

Mustangs lose to Pelham, seek revenge with Oak Mountain

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By **ART PARKER**

Stanhope Elmore (SEHS) coach Jeff Foshee said he wanted to get a step ahead in the region race and the best way was to win the first region game against Pelham. Unfortunately the Mustangs didn't get the job done and will have an uphill battle in the race for the playoffs as they were defeated by the Panthers 16-10 Friday night.

It was mostly a defensive struggle and a shoving match for territorial advantage with the game being played primarily on the ground. Pelham gained 276 yards on the night with 252 coming with the running game. SEHS accumulated 205 total yards.

Pelham scored first and early. The Panthers hit the end zone from 3 yards away with about 8 minutes to go in the first quarter and a 7-0 lead.

The Mustangs dodged a Pelham bullet when Desmond Battle blocked a 28 yard Pelham field goal attempt later in the first quarter.

SEHS got on the board when Angel Vasquez drilled a 29 yard field goal in the middle of the second quarter making the score 7-3.

The Panthers responded with time running out in the first half with a field goal that sent the teams to the locker room at 10-3.

Foshee said giving up the field goal late in the half was not a factor with the Mustangs. "In fact, I think it was a plus that Pelham didn't get more than that at that particular time. Keeping them out of the end zone showed determination and character," the Mustangs coach said.

Pelham dug a deeper hole for the Mustangs in the third quarter with a 6 yard touchdown on its

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first possession of the second half. The Panthers extra point attempt was blocked by Jarrett Houston but Pelham still held a 16-3 lead. The blocked kicks were indicative of a good defensive effort on behalf of the Mustangs. "I was proud of our defense and the improvement the guys have made. They certainly played good enough to win Friday night," Foshee said.

SEHS came right back and grabbed control by not letting Pelham get too far away on the scoreboard. The Mustangs drove to the Pelham one yard line. B. J. Smith scored the Mustangs only touchdown with a short run, and with time running out in the third quarter Pelham's lead was cut to 16-10.

SEHS was in position to score with about four minutes to go in the game but turned the ball over on downs. The Mustangs remained determined and held the Panthers without giving up a first down to have one last chance. With a little more than a minute remaining on the scoreboard Smith caught a screen pass and dashed 40 yards to what would have been a great set up to win the game in the final moments. Unfortunately Smith lost the ball, Pelham recovered the fumble and ran the clock out from there. "We had plenty of chances to win but we didn't take advantage of our opportunities. Our youth showed up. Our team is very young and inexperienced. And a lot of these ailments are just going to take time to get cured. We still have a lot of guys that need to play a lot more football. They are trying real hard and they are putting their heart into the game. Unfortunately, you can't gain experience overnight," Foshee said of his team.

The Mustangs will be at home this week and will host Oak Mountain. Last year Oak Mountain upset the Mustangs and the loss caused SEHS a lower ranking in the region.