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By JASON EPP
Daily Leader

TURPIN- Sometimes you take the victory however you can get it. On a night when the Turpin offense struggled to move the ball, the Cardinals found a way to win with defense and taking advantage of Fairview miscues to win 20-7.

"It got sluggish out there, and too many mental mistakes," said Cardinals coach Mario Mendoza. "But it is an important victory for us if we want to make the playoffs."

On a night when the Cardinals' offense could only muster 149 yards, the defense stepped up, holding the Fairview Yellowjackets to only 140 total yards.

The key to the game, as it often is in football, was turnovers and avoiding miscues. Turpin finished the game with no turnovers, but Fairview had three as well as 90 yards in penalties.

What may have been the key turnover in the game did not even go down in the books as a turnover.

With about one minute left before halftime Fairview found themselves in a fourth-and-long situation inside their 30. Fairview lined up to punt only to see the ball go sailing over the punters head, and Turpin took over on downs at the Yellowjacket 13 with only 54.2 seconds left before half.

Clinton Toney took the handoff on a run that was supposed to go wide to the left, but after finding nowhere to go, reversed field all the way back to the right and fought his way to the six. A facemask penalty moved the ball to the three. Two plays later, Toney scored from the two

with just 25 seconds left in the half, giving Turpin a 14-0 lead.

Turpin started in Fairview territory on their first TD drive as well. A bad snap had moved Fairview back from the Turpin 46 to their 47. Jake Zielke picked up one of his four sacks on the next play, knocking the Yellowjackets back to their 39. Clinton Toney then grabbed one of his two interceptions on the night, when he jumped a slant route and scooped the pass just before it hit the turf at the Fairview 46.

Turpin ground out a drive, including a fourth down conversion. Turpin looked to have missed their opportunity when Toney dropped a touchdown pass in the back of the endzone. But on third-and-four from the 13 Toney redeemed himself with a great catch that set the Cardinals up within inches of the goal line. Matt Mendoza scored from there for the early Cardinal lead. The drive took 11 plays and 5:14 off the clock to go 46 yards.

"We knew they were going to try and stop our inside game, but that's what we do and we have to keep after it," said Mendoza "We were able to go to some spread and completed a few passes. Clint (Toney) played a great game. Stern (Douglas) was a little banged up and Clint stepped in for us."

One missed opportunity for the Cardinals came in the third. Toney was able to drop a punt that rolled out at the Fairview 4. Fairview fumbled on the next play, setting the Cardinals up at the 14 after a Matt Mendoza recovery. But the offense was unable to move the ball and turned it over on downs.

A Fairview miscue also setup the final Turpin score. After forcing a Turpin punt, Boyer fumbled the return and Turpin's Jake Jimenez picked it up on the run and made it to the Fairview 11 before he was pulled down.

Consecutive penalties put the Cardinals in a bind, staring at a second-and-goal from the 27. But Bradley Kinser found Javier Alvarez for 22 yards, and on third down Mendoza found the endzone with 4:10 left in the third, giving Turpin a 20-0 lead.

Fairview answered quickly scoring on a 61-yard pass reception to Willis Mallory only 17 seconds later.

The Yellowjackets even recovered the ensuing onside kick, but were unable to move the ball. The Turpin defense shutdown Fairview the rest of the way to help preserve the win.

"Our defense did a great job, especially up front," said Mendoza. "Jake (Zielke) did a great job putting pressure on the quarterback. I'm very happy with the front four."

Zielke not only collected four sacks, but led the Cardinal defense with 8 tackles and had a fumble recovery. Matt Mendoza added 7 tackles and a fumble recovery. Clinton Toney had two interceptions.

Turpin improves to 4-1 on the season and 2-0 in district play, and will travel to 4-1 Thomas Friday.

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