

Northern stuns Rocky with late TD pass

Gazette Staff | Posted: Sunday, September 13, 2009 12:15 am

HAVRE - Quarterback Jeff Van Nest threw a 21-yard scoring pass to wide receiver Matt Stuart with 29 seconds left as Montana State-Northern rallied to stun Rocky Mountain College 38-37 in another wild Frontier Conference football shootout at Blue Pony Stadium.

The Lights, 1-1 in Frontier play and 2-1 overall, tied the game at 37-all on the TD reception and Kyle Kercher tacked on the point-after kick to give Northern the stirring victory.

Rocky, 0-2 in conference games and 1-2 overall, got into position for a 49-yard field goal attempt by Bjorn Nelson with two seconds to go, but the kick was blocked.

Van Nest, a senior, threw for three touchdowns on the afternoon, including a 19-yarder to Stuart and a 90-yarder to Coda Tchida during the third quarter. He completed 26 of 43 passes for 424 yards.

Rocky led 27-14 early in the third on a 63-yard run by senior quarterback Kasey Peters, who finished the game with 315 passing yards and 96 rushing.

The Bears had 655 yards on offense, 340 of it rushing. The Lights rolled up 572 yards of offense.

Saturday's game was almost a replay of a contest in Billings on Sept. 6, 2008 when Northern beat the Battlin' Bears 38-37 on a blocked point-after kick in overtime.

This time around, Rocky took a 37-31 lead with 10:19 left in the fourth quarter on a 22-yard jaunt around the end by running back Michael Thomas and a PAT kick by Nelson. It was the fourth rushing touchdown of the game for Thomas, who rushed for 160 yards on 21 carries.

However, the Bears, in looking to pad their lead, missed a 36-yard field goal with 3:23 left in the game. The Lights turned right around and drove 79 yards on 10 plays for the winning score.

With Van Nest leading the way on the final drive, the Lights looked like they were going to be rebuffed deep in Bear territory following back-to-back holding penalties.

But on a second-and-eight play from the 21, Van Nest rolled out and found Stuart, a junior, open in the corner of the end zone for the dramatic touchdown.

"That was a great comeback win for us," Northern coach Mark Samson said afterward.

The Lights have now beaten the Bears in eight of their last nine meetings.

The 90-yard pass play between Van Nest and Tchida helped Northern get within 30-28 with 6:55 remaining in the third quarter. The Lights took a 31-30 lead on a 29-yard field goal by Kercher with 12:56 left in the fourth quarter.

Thomas scored his TDs on runs of 9, 2, 2 and 22 yards.

Nate Barnett had nine catches for 129 yards for the Bears. Levi Sutton also had nine catches for 91 yards.

Rocky will host No. 2-ranked Carroll College, 3-0, next Saturday, while Northern will remain at home to host Montana Western, 0-2.

Carroll 27, Montana Tech 7

At Butte, Gary Wagner threw a touchdown pass early in the fourth quarter and Pat Regan returned an interception for another score as the No. 2-ranked Saints pulled away from the Orediggers.

Wagner connected with Gabe Le on a 6-yard pass to make it 20-7 with 14:55 to play. Regan's 45-yard interception return came with 2:13 to play.

The game was knotted at 7-all at halftime.

Malta's Chance Demarais also ran for two touchdowns for Carroll, including the go-ahead score in the third quarter.

Wagner passed for 186 yards and rushed for 40.

Tech's Matt Komac passed for 312 yards and one TD. He was intercepted three times.

The Orediggers, 1-1 and 1-2, had five turnovers overall in losing their 10th straight game to the Saints.

Eastern Oregon 45, Western 24

At Dillon, Eastern Oregon scored 21 second-half points to pull away from Montana Western.

EOU quarterback Chris Ware passed for 338 yards and five touchdowns. He also rushed for 40 yards.

The Mountaineers led 24-17 at halftime.

Western quarterback Michah Mamiya suffered an arm injury late in the third quarter. He was replaced by true freshman Jeff Logan, who passed for 148 yards and one TD, but had three interceptions.

EOU is 2-0 in league and 2-1 overall. Western is 0-2 in the Frontier.