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Managing Editor

HENDERSONVILLE - What a time to record your first catch as a high school football player.

Senior Contrez McCathern has run for over 3,000 yards in his high school career, but he had never caught a pass until the last Bears' offensive play Friday. Nolan Chowbay hit the fullback perfectly in stride in the end zone for a 54-yard score with 25 seconds left, lifting the Bears to a 34-31 victory over Hendersonville.

"He was in the right place at the right time," said Head Coach Roger Perry after the game.

The back and forth game had a wild finish, with three lead changes in the final 3:07 of the game.

"It's huge," said Perry of getting the big win. "We had to fight to the end. We said before this would be a playoff type atmosphere."

Hendersonville struck first on an Andrew Pate 38-yard run, but it didn't take long for Mt. Juliet to answer. Caleb Hopkins started the drive with a 42-yard run, and a few plays later scored from three yards out to tie it up.

McCathern blocked a Commando punt on their next drive, which set up a 30-yard field goal for Ryan Jenkins, making the score 10-7.

Hendersonville was able to put together a long drive, but the Bear defense held. Bryce DeGuira connected on a 44-yard field goal to tie it up again.

Mt. Juliet went to work again on the next drive, going 68 yards on nine plays. Chowbay found Jalen Graham in the end zone for a 32-yard score. The ball was tipped by a Hendersonville defender, but Graham was able to pull it in as he was going to the ground.

Hendersonville got into scoring position again, but a field goal clanged off the upright, leaving the score 17-10 at the break.

After an interception, Hendersonville was able to tie the game up once again. Pate started the drive by fumbling, the ball bounced right back up into his hands, and he took off for 52 yards. A few plays later, Colt Culpit scored from eight yards out, making it 17-17.

The tie didn’t last long as Chowbay and Graham hooked up again on the next drive. Graham got behind the defense, and Chowbay hit him perfectly for 76 yards to make it 24-17.

Hendersonville continued to fight, taking advantage of a beat up Mt. Juliet defense, who were short three starters due to injuries. The Commandoes had an 18-play, 80 yard drive. They converted two fourth downs, including the touchdown by Pate, who scored from four yards out.

The Bears answered, chipping away at the Hendersonville defense, including two fourth down conversions by McCathern. However, the drive stalled and the Bears turned to Jenkins for a 45-yard field goal with 3:07 left in the game. The Bears led 27-24.

Mt. Juliet looked to have the game sealed up as they forced Hendersonville to a 4th-and-12, but Pate took a throwback screen for 81 yards putting Hendersonville in the lead, 31-27, with 1:20 to go.

The Bears needed 80 yards in 1:20. McCathern started with a 17-yard run, and Hopkins went for six. Chowbay found Cheatham out to the left for seven yards. After an illegal shift penalty, there was an incompletion and Chowbay picked up a yard on a scramble. On 3rd-and-14, Chowbay dropped back, looked right, where a defender was beating down on him. He spun around back to the left, got his feet set and let it fly. McCathern, who was on a stop and go, had gotten past his defender and was streaking toward the end zone. The ball fell right in his hands near the goal line and the celebration began.

“It was the best play all year,” said McCathern of the final play. He said he was excited that the Bears were able to connect on several passes so defenses can’t key on the run game.

Chowbay was 4-for-6 for 172 yards and three touchdowns. Graham went over 100 yards receiving as well with 102 yards on two catches, both of them scores. Hopkins led the ground game with 141 yards on 14 carries and a score. McCathern had 122 yards rushing on 18 carries. He finished with 176 total yards.

The Bears finish the regular season Thursday at Wilson Central. The game will be televised on WUXP-30’S Thursday Night Lights broadcast. Kickoff is 7 p.m.

This game is expected to be heavily attended and Central anticipates that the school parking lot will be full around 6:30 p.m. Overflow parking will be at Gladeville Baptist Church. School buses will be running from there.