

Long night in Oostburg grounds Rockets

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Hard-hitting Dutchmen seize control of CLC race with shutout win that dashes CG-Belgium's title hopes

Wind-swept rain was no friend to the Cedar Grove-Belgium football team last Friday night.

But hard-hitting Oostburg provided an even more annoying obstacle, grinding out a 30-0 victory that effectively dashed the Rockets' shot at a third straight Central Lakeshore Conference title.

"It was a tough game," said Cedar Grove-Belgium coach Chris Zablocki, whose team fell to 2-2 in league play, two games behind first-place Oostburg with three weeks left in the regular season.

"We lost two defensive starters (lineman Matt Mueller and back Brady Myhre) in the first quarter, which hurt, and were never able to get much going.

"A lot of credit goes to Oostburg's coaching staff and players. They came out and got the job done."

The Flying Dutchmen, who stand alone atop the league race with a 4-0 record, stymied the Cedar Grove-Belgium offense. They allowed only 133 total yards and three first downs on a night when conditions forced both teams into ball-control mode.

Together, the teams attempted only nine passes and completed one — a 17-yarder from Cedar Grove-Belgium quarterback Travis Obbink to tight end Jonathan Herzog.

But the Dutch were able to control field position and the clock by piling up 316 yards rushing. Sam Schouten carried most of the load, running for a game-high 129 yards and two touchdowns on 22 attempts.

Schouten's 67-yard scoring run in the third quarter helped break the game open after the Dutchmen held a 10-0 lead at halftime. He ended the suspense with a 26-yard touchdown burst in the fourth quarter.

For good measure, Schouten also used his kicking leg to sting the Rockets. Besides booting a 36-yard field goal in the second period, he made all four of his extra-point attempts.

Quarterback Mike Keller put Oostburg ahead for good with a 57-yard touchdown scamper in the first quarter and capped the scoring with a 1-yard keeper.

"Oostburg controlled the line of scrimmage, and that was the biggest factor in the game," Zablocki said.

"Between them and the weather, we had trouble getting our offense moving. You couldn't pass,

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and when you have trouble running the ball, there isn't much else you can do."

The Rockets, who slipped to 3-3 overall, had a tough challenge entering this season with a young roster. Their ranks became further thinned when Mueller, a junior, and Myhre, a sophomore, went down with ankle and hip injuries, respectively.

By the end of the game, the Rockets had seven players on the sideline who were knocked out by injuries this season, Zablocki said. Among them was junior Hunter Buechler, the Rockets' top runner and a standout linebacker.

"This is the first time we've ever experienced something like this," Zablocki said.

"Injuries are part of football, but there's no question it's had a great effect on how we're able to do things."

Despite the mishaps, Cedar Grove-Belgium still has its sights on a WIAA playoff berth. With a win by forfeit against Stockbridge assured in their regular-season finale, the Rockets need one more victory to secure a post-season berth.

They're take aim at one this Friday when they host Elkhart Lake in a 7 p.m. homecoming game also designated as Senior Night.

Due to the Stockbridge forfeit, the contest will be the Rockets' home finale.