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By SHAWN YORKS

The Guymon Daily Herald

GUYMON, Okla. — For the young Guymon Tigers, every game is a step in the right direction to eventual success. And for head coach Mike Taylor, it's all about the future.

The Tigers fell to Hugoton, Kan. 52-17 on Friday night. But it was more about how the team handled adversity, down 44-3 at halftime.

“What I was very proud of is the change this year is there is no pointing fingers, no negativity, it's all positive,” Taylor said. “They were a totally different team walking out after halftime. I told them they need to start fast, don't start slow.”

Guymon outscored the Eagles (2-1) 14-7 in the second half.

Hugoton spoils homecoming for Guymon

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But the Eagles jumped up early and often in the first half as the Tigers went three and out on its first possession and netted just 7 yards on the punt, giving Hugoton the ball at the Tiger 40.

It took eight plays for the Eagles to score — a 1-yard run by Yates Sutton with a Sutton to Nic Frederick conversion for an 8-0 lead.

The drive featured a 4th down conversion run by Michael Baeza to keep the drive alive.

Then disaster struck for Guymon (0-3). After fumbling out of the end zone for what was ruled a touchback, Guymon got it at the 20 yard line, that's when Kellen Watkins intercepted an Austin Stonecipher pass at the 30.

But the Tiger defense was doing well holding Hugoton's offense in check, and forced a 4th and 9. Sutton responded with a 9-yard keeper for a first down at the 20. The Eagles put it in the end zone a few plays later when Mitchell Persinger scooted in from the 6, and Ross Davis's conversion run made it 16-0 Eagles.

Matthew Gallegos returned the ensuing kickoff to the Hugoton 11 yard line. And after the Guymon offense stalled, John Avalos booted a 39-yard field goal for Guymon's first points of the game — and season — and the Tigers trailed just 16-3.

But the Eagles took the wind out of Guymon's sails on their ensuing possession when Frederick raced 70 yards for a score with 3 seconds left in the first quarter. Davis ran the conversion and Hugoton led 24-3.

Guymon followed up with a nice drive from its 24 to the 43, with runs by Baily Homan and Brody Nolan. But Hugoton's Bradley Campbell intercepted a Jacob Watson pass and returned it to the 10. After a penalty backed the Eagles up to the 25, they were in the end zone five plays later when Davis raced in from the 11 and scored the conversion for a 32-3 lead.

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Another passing miscue led to a Hugoton score when Watson was intercepted by Kellen Watkins, who returned the ball 32 yards to the end zone and a 38-3 lead.

Guymon tried a fake punt on its next possession, which failed, and led to Hugoton's final touchdown of the first half when Davis raced 9 yards to score and cap a 4-play, 43-yard drive. A 20-yard run by Persinger kept the drive going.

The defenses exchanged barbs in the third quarter, and the Tigers got their first touchdown of the season on a special teams play that Hugoton thought shouldn't have been a touchdown.

After the Tigers punted from deep in their own territory, the ball touched the Hugoton receiver, then the ground — a live ball. Baily Homan scooped it up and raced to the end zone for a touchdown. Avalos added the extra point and it was 44-10.

The Eagles put together a 68-yard drive, with Ulises Reyes scoring from 2 yards out and running in the conversion.

Guymon had some nice defensive plays on that drive, with Demetry Sandoval saving a touchdown when Parker Titus set sail on a long run, and Cale Purdy, Raul Calzadillas, Jesse Carpenter, Levi Padilla, Strattom Blasingame and Jacob Schmitt getting in on the action, as well.

Guymon got its first offensive score of the season on the ensuing drive. After a nice kickoff return by Alex Zakrzewicz gave the Tigers the ball at the Eagle 42, Lozano took Guymon to the 34, but two losses put Guymon in a 4th and long.

Zakrzewicz came to the rescue, catching a 38 yard pass from Watson to the 5 yard line. A few plays later Matthew Mallard scored his first varsity touchdown.

“We're still reloading, we're still going to play these young guys and get them experience, and

that's the only way they can get experience is playing like that," Taylor said. "The future looks good, these young men are getting the experience that they need."

Guymon will be home again next week to open District 5A-2 play against No. 1 Guthrie, while the Eagles will be home against Colby.

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