Mountaineer offense would begin to claw their way back into this crazy game. On the ensuing series WVU marched 72 yards on 12 plays before the drive stalled at the Pitt 3 yard line and on 4th and goal at the 3 Coach Rodrieguez elected to take the easy field goal and make this a. one score game on a 21 yard Kade Hensley field goal and with 5:03 to go in the game it was 24-17 Pitt. All the Panthers needed to do on the ensuing possession was take a few minutes off the clock and the game would most likely be theirs. Well five plays and out for the Pitt offense and with 2:47 to go in the game the Panthers punted to the Mountaineers who took over at their own 22. 13 plays and 85 yards later WVU sat at the Pitt 2 yard line with a 2nd and goal with 11 seconds to go in the game when Nicco Marchiol found his senior tight end Grayson Barnes with a 2 yard TD pass and we were heading for overtime at 24-24.

Pitt won the toss and as everyone does they went on defense wanting to know what they will need to win or send this thing to a second overtime. Well the Mountaineers needed 8 plays before coach Rodreguez inserted 9 offensive lineman into the game as blockers and it worked as Tye Edwards busted in from a yard out with his 3rd touchdown of the game and it was 31-24 EERS and of course the sold out crowd at Mountaineer field. N Pitts overtime possession the Mountaineer defense was swarming and sacked Holstein on 3rd for a 10 yard loss and on 4th and 20 at their 32 Holsteins pass was off mark and the West Virginia Mountaineers had a most improbable comeback victory and Rich Rodriguez had his first signature win in his second stint as the Mountaineers had coach.

Now we celebrate for a couple days but next week WVU prepares for Big 12 play with a trip to Laurence Kansas to take on Coach Lance Leipolds Jayhawks at 6:00 pm on Fox Sports One.