

Fumbles, interceptions, penalties, you name it, were enemies of Franklin in its season opener Saturday night at Mercer.

The Mustangs, from midway through the first quarter on, dominated the Knights, 33-6, in the non-region game, which ended with 1:59 on the clock due to a power failure.

Parker Puskar gave the Mustangs a 7-0 lead on a 47-yard run late in the first quarter when the Knights were nailed for minus 26 yards total offense.

After Mercer increased its lead to 14-0, Caden Mincer ran 75 yards for an apparent Franklin touchdown, only to have it called back due to a holding penalty.

Three straight big plays sparked Mercer to a 21-0 lead with 3:45 to play in the first half when disaster again struck Franklin. This time it was a red zone fumble after a 14-yard run by Eddie Mattocks and a 20-yard pass from Freddie Blackhurst to Julian Johnson. (Mattocks and Blackhurst both played quarterback for the Knights.)

The Knights had another nice drive going in the third quarter when an interception stopped them. Mercer answered with its fourth touchdown of the game. The 62-yard march included a 32-yard run to the Franklin 21.

The Knights finally got on the scoreboard with 11:28 left in the game on a 25-yard pass from Blackhurst to freshman Ryder Stevens. The snap was fumbled on the try for the extra point.

Later on, Blackhurst and Jayden Wilmoth connected on a 27-yard pass on third-and-26, but on the next play a sack and fumble gave Mercer the ball back.

The Mustangs' final TD came on a 49-yard run by Puskar. No sooner did Puskar cross the goal line than the lights went out, and everybody went home.

Knight Life -- Mattocks had an interception for Franklin, and Connor Ritchey did a nice job punting (46.6 yards on four attempts) and handling the KO chores...Mattocks led the Knights with 62 yards on 11 carries and Blackhurst completed five of nine for 66...Puskar rushed for 158 yards as the Mustangs outgained the Knights, 350-161...Franklin finished with four turnovers...

