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Oostburg blanked again as Rockets win rematch to advance in Div. 5 playoffs

The suspense that often highlights rematches between hard-hitting football teams lasted about one half last Saturday at Cedar Grove-Belgium High School.

Thanks to a determined effort, underdog Oostburg made things interesting in a second-round WIAA Division 5 playoff game, but it wasn't enough to prevent the host Rockets from pulling away in the second half for a 31-0 win that kept them on a postseason roll.

"Everything's out the window when you play someone a second time," Cedar Grove-Belgium coach Chris Zablocki said of his team's rematch against a foe that lost to the Rockets, 35-0, in Central Lakeshore Conference play Sept. 25 — and didn't get much closer the second time around.

"Oostburg's kids came out fired up and ready to play, and I told our kids that they would.

"But our kids were just as ready. To their credit, they worked hard, prepared for this game and did whatever they had to for a win."

With the victory, second-seeded Cedar Grove-Belgium improved its season record to 11-0 and advanced to a third-round game at 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7, in Fond du Lac against top-seeded St. Mary's Springs.

Unlike the teams' previous meeting, the Rockets didn't seal the deal in the Oostburg rematch until they scored three second-half touchdowns.

The Flying Dutchmen (9-2), whose only two losses this season came against Cedar Grove-Belgium, trailed, 10-0, at halftime and were poised to cut the deficit when they drove to the Rockets' 41-yard line early in the third period.

However, the Cedar Grove-Belgium defense ended the threat by stuffing a pair of running plays. After stopping quarterback Marcus Buehler an inch short of a first down on a third-down sneak, the Rockets gang-tackled tailback Jake Menzel for a one-yard loss on fourth down.

The Rockets took over with 8:08 left in the period, their lead preserved and momentum firmly on their side.

"The stop we got on fourth down was a play that took the wind out of Oostburg's sails," Zablocki said. "It was typical of what our defense has been able to do all season."

Six plays later, Cedar Grove-Belgium capped a 59-yard scoring drive when quarterback Kyle Bruggink rolled out and found Tyler Garcia wide open in the Oostburg secondary for a 33-yard touchdown pass. The completion was the first of the game for the Rockets, who relied heavily on a rushing attack that piled up 284 yards on 57 attempts.

"I knew that play-action pass would work," Zablocki said. "When Oostburg started stacking their defense at the line, it opened things up for us."

Besides having their hands full with a finely tuned foe, the Dutchmen had to play the second half without their biggest weapon. Luke Menzel, their top rusher and defensive back, went down with a season-ending lower-leg injury late in the first half.

After taking a 17-0 lead into the fourth quarter, the Rockets added a pair of insurance scores on touchdown runs of six and seven yards by tailback Nic Vrubley.

Vrubley, a senior, finished with 115 yards on 29 carries. He also used his right foot to provide seven points — four on conversion kicks and three on a 26-yard field goal that sliced through a brisk crosswind on the final play of the first half.

The Rockets also got plenty from the other half of their powerhouse backfield. Fullback Spencer Jacque rushed for a game-high 155 yards on 18 carries, including a 61-yard touchdown burst that put his team ahead for good on a pivotal play in the second period.

With less than six minutes to play in the first half, Oostburg had played the Rockets to a scoreless standoff. The Dutchmen mounted a drive that reached the Cedar Grove-Belgium 30,

but lost yardage on a running play and an incomplete pass that left them facing a fourth-and-13 at the 34.

When Oostburg elected to go for it, Buehler's pass was intercepted by linebacker Nate Drewry, who returned the ball to the Rockets' 39. On the next play, Jacque took the handoff on a trap play, cut to the right sideline and raced untouched for a score with 5:03 left.

"Those two plays were huge momentum changes," Zablocki said of the turnover and Jacque's sprint.

"The game could have easily been 0-0 at halftime, but our kids found a way to make some clutch plays."

The loss of Luke Menzel seriously hampered Oostburg's comeback attempt, Zablocki said. However, even with the senior standout in the lineup, the Dutchmen had trouble moving the ball.

They finished the game with just 68 yards in total offense, including 57 rushing yards on 29 attempts.

The play of linemen Wayne Paulus and Aaron Bley and linebackers Jacque, Drewry and Ian Evans helped stonewall the Dutchmen at nearly every turn.

"Oostburg has an excellent team, no doubt about that," said Zablocki, whose squad knocked the Dutchmen out of the playoffs for the second straight year.

"We've had a good rivalry with them, but we've been able to beat them the last five times we've played."

CG-Belgium 42, Kenosha St. Joseph's 7

The Rockets didn't let an early 7-0 deficit keep them from pounding out an easy win at home in a first-round playoff game Oct. 27.

St. Joseph's jumped ahead on a 1-yard touchdown run by Ian Neville in the opening period, but Cedar Grove-Belgium did the rest of the scoring.

After Vrubley's 27-yard touchdown run tied the game in the first quarter, Jacque scored on runs of three and 74 yards in the second period to give the Rockets a 21-7 lead at halftime.

In the third quarter, Bruggink threw a 30-yard touchdown pass to Jesse Anderson, and Jacque added a 69-yard scoring run.

Vrubley's 13-yard touchdown run in the final period capped the scoring.

The Rockets collected 494 yards in total offense, including 460 yards on the ground in 43

attempts.

Jacque finished with 216 rushing yards on 11 attempts, and Vrubley had 205 yards on 22 carries.

St. Joseph's, which finished the season 5-4, had 173 yards in offense. Neville had a team-high 70 rushing yards on 21 carries.

THE SWARMING EFFORTS of Oostburg defenders weren't enough to keep Cedar Grove-Belgium fullback Spencer Jacque from rushing for a game-high 155 yards in his team's 31-0 playoff win last Saturday. Photo by Sam Arendt