

Offensive Explosion

Mountaineers dominate Colonels 56-10 Rushing Attack Returns in Opening Day Romp

Next Up: West Virginia at #15 Oklahoma State September 26th

The opening day domination of Eastern Kentucky was certainly not unexpected however the way it occurred was at the very least a good sign. West Virginia came into this season off a 2019 campaign that saw them near the bottom in running the football, in fact they turned in the worst ground attack in the history of Mountaineer Football at roughly 73 yards per game and didn't have a 100-yard rusher the entire season.

2020 saw the West Virginia ground game get out of the gate with 329 yards on the ground on 51 attempts for 6.5 yards per rush on the day. Even against an Eastern Kentucky team that was outscored 115-10 in two trips to the Mountain State to start the season it was great to see 3 different running backs have some measure of success running the football. In 2019 the Mountaineers rushed for just 879 yards as a team for the entire season. They were better than half that in yesterday's season opener as Leddie Brown and Alec Sinkfield both rushed for 123 yards and 3rd team tailback Tony Mathis Jr added another 54 yards and true freshman quarterback Garrett Green added another 33 yards on 5 carries when he got into the game in the 4th quarter.

Along with the Mountaineer rushing attack starting quarterback Jarrett Doege had a very solid effort completing 19 of 25 passes for 228 yards and 3 touchdowns with no interceptions in on half of work. He looked very poised and in control and only had a couple of poor throws the entire game. Of course, this was a struggling Eastern Kentucky team that never really put much pressure on him the entire game and the real test

will be in two weeks when the Mountaineers travel to Stillwater Oklahoma to take on the 12th ranked Oklahoma State Cowboys but it was still a very solid performance as the WVU offense under Doege looked under control and focused. The Mountaineers receivers were led by Sam James with 5 catches for 75 yards and a TD. In all 10 different Mountaineers caught passes. A pretty balanced WVU attack with 329 yards rushing and 295 yards passing for 624 yards of total offense.

Another reason this was such a positive performance even against a lesser opponent is that just prior to the game it was announced that 11 Mountaineer players were suspended from the game for violation of team rules, several of these players were starters and all were players that were expected to see action in the game. It was made clear this was not Covid-19 related so it could really have been everything from curfew violations to missing a mandatory team meeting but you never know what effect this kind of announcement could do to the mindset of the team but it didn't seem to affect them in anyway.

Another positive was that a lot of true freshman and redshirt freshman played significant minutes in the game as everyone that was dressed on the sidelines saw at least a few snaps by the end of the game. WVU played all 3 quarterbacks Doege followed by Austin Kendall and true freshman Garrett Green playing most of the 4th quarter. At one point late in the game there were 3 freshman or redshirt freshman on the Mountaineer offensive line. Despite the youth on the offensive line for much of the game WVU allowed no sacks of any of their 3 quarterbacks

Defensively West Virginia was in control throughout the entire game although the secondary was out of position on a couple of long passes for the most part it was a very solid effort. The Mountaineers had 4 sacks and 9 tackles for loss and an interception. ECU ran for just 75 yards on 32 carries for 2.3 yard per attempt. ECU was also held to 1 of 11 in 3rd down efficiency.

The one aspect of the game that certainly needs improvement was special teams as we saw almost everything from a fumbled kick return to a missed chip shot field goal of 23 yards by Senior Evan Staley to a kick return for a touchdown that was overturned by a penalty. The Mountaineer Special Teams also committed 6 of the WVU 8 team penalties for the game. It was not totally unexpected that Special Teams play could be erratic but I was disappointed in a Senior Placekicker missing essential an extra point field goal, that certainly must not continue as hopefully WVU will be in some close battles where field goals could be critical.

As for the game WVU opened up with a nice 80-yard touchdown drive on 11 plays with Jarrett Doege hitting Leddie Brown for a 15 yard TD and the rout was on. Three series later it was suddenly 21-0 WVU and after ECU cut the lead to 21-7 on a 28 yard TD pass from Peyton McKinney to Keyion Dixon WVU would score the next 21 points to take a 42-7 lead into the break and added a couple more touchdowns in the 2nd half despite coach Neal Brown emptying the bench.

Now we wait until next Saturday to get a look at WVU's next opponent as the #15 ranked OK State Cowboys will open their season hosting Tulsa at Noon on ESPN.

