

Southern Chester County Sports

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Avon Grove defeats Oxford, 37-7

Red Devils improve to 2-0; showdown with Unionville on Friday night

By Steve Hoffman
Staff Writer

Avon Grove players and coaches weren't caught by surprise when backup quarterback Sean Sallee stepped in and led the Red Devils to 37 unanswered points in the victory over Oxford last Friday night.

"We had complete confidence in Sean," said running back Ryan Ayers, who helped the Red Devils' cause by scoring one touchdown. "He always works hard in practice."

The hard work showed when Sallee replaced ailing starting QB Kyle Kush early in the first quarter.

Avon Grove already trailed 7-0 at that point, but there was no panic on the Avon Grove sideline.

"It's all about preparation," Avon Grove head coach Marvin Dooley explained. "Sean is a good example of what hard work can do. He always practices hard every day and he was ready."

Sallee ran for one score and passed for another as Avon Grove overcame a sluggish start.

The Oxford Hornets stung early, scoring on the second play from scrimmage following an Avon Grove fumble of the opening kickoff. Craig Brown moved the ball 20 yards on two carries, crossing the goal line before one minute had elapsed.

The Red Devils' first drive was halted by the Hornets. Oxford gave the ball right back when they fumbled away the punt, but the Hornets' defense refused to budge.

Oxford fumbled away the ball again, setting up the Red Devils' offense on the 14 of Oxford.

Dooley inserted Sallee into the lineup. "We started Kyle {Kush}," Dooley said after the game. "But he was sick all week. Kyle wasn't Kyle so we thought that we needed to make a change."

Sallee admitted that he felt nervous entering the game. He knew all week that he might see action.

"I've been thinking about it the last couple of days," Sallee said. "I was definitely nervous. I knew that I needed to step up."

On his first play, Sallee dashed five yards. A face-mask penalty on the Hornets moved the ball to the four. Two plays later, Ren Hoilman bolted into the End Zone for the game-tying score.

Avon Grove's defense put the ball right back in Sallee's hands by forcing a fumble at the 30-yard line of Oxford. Runs by Ayers and Sallee moved the ball inside the ten. Then the junior quarterback connected with wide receiver Jordan Harris on a beautiful slant play. Oxford stopped Harris just short of the goal. Sallee called his own number on the next play, diving in from one-yard out. Tyler Wilkinson's extra point made it 14-7.

As the first quarter turned into the second, Avon Grove started to take control of the game. The offensive line, in particular, started to produce good results, with Mike Jeffcoats, Jake Disabatino, Colin Valentine, Ryan Smith, and Brennan Pankiw turning in solid efforts.

A special teams miscue by the Hornets again gave the Red Devils the ball deep in Oxford territory. Avon Grove kept the ball on the ground and soon Ayers was dancing in the End Zone. Wilkinson's

kick made it 21-7.

The Red Devils' defense was starting to dominate, too, led by Ryan Samuels and Wes Shoap. The defense put consistent pressure on Oxford. On one play, that pressure resulted in an interception by Zach Johnson. He dodged Hornets as he raced up the left sideline. He made it to the End Zone, but was disappointed to find that a flag had been thrown on the play. An illegal-hands-to-the-face penalty brought the ball all the way back to the 40.

That was no problem for Sallee and the Red Devils. He threw a nice pass to Harris on the right side and the athletic wide receiver went up and hauled it in. The 35-yard play had Avon Grove threatening to score again.

To Oxford's credit, the Hornet defense held its ground. Avon Grove settled for a field goal, which their excellent kicker, Wilkinson, boomed through the uprights with 3:54 left to play in the first half.

The score would remain 24-7 until mid-way through the third quarter, when the Red Devils were again handed the ball deep in Oxford territory. Hoilman raced 16 yards to move the ball inside the ten. Sallee once again connected with Harris on a nice pass play, this one a scoring strike. Wilkinson's kick made it 31-7.

Some of the reserves for both teams picked up valuable playing time in the fourth quarter. Brandon Monk scored on a five-yard run, capping a drive that was highlighted by a long gain by Dillon Hoilman. That score gave the Red Devils the 37-7 final margin.

Reflecting on his first significant action, Sallee said that he'd remember his touchdown run—his first varsity score—the most.

Ayers admitted that the Red Devils were slightly taken aback by Oxford's early score.

"We were a little blown away by that score, but I think it really did fire us up."

He credited the work of the offensive line with allowing Avon Grove to move the ball.

"It's all about the offensive line," he said. "That's where the credit goes. The blocking—it was a beautiful thing."

Dooley agreed. "The offensive line was a concern of ours coming into the season because it was completely new. But those guys have worked hard and done a good job."

He mentioned the leadership of Disabatino and Pankiw on the line with helping the unit gel.

On defense, the coach praised the efforts of Samuels and Shoap, but said that the real key to success was to continue to swarm to the ball.

The coach added, "That was a good win for us. You have to give Oxford credit they played hard. There was a lot of hard hitting out there. We started out sluggish, but we were able to get out of the hole. With Unionville next week, we might not be able to get out of a hole like that."

Ah, yes, the game against Unionville. The Red Devils will take their 2-0 record on the road next week, visiting the Chester

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The Oxford Hornets kick off to start last Friday's game against Avon Grove. The Red Devils fumbled away the ball, allowing the Hornets to grab an early 7-0 lead.

Oxford scored within the first minute of the game on big runs in the Red Zone, but after that the Avon Grove defense swarmed all over the Hornet ball carriers.



The Avon Grove running attack, which paved the way for a season-opening win against Kennett, again dominated the game.



Avon Grove defensive back Brendan McLaughlin tries to pull down Oxford running back Craig Brown.



Photos by Steve Hoffman
Jordan Jones handled the quarterbacking duties for the Red Devils in the fourth quarter.

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