

# Football team falls to West Salem

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**West Linn's football team suffered its first loss of the season last Friday but, in some ways, it may have been just what the Lions needed heading into league play.**

While the score might not indicate it, West Linn more than held its own on the road against West Salem, accumulating more yards on offense than the Titans and moving the ball effectively with the run all night.

But the Lions were stymied near the goal line on multiple possessions which proved to be the difference in a 24-3 defeat.

Mason Finnerty had a breakout game for West Linn, racking up 202 yards on 21 carries, rattling off a handful of impressive runs as the Lions did most of their damage on the ground.

West Linn worked its way inside West Salem's 10-yard line three separate times and, twice, got inside the Titans' five-yard line but none of those occasions garnered the team any points.

A first-and-goal opportunity inside the five was hindered by a 15-yard penalty and West Salem tightened up its defense at opportune times all evening.

The Lions have also not had much experience this season at converting on offense near the opposition's end zone.

"I think it was a bit of a hangover from our previous games where we've scored so easily. We haven't had the opportunity to work on our goal line offense and we just didn't play very well in that part of the field," coach Ron Chappell said.

West Salem got on the board late in the first quarter on a screen pass that went for a 67-yard touchdown.

West Linn was then stopped on its next possession and the snap on the punt went over the Lions' kicker's head and the play resulted in great field position for the Titans.

West Salem converted their good fortune into another touchdown to go up 14-0.

"Defensively we played pretty well. We had one breakdown that went for a big play but, against a good team, it was a solid effort," Chappell said.

Sam Clark had another strong game at linebacker, solidifying that position for the team along with Sean Byrne.

The Lions would notch a 34-yard field goal from Ryan Harman in the closing seconds of the half to get on the board but West Salem would seize control of the game midway through the third quarter with another score.

West Linn's offense never found its footing in the second half as the Titans were able to take the pass away for much of the game.

"They forced us to be one dimensional and when we got behind we started forcing things a bit," Chappell said.

West Salem would tack on a field goal midway through the fourth quarter to complete the scoring.

"I told the kids after the game that I was pleased with their effort. We played well in a lot of ways. The mistakes you make against a good team are always magnified and that's a lesson we learned," Chappell said.

The game was easily West Linn's toughest test to date and it should help prepare them for Friday's pivotal league opener against Canby.

"I think this was probably a game we needed heading into league," Chappell said.

The Lions figure to face a big and physical Canby team at home on Friday and one that is battle tested, having taken on Jesuit and Central Catholic in the preseason.

In a very competitive league, the winner of this game will garner a huge amount of momentum going forward in the season.

West Linn may also have to take on the Cougars without two of their starting linemen as Cam Keizer went down against the Titans with a knee injury and center Ellis Eaton has also been sidelined.

The Lions lost by one point to Canby on the road last year.