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By CHRIS YERARICK

- Daily Leader

Kismet – Even with an incredible defensive stand, the Southwestern Heights Mustangs could not overcome the phenomenal pass play of the Elkhart Wildcats on Friday night in their first home game of the season. Southwestern Heights fell to Elkhart 33-8.

After receiving the opening kick-off, the Wildcats scored in their first possession after a dominating pass play on the field. After three sailing completions, the Wildcats sent a pass into the end zone for a touchdown at 8:50 in the first. The successful kick after the score put the Cats on top 7-0.

In the Mustangs opening drive, quarterback sophomore Ben Johnsrud carried the ball for a Mustang first down. However, the running game would be stopped in its tracks, and the Mustangs were forced to punt after only three more carry attempts.

Luck would live with Wildcats all night long. A blocked punt by the Wildcats gave them incredible field position at the Mustang 17-yard line, but the ferocious Mustang defense was not ready to give in. First, junior Ruben Chavez tackled the Cats for a loss of 2. After a failed pass attempt, seniors Ricardo Landa and Taylor Collins tackled the Cats for a loss of 3. The Cats were able to advance to the 1-yard line, but the Mustangs made a fortress around their goal line and prevented Elkhart from taking advantage of the excellent field position.

Taking over on downs, the Mustangs seemed stuck in their territory. The Cats capitalized by scoring a safety at 2:53 in the first. The first quarter ended with a Wildcat lead of 9-0.

In the second quarter, the Wildcats started out again with incredible fortune. After two forced fumbles, Elkhart was able to recover and keep their offense alive. However, the tenacious Mustang defense was out for the hunt. Again with the Elkhart Wildcats knocking on their door at the 1-yard line, the Mustangs took up arms. With an incredible defensive stand by junior Alex Adame who forced the incomplete pass at fourth and goal, the Mustangs took over on downs. Coach Bobby Murphy rejoiced with his defense yelling, "Let's get the offense pumped up!"

After an unsuccessful possession, the Mustangs changed up their offense and swelled with success. Starting at their own 49-yard line, the Mustangs passing game came alive. With a beautiful pass to junior Jeffrey Dutton, the Mustangs gained a first down and marched into Elkhart territory. Consistently gaining yardage on the backs of junior Ruben Chavez and freshman Saul Sanchez, the Mustangs set up a first down at the Cats 3-yard line. With a carry by Johnsrud that brought the Mustangs inches of the goal, the Mustangs knew they had the momentum. Johnsrud carried the ball in for a Mustang touchdown, and with a successful conversion by Collins, the score was close at 9-8 at 3:45 in the second. Coach Matt Scripsick gathered his offense in celebration and yelled, "Believe in me – I believe in you! Yell Mustang pride!"

Getting back on their game, the Wildcats received a short kick-off and great field position at the Mustang 33-yard line. The Cats would capitalize and pass the ball into the end zone for a touchdown. With another PAT, the Wildcats extended their lead at the half 16-8.

In the third quarter, the Mustangs seemed stifled and went three and out in their first possession. Elkhart however took advantage of their good field position and passed the ball in for a touchdown at 7:49 in the third. With the extra PAT, the Wildcats shook the score, and the quarter ended with a Wildcat lead of 23-8.

With a couple of injuries shaking up the Mustangs, the fourth quarter started with an Elkhart stand on the Mustang 32-yard line. Elkhart's senior Marcus Irsik carried the ball 31 yards for a first down and then caught a pass from his fellow senior quarterback James Kelly for a touchdown. With the point after good, the Wildcats took their lead to 30-8.

Heartbreakingly, the Mustangs could not answer and gave the ball back to the Wildcats who scored a field goal at 1:45 in the fourth. The Cats would end the ball game 33-8.

?The Mustangs will be looking for redemption next Friday night when they travel to their arch rival, the Meade Buffaloes.

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