

By JOHN HENSON

Harlan County Sports.com

MORRISTOWN, TENN — Unlike their three previous season openers, the Harlan County Black Bears won't have to spend a whole lot of time in practice next week talking about what went wrong.

Other than failing to capitalize on a couple of scoring opportunities, the Bears dominated on Saturday in the Citizen Tribune Classic, scoring on four of five possessions in the second half to rout Morristown East 36-0.

It was the first win in a season opener for the Bears, who dominated on both sides of the ball. Morristown East was limited to only 31 yards rushing on 22 carries and standout quarterback Cody Ricker connected on three of 12 passes for 32 yards.

"I'm sure their coach is disappointed in their offense. They have a great quarterback and great speed, but our defense dominated tonight," Harlan County coach Tom Larkey said. "We had to contain (Ricker) inside and not let him get outside. We did a good job of getting a lot of people to the ball."

Harlan County put together three long drives in the first half but only one ended in points as the Black Bears dominated statistically but led only 8-0 at the half.

The Bears marched 65 yards in 12 plays to score on their opening drive as they successfully overpowered the Hurricanes with a power alignment that featured guard Carson Whitehead moving to the backfield alongside fullback Tucker Lewis. Marcus McMillian, Jake Middleton and Cody Taylor picked up nice gains before McMillian went the final yard for a touchdown with 3:52 left in the opening quarter. Middleton added the two-point conversion after a Morristown East penalty moved the ball inside the 2.

"We did a good job on that drive with Carson and Tucker as blocking backs and we put Tyler Ely in there on the line. We'll stick with it," Larkey said. "We should have punched it in a couple more times in the first half, I thought.

Morristown East was limited to zero yards rushing in the first

quarter and didn't pick up a first down until their fourth and final drive of the first half. Logan Overbay had a 19-yard catch on a pass from Ricker after the Bears gave up the ball on downs at the East 16. Chase Brunson ran 12 yards and Ricker ran 21 as the Hurricanes moved the ball to the Harlan County 27. Ricker recovered his own fumble on the next play and time expired with the Hurricanes out of timeouts.

Harlan County had two 10-play drives that ended on downs, one on the Morrystown East 4 and the other on the 16.

Harlan County had 147 yards on the ground in the first half and 28 yards passing, Morrystown East had 37 yards rushing and 32 passing.

The Bears found success through the air on their opening drive of the second half as Jordy Brewer connected with Lewis for a 23-yard gain and then found junior wide receiver Austin Maggard for a 31-yard touchdown strike with 8:26 left in the third quarter.

"I felt the play-action fakes were there," Larkey said. "We missed a pass to the tight end the first half. Jordy did a nice job the second half finding his receivers."

The Bears stopped Morrystown East after three plays on the ensuing possession. Jon Michael Samsel tried to run for a first down after a high snap on a punt attempt, but sophomore safety Zach Chitwood upended him after a short gain to the 40. Harlan County needed only five plays to reach the end zone again as McMillian broke through the Morrystown East line for a 19-yard touchdown run. Josh Jenkins hit the extra point.

McMillian scored on a 2-yard run in the fourth quarter. Jenkins' extra point pushed the lead to 30-0. Maggard and tight end Aaron Caldwell each had catches for first downs in the drive.

After missing a potential touchdown pass in the first half, Brewer was perfect in the second as he completed all four of his attempts for 106 yards. The senior quarterback connected on nine of 12 passes in the game for 134 yards.

Brewer set up the final touchdown when he stepped in front of a Ricker pass near midfield and returned it to the Morrystown East

8. A personal foul penalty moved the ball half the distance to the goal, and sophomore Jake Alred scored two plays later on a 3-yard run.

Harlan County (1-0) returns to action Saturday at the 3 against Lexington Dunbar in the iHigh Fayette Football Frenzy at Lafayette High School in Lexington.

Harlan County 8 0 15 13 — 36

Morristown East 0 0 0 0 — 0

HC — McMillian 1 run (Middleton run)

HC — Maggard 29 pass from Brewer (McMillian run)

HC — McMillian 19 run (Jenkins kick)

HC — McMillian 2 run (Jenkins kick)

HC — Alred 3 run (kick blocked)

HCHS MEHS

First downs 20 5

Rushes-yards 53-289 22-31

Passing 134 32

Comp-Att-Int 8-12-0 3-12-1

Punts-Avg 1-9 5-41

Fumbles-Lost 2-0 2-0

Penalties-Yards 10-85 10-60

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Harlan County, McMillian 17-97, Middleton 12-94, Brewer 9-53, Taylor 5-14, Jenkins 1-7, Lewis 3-6, Chitwood 2-4, Alred 2-4, Chorak 1-2. Morristown East, Brunson 6-22, Ricker 12-14, Samsel 1-4, Campos 2-(-3), Thompson 1-(-6).

PASSING—Harlan County, Brewer 8-12-0-134. Morristown East, Ricker 3-12-1-32.

RECEIVING—Harlan County, Maggard 3-78, Caldwell 2-21, Middleton 2-12, Lewis 1-23. Morristown East, Overbay 1-19, Thompson 1-10, Guerrero 1-3.