

# Lions keep win streak over OC alive

BY MATTHEW SHERMAN

*The West Linn Tidings, Oct 6, 2011*

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JAIME VALDEZ / PAMPLIN MEDIA GROUP PHOTOS

West Linn quarterback Logan Ems scrambles out of trouble in last week's victory. Ems led another late-game drive to propel the Lions.

**For the second year in a row it seems like West Linn's football team is destined to play in nail-biting Three Rivers League contests.**

But, unlike last year, the Lions have been able to come out ahead in those games this year.

West Linn moved to 2-0 in league last week with a 28-27 win over rival Oregon City, rallying from another 13-point halftime deficit and using another impressive late drive to seal the win.

"It's really been a tale of two years. This year, the kids said at the beginning of the season that they weren't going to lose those close games," Coach Ron Chappell said.

In most respects it was a very evenly matched game as the Pioneers are fielding one of their best teams in close to a decade.

But a flurry of activity to close the first half seemed to give Oregon City a golden opportunity to end West Linn's winning streak against them.

West Linn scored first, getting a 30-yard touchdown run from Mason Finnerty early in the second quarter.

The Pioneers would tie the game with 4:49 to play in the half on a 27-yard pass from Landon Martinez to Trevor Dye.

But West Linn regained the lead on the next kick-off when Elijah Eaton fielded the ball at the 12-yard line and weaved his way for an 88-yard touchdown return.

Then, just 30 seconds later, a broken play gave the Pioneers the momentum back.

After a fumbled snap, Martinez avoided a handful of tackles in the backfield and eventually found Justin Cornejo for a 42-yard score. The extra point attempt was missed, which would ultimately be the difference in the game.

The Lions then fumbled at their own 20-yard line. It would be the team's only turnover of the night but it was costly as Oregon City quickly converted it into another touchdown, the fourth scored in the game in a little over a minute.

The Pioneers' defense would come up with another stop and Martinez then hit Adam Genskay for a 55-yard touchdown, making it 27-14 and leaving the Lions stunned at the half.

"We were fortunate the half came when it did because it gave us a chance to recover a bit," Chappell said.

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Like the Canby game, the Lions dug in on defense in the second half and the offense did a nice job keeping the ball away from the Pioneers.

While Martinez stole the show with his second quarter flurry, Oregon City actually had plenty of success running the ball for much of the game.

"Their ground game really gave us problems. We made some adjustments at the half and that was a key for us," Chappell said.

West Linn started its comeback when Logan Ems hit Finnerty for a 53-yard touchdown pass midway through the third quarter.

But Oregon City held tough and maintained its advantage into the fourth quarter.

And, just like the Canby game, it took another extremely impressive drive by the Lions under pressure to put the game on ice.

Starting at its own 20-yard line, West Linn steadily moved down the field as Ems captained what would turn out to be the team's final drive of the game.

The Lions moved into scoring range as time continued to tick off the clock, eventually getting into the end zone on a three-yard run by Finnerty with 27 seconds left in the game.

But the Lions still needed the extra point to regain the lead and Ryan Harman calmly knocked it through the uprights.

"I didn't have any doubt. It's something we've emphasized so much this year," Chappell said.

For the game, Finnerty rushed for 126 yards and led the team in receiving yards while Ems was a very efficient 15-for-23 for 171 yards.

"You have to give Logan a lot of credit to do what he's been able to do in the last two games," Chappell said.

The Lions now have wins over two teams that figured to be in the mix for one of the league's three automatic playoff spots.

"To get these behind us is huge," Chappell said.

The Lions will take on Grant on homecoming night this Friday. The Generals have been strong this season, racking up impressive wins against Westview, Aloha and Beaverton.