

# Solid ground game, key plays give Oilers' 21-7 decision over Eagles

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WOOD RIVER — Football is usually a game of momentum switching and making plays at the right time. The team that make those plays usually winds up on top.

Which was the case Friday night at East Alton-Wood River High School's Memorial Stadium, as the Oilers made the key plays, plus used a powerful ground attack led by seniors Zach Womack and Gabe Grimes, in defeating Civic Memorial 21-7 in EAWR's home opener.

That the Oilers made the plays when they had to was something EAWR head coach Garry Herron emphasized to his players after dropping their season opener last week at Breese Central.

“We told our kids after last week that we had to make more plays,” Herron said. “Opportunistic plays. And I think our kids did a really good job of that tonight.”

Both Womack and Grimes were the main focus of the Oiler running game, which was a big part of the EAWR offense.

“Both kids run hard,” Herron said. “Gabe really runs hard between tackles, and we had Zach get between tackles at times, but he's an outside guy, and when he had the opportunity, he got around there. He's quick, he cuts well. And Game just ran with a tenacity tonight that we hadn't seen in a while. So it was good seeing them both run hard.”

An early scoring opportunity for the Eagles went awry after a penalty, and it was a chance missed that swung things around.

“We had our chances early, I thought,” said CM coach Mike Parmentier. “Getting that holding call at the two yard line, we go in for a touchdown, that's a big play. That's a big call there. It takes seven points off the board. Whether he did or he didn't, I don't know. We had our opportunities, I thought our kids played hard, played well. I thought they wore us down a little bit in the second half; that opening drive really killed us.

“Our kids played hard,” Parmentier also said. “I don't really have anything to say; I'm not down on them or anything. We're a young ball club, Wood River's a lot more experienced, and they showed it tonight. But we had our chances, and we just didn't take advantage of the plays we could have.”

That opening drive the Eagles had was most impressive, starting at the Oiler 47. Austin Eaton ran the ball well, while quarterback Brayden Pierce hit a couple of passes. With

fourth and goal on the Oiler two, Pierce ran in for the touchdown, but the holding penalty negated the score, and forced CM back 10 yards, where a Pierce pass intended for Spencer Powell was knocked down, giving the ball to EAWR.



At the end of the quarter, the Oilers produced an eight play, 73-yard touchdown drive, where both Grimes and Womack ran the ball well, and quarterback Justin Englar mixing in some good passes. Englar hit Zach Wells in the corner on the last play of the quarter for the opening touchdown. Englar's convert made it 7-0 EAWR at quarter time.

Right before halftime, the Eagles went on a nine play, 68-yard touchdown march, the key play being a 35-yard pass completion from Pierce to Eaton. Pierce hit Eaton in the end zone, Eaton making a nice catch in traffic, with 12.1 seconds left to tie the score at halftime 7-7.

The Oilers would get the ball to start the second half, and immediately went on a 13 play, 64 yard drive that took 6:39 that would give EAWR the lead for good. Both Grimes and Womack made key runs on the drive, while Englar helped out with a good run of his own. Grimes ran it up the middle for the final two yards and the touchdown that put the Oilers up to stay 14-7 after the convert.

“Just really proud of our kids,” Herron said. “They played an excellent game. I went in and really challenged them at halftime. We were tied up 7-7, and I pretty much just asked them 'How bad do you want it? It's there. If you want it, you gotta go out and take it.' And I think that's what we did in the second half.”

“Yeah, it was a seven-minute drive; it was a great drive for them,” Parmentier said. “We were blitzing, we were bringing everybody. Grimes and Womack did a great job, and (Englar) hit some key passes, I thought. We had them third and 17, and he hits a 18-yard out, and it's a great throw and catch on their part. Like I said, they made the plays on their part when they had to. We came back and moved the football again, but we continued to kind of shoot our foot a little bit, there were an awful lot of penalties on us tonight, so obviously, we have to clean that up.”

The final touchdown was scored late in the game on a four play, 19-yard march that was climaxed by Womack turning the corner and scoring from six yards out with 36.5 seconds left. Englar's convert made the final 21-7.

The Eagles have their home opener next Friday against Richland County of Olney, the only home game in CM's opening stretch, and it's a game Parmentier is looking forward to.

“The first four out of five on the road,” Parmentier said, “So we got these first two out of the way, tough games, and again, games we were right in it, but we just didn't do what we had to do to get it done.

“I thought both teams played hard,” Parmentier added, “and it was a good football game. It came down to a couple of plays, and unfortunately, Wood River made the plays and we didn't.”

Meanwhile, EAWR hosts Madison, who's fielding a team for the first time since 1992, and it's a game Herron knows his players can't overlook.

“I think they'll be a little inexperience there, but they're athletes,” Herron said. “Their track team's in state every year, so they're gonna have athletes, and we gotta be ready for that. We gotta come out, we can't look that game over. We have Marquette after that, but we gotta get at Madison first before we get Marquette.

Coach Parmentier's kids played really hard,” Herron also said. “They stopped some things that we were trying to do, so we had to be a little more creative, which is fine. That pushes us as coaches, and makes our team better. Really big win; I'm proud of our kids and proud for our community and everything else.”







[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)