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Football

Defense and special teams lead Rockford to 28-19 win over Hudsonville

Rockford linebackers Randy Garvin, left, and Brent Showers, pictured during a Rams practice, led their team to a 28-19 win over Hudsonville on Friday, Oct. 4 (Cory Morse | Grand Rapids Press/MLive.com)

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ROCKFORD, MI – It was the type of game the Rockford football team has been winning all season long.

The Rams' defense, led by superstar senior inside linebackers Brent Showers and Randy Garvin, set the tone early with a physical style of play that had the Hudsonville offense on its heels all night long.

And Rockford's special teams made a couple of game-changing plays that allowed the Rams to pull out a 28-19 win over visiting Hudsonville at Ted Carlson Memorial Friday.

“We played to our strengths tonight,” said Rockford coach Ralph Munger, whose team improved to 2-0 in the OK Red and 5-1 overall. “Our strengths are defense and special teams, and it worked out (that) they played a big part tonight. But our major concern is that we need an offense that can make some first downs and sustain drives.”

The Rockford offense sputtered, gaining 245 total yards, including 204 on the ground.

The defense, however, made that output look like a juggernaut compared to the Eagles, who were held to just 35 yards rushing on 29 attempts.

Showers and Garvin, who have started together on the defense since their sophomore year, each had 11 tackles.

“They shut our run game down, and we have to get that going,” said Hudsonville coach Dave Lidgard, whose team fell to 1-1 in the OK Red and 3-3 overall. “It's those linebackers, they have been wreaking havoc in the OK Red for years now. I can't wait until they graduate and are gone.”

On special teams, Rockford blocked an extra point after Hudsonville's first quarter touchdown. The Rams' Jimmy Olewinski later blocked a punt that Caleb Childers scooped up and returned for a touchdown late in the third quarter, giving the Rams a 21-12 lead.

But the Rockford special teams weren't perfect as the Rams missed a couple of field goals, and Hudsonville blocked a punt for a touchdown of its own to cut Rockford's lead to 21-19 with just over four minutes to play in the game.

Rockford punter Quinn Nordin redeemed himself on his next kick, pinning the Eagles deep in their own territory with just over two minutes to play in the game.

The Rams defense held, forcing the ball over on downs, and Rockford senior running back Darian Vaughn scored from two yards out to put the game away at 28-19.

The game was marred by injuries on both sides of the field, the most notable being Rockford starting quarterback Austin McKellar, who left in the second quarter with an apparent ankle injury.

Landen Haney relieved him, and he completed just two of seven attempts. One of the completions was a touchdown to Jimmy Scales in the second quarter.

“He did the best he could versus the circumstances,” Munger said “Next man up, that's what it has to be when injuries happen.”

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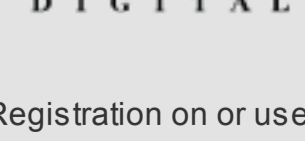
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