



WRANGLERS RISE TO THE TOP WITH THRILLING 35-34 WIN

Posted on May 17, 2023 by Ron Williams, Prescott eNews Sportswriter



Photo: Theo Majette gets held as he puts pressure on Panther quarterback Dalton Sneed

The Northern Arizona Wranglers took sole possession of first place Saturday night in the Western Conference of the Indoor Football League with a hard fought 35-34 victory over the Bay Area Panthers at the Findlay Toyota Center in Prescott Valley.

Photo: Theo Majette and Ch'aim Smith bring down Justin Rankin

It was an intense playoff type atmosphere from start to finish. The game began with the Wranglers driving down the field, coming up empty with a missed field goal on their opening possession. The Panthers took advantage of the stop, scoring a touchdown within two plays, when Justin Rankin weaved his way through the Wrangler defense taking a 7-0 lead. Rankin, who was very tough to bring down rushed for 63 yards on ten carries.

The Wranglers got the equalizer on their next possession on an amazing catch. Ryan Wisniewski went high in the air, making an incredible catch in the corner of the end zone, flying over the padded wall in the process. Wisniewski had five catches on the night for 58 yards.

On the following drive, Wranglers defensive back Daniel Wright came up with the game's only turnover when he picked off a Dalton Sneed pass.

Photo: Garrett Kettle releases a pass as Zech Thomas protects

The Wranglers offense was able to capitalize off the turnover, as quarterback Garrett Kettle threw his second touchdown pass of the opening quarter. This time, Kettle located wide receiver Glen Gibbons Jr. for the score and a 14-7 lead.

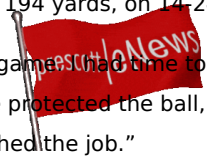
Bay Area scored on a Sneed 6 yard run, but a crucial miss on the extra point proved noteworthy. The Wranglers remained ahead of the Panthers 14-13. The Panthers made the most of another missed field goal by the Wranglers, scoring a touchdown on a Sneed pass to JT Stokes to regain the lead. Gibbons Jr. scored his second touchdown of the half on a one yard run to give the Wranglers a 21-20 at the half.

The third quarter saw the teams exchange leads as a pair of Sneed passes to Stokes was sandwiched with a Kettle 24 yard pass to Ramaud Chiaokhi-Bowman. Trailing 34-28 to start the final quarter, the Wranglers defense held a very good offense to no points, while able to get the score they needed for the win.

On the Panthers first offensive possession of the fourth quarter, Bay Area missed a field goal attempt. The Wranglers offense needed another score, and they found one. The final touchdown was came about when Kettle ran in for the score from two yards out with 3:18

left. The Wrangler QB rushed for 43 yards, and threw for 194 yards, on 14-24, with three touchdowns.

Kettle said, "Our offensive line did a good job the whole game. Had time to get the ball out to the receivers. Coach Rod was preaching all week, take what they give you and that is what I did. We protected the ball, which was huge tonight. The defense came up with some big plays, especially in their final drive, and our offense finished the job."



Offensive lineman Justin Smith said, "We were all upset about that first loss. We took it personal and took care of things tonight and I am happy about that."

Photo: Ramaud Chiaokhi-Bowman is brought down after a reception

The Panthers had an opportunity to regain the lead in the final minute. First when Stokes dropped a sure touchdown pass from Sneed, followed by a second missed field goal attempt, keeping the slim lead with Northern Arizona. Sneed finished 16-25 155 yards three touchdowns and the one big interception. The Panther quarterback also rushed for 44 yards, with one touchdown on seven carries.

Defensive lineman Theo Majette said, "We went hard all week in practice. This game was personal to us. They have a good offense with weapons all over the place. It was good to get the win."

Bay Area burned their three timeouts, but when Kettle hit Gibbons Jr. for a first down, the game was soon over.

Gibbons Jr., who scored two touchdowns, said, "We worked really hard this week to prepare for this game. Once our defense came up with that big stop, we knew we had to keep the ball and run out the clock."

The Wranglers got their revenge from the lopsided 47-13 road loss against the Panthers. Offensive lineman Zech Thomas said, "Man it was a battle out there. Both teams fought hard the whole game, but we were not going to let them come into our house and get a win."

The Wranglers improve their record this season to (5-2), and will travel to Phoenix to face the (3-4) Rattlers at the Footprint Center, on Saturday at 6:05 pm.

NORTHERN ARIZONA WRANGLERS 35, BAY AREA PANTHERS 34

| Score By Quarters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | - | T |
|-------------------|----|----|----|---|---|----|
| Bay Area | 7 | 13 | 14 | 0 | - | 34 |
| Northern Arizona | 14 | 7 | 7 | 7 | - | 35 |

Scoring Summary

BA-Rankin 36 yard run (Johnson kick)

NAZ-Wisniewski 14 yard pass from Kettle (Fischer kick)

NAZ-Gibbons Jr. 8 yard pass from Kettle (Fischer kick)

BA-Sneed 6 yard run (Kick failed)

BA-Stokes 13 yard pass from Sneed (Johnson kick)

NAZ-Gibbons Jr. 1 yard run (Fischer kick)

BA-Stokes2 yard pass from Sneed (Johnson kick)

NAZ-Chiaokhi-Bowman 24 yard pass from Kettle (Fischer kick)

BA-Stokes 16 yard pass from Sneed (Johnson kick)

NAZ-Kettle 2 yard run (Fischer kick)

Att:1,741



IFL STANDINGS

| Western Conference | W-L | Eastern Conference | W-L |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|
| WRANGLERS | 5-2 | Frisco | 7-0 |
| Bay Area | 4-3 | Quad City | 6-2 |
| Tucson | 3-3 | Massachusetts | 4-3 |
| Arizona | 3-4 | Sioux Falls | 4-3 |
| Duke City | 3-4 | Green Bay | 3-4 |
| Vegas | 3-4 | Tulsa | 1-6 |
| San Diego | 2-5 | Iowa | 1-6 |

SCOREBOARD

WRANGLERS 35, Bay Area 34

Vegas 55, Arizona 54

Green Bay 61, San Diego 50

Duke City 56, Tucson 49

Quad City 47, Sioux Falls 30

Iowa 73, Massachusetts 43

Frisco 39, Tulsa 37

WEEK 10 SCHEDULE- Arizona Time

WRANGLERS at Arizona, Saturday, 6:05pm

Quad City at Massachusetts, Saturday, 4:05pm

Iowa at Green Bay, Saturday, 5:05pm

Frisco at Bay Area, Saturday, 6:05pm

Sioux Falls at Tucson, Saturday, 6:05pm

Duke City at San Diego, Saturday, 7:05pm

Tulsa at Vegas, Saturday, 7:05pm

