

Pirates ready for district opener against Stephenville

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By Matthew Brice Oct 19, 2018



Waco La Vega QB Ara Rauls takes off against Pflugerville. (Photo: Waco Tribune)

The Waco La Vega Pirates earned themselves a needed bye week after their 56-19 victory over Texarkana Liberty-Eylau on October 5th. The bye week gave them an extra week to prepare for the Stephenville Yellow Jackets, who come to town for a 7PM kickoff on Friday evening.

Keys to the game

Stephenville

Offensively, running back Krece Nowak is the Yellow Jackets best player. For the past two seasons, he has been the focal point every opponent has tried to disrupt while trying to stall out the Yellow Jackets' offense. Continuing to feed him will open up everything on the outside for the Yellow Jacket passing arsenal. Austin Kade Renfro has been the 'Jackets' signal caller at QB for the last 3 games, filling in for Cole Stanley. Whether it's Renfro or if the 'Jackets go back to Cole Stanley, both will need to be ready to stretch the field once the Pirates defense decides to load up and attempt to take Nowak and the running game out of the equation. However, look for Nowak to also play a big role in the passing game as he's also the 'Jackets' leader in receptions and yards. Sophomore Gavin Rountree leads the 'Jackets in receiving touchdowns and his presence and performance will be needed to help take some pressure off of Nowak. Defensively, linebacker Blu Caylor anchors a

defense that should show up wearing their track shoes. The Pirates will be the fastest team that the 'Jackets have faced all year. However, Caylor along with sophomore fellow linebacker Quentin Walker, must also play fundamentally sound football and not over-commit on running plays. Pirate running backs are very good at finding the cutback lanes and turning what should be a small gain into a huge gain. Defensive backs Gage Graham and Chase Carrillo are the leaders on the back end they must also play fundamentally sound football. The Pirates are very good at beating teams deep on the play action after luring them to sleep with the running game. Graham and Carrillo should expect the Pirates to take at least 2 shots deep to keep them honest.

La Vega

Offensively, the 4 headed rushing attack of Jar'Quae Walton, Elisha Cummings, Ara Rauls, and Josh Hamilton, is what makes the Pirates' offense go. The Pirates' offensive line must also continue to win in the trenches and this will give Rauls and company the opportunity to continue to do what they do, which is get in the open field and win 1 on 1. As a team, the Pirates have scored a total of 17 touchdowns on the ground and they're only 6 weeks into the season. With the 'Jackets looking to load the box and stop the run, the Pirates will need to keep the 'Jackets honest by rolling Rauls out on play action. Keeping it would be an option but also finding the speedy Malachi Wright deep would be an option, as well. Defensively, linebackers Jared and Jordan Rogers anchor a defense that has given up only 18 points per game for the season. While it's a given that they must be ready to follow Krece Nowak, the Pirates can't fall into the trap of leaving everyone else on the 'Jackets offense open. 2 way player Josh Hamilton and fellow DB Quintaveon Mason, will play a major role in making sure that Gavin Rountree and the other Stephenville weapons don't beat them.

The Stephenville Yellow Jackets are already 1-0 in district after defeating a tough China Spring Cougars team last Friday. Can they defeat an even tougher La Vega Pirate squad to go 2-0? Or will the Pirates defend their home turf and make an already long bus ride back home even longer for the Yellow Jackets? Follow me to Waco on Friday evening for the highlights.

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