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Managing Editor

Mt. Juliet forced five turnovers in front of packed crowd at Wilson Central Thursday, and came away with a 38-15 win.

The win was sparked by the defense which got two interceptions from Deontre Nealous and several big plays from Josh Belhu, who returned from missing several games with a hip injury.

“Our whole defense played well all night,” said Bears’ Head Coach Roger Perry. “Wilson Central has a good football team.”

Perry said that he thought the team played well in all phases, despite some offensive struggles in the first quarter.

Both offenses struggled in the first as both defenses came out strong. It was a scoreless first quarter, and it wasn’t until Caleb Hopkins’ 56-yard run set the Bears up at the 1-yard line. Hopkins did the rest, and the Bears got on the board. Central blocked the kick and trailed, 6-0.

Central answered late in the second quarter. They got the ball in the red zone thanks to a Jordan Roundtree to Chris Lee reception of 31 yards, but Mt. Juliet’s defense held. However, a

roughing the kicker personal foul on the field goal attempt gave Central life. Another personal foul on Mt. Juliet moved it a bit closer and Alex Price got the score from five yards out to give the Wildcats the lead at 7-6.

Mt. Juliet only had 51 seconds to try to take the lead back. Nolan Chowbay hit Ben Cheatham for an eight yard gain up to the 47-yard line. Chowbay went deeper on the next throw, which was deflected by Central, but still hit Jalen Graham streaking down the sidelines. Graham strolled in, and Contrez McCathern added the 2-point conversion to put Mt. Juliet up 14-7. That lead held until the break.

Mt. Juliet got two big turnovers in the third quarter, and 17 points in the span of 3:07. On the third play of the opening drive, Nealous got his first of his two picks, and set the Bears up at the 18-yard line. Central's defense held, but Ryan Jenkins connected on a 31-yard field goal to put Mt. Juliet up 17-7.

A few plays into Central's next drive, a pass was tipped by Mt. Juliet, and went right to Nealous.

"I was in the right place at the right time," said Nealous of the play.

After a penalty, Mt. Juliet called a fake double reverse and Chowbay hit a wide open Austin Chaplin streaking down the sideline. The extra point was good, and Mt. Juliet led 24-7.

After a Central three-and-out, Mt. Juliet got the ball back. A personal foul moved the ball down to the 22-yard line, and McCathern ran the rest of the way for another Bear score, making it 31-7.

Some good runs by Tim Fitzgerald moved Central back into scoring position in the fourth quarter. Roundtree found Gabe Angel down the middle of the field and Angel trotted into the end zone. Roundtree found Mason Pavan on the 2-point conversion and Central cut the lead to 31-15 with 8:01 remaining.

Central tried a bloop kick, but McCathern returned it to the 20-yard line. A few plays later, Hopkins scored from three yards out to make it 38-15.

“It’s a real big win, a real confidence boost,” said Nealous after the game. “I’m happy to come out with the victory.”

Belhu helped spark a good defensive effort after returning from a dislocated hip he suffered in the Beech game six weeks ago.

“We thought his high school career was over,” said Head Coach Roger Perry.

Perry said Belhu is an impact player and leader for the defense. Belhu had eight tackles on the night, including two tackles for loss.

Wilson Central’s Fitzgerald, playing with a cast on his wrist, had a big night running the ball. He had 166 yards on 20 carries.

Both teams move onto the playoffs. Mt. Juliet will host Independence (6-4) Friday, 7 p.m. Central will travel to Brentwood (9-1) Friday as well for a 7 p.m. game. Playoff possibilities are on page 9.