

Out-played,...eh, well... out-everythinged.

The homesteading Meadville Bulldogs put a no-doubt-about-it old-fashioned whipping on the Oilers to end September, virtually clinching a third straight region title.

Final score was 32-8, and it really wasn't that close. In fact, the Bulldogs completed a 44-yard pass -- some 30 yards in the air of fourth down -- for a would-be touchdown, but Brighton Anderson took a knee at the one just before the Bulldogs took another knee to end the game.

Except for a near school record 89-yard touchdown pass from Cole Findlay to Gavin Stephens, Meadville completely stifled the Oiler offense, limiting Ethen Knox to a career-low 49 yards on 20 carries. This after holding him to 95 yards in 2021 and 97 last season.

Knox could never break loose. His longest run from scrimmage was six yards, and he accomplished that twice. Meadville is the only team to hold the record-setting back to under 100 yards. Ever.

Knox went 0-3-4 to start the game and then after Stephens intercepted a MASH pass and Findlay threw an incomplection, 4-2. And then the rout was on.

A 20-yard punt return and a 21-yard run from scrimmage set the Bulldogs up at the Oiler 4, and three plays later soph QB Jacoby Thompson was in the end zone.

The Bulldogs failed on the conversion, but there was more to come. Much more. You know how Meadville just loves to throw the ball -- about as much as the Oilers -- but on its next possession, the Bulldogs' other quarterback, senior Tate Reichel, unloaded an 80-yard touchdown to Anderson. The PAT was good, making it 14-0 very late first.

On the Oilers' next series -- they wouldn't get a first down until midway through the second quarter -- there was a bad snap from center and the ball rolled to the Oil City 30, where Meadville recovered. Lawrence scored from the 7 four plays after that.

The Oilers did get to the Meadville 38 on their next possession, thanks to a couple of big penalties against the 'Dogs and a 14-yard pass to Kevin Pearsall, but that drive fizzled.

Then came the coup-de-you know-it's-not-your-day moment: Meadville was faced with a second-and-47. *Second-and-47!* And boom!: a 64-yard touchdown run by Thompson. That made it 26-0 with 3:26 left in the half.

Oil City's one shining moment, which also offered a glimmer of hope, followed: the 89-yard touchdown from Findlay to Stephens, which prevented a third straight shutout for Meadville against the Oilers. That ranks No. 2 all-time in Oil City annals behind only

Holden Stahl's 90-yard touchdown pass to Brayden Crocker in 2019. Knox added the PAT, but that would be all she wrote for the Oilers.

They did have the ball around midfield with less than a minute left in the half, but could do nothing with it as Findlay -- as he had been doing the whole game -- was running for his life.

Meadville's final touchdown came after the second half kickoff when Reichel tossed his second TD pass, a 32-yarder to Nic Williams.

The Bulldogs weren't perfect. They had more penalties than they probably would have liked and they didn't convert all their PATs. But they shredded the Oiler defense, both running and passing the ball.

Meadville plays McDowell next in a non-region affair. Back to the drawing board and then the Oilers will be home the next two weeks against Hollidaysburg and Conneaut.

OIL SPILLS -- Senior linebacker Hayden Wilson, injured in the North East game, was back in action for the Oilers...Pearsall tied Mario Fontanazza with 30 career TFLs for No. 1 on the "modern" all-time list at OCHS...Tackle leaders were Pearsall with 13, Hank Lockhart and Brayden Buzzard with a dozen apiece, Knox 10 and Dunkle and Trenton Grooms with nine each...Pearsall's punting average is 38.8 yards on 11 tries...JMHO: Meadville is more impressive this year than last...Knox was wearing No. 13 (decoy?) against the 'Dogs...

Stephens got into the end zone just ahead of Williams, a sprint star in track who transferred to Meadville a year ago from Jersey Shore. Williams is the second-fastest Bulldog all-time in the 100 (11.19) behind only state champion Journey Brown (10.43). Stephens and Williams battled all night; at one point early in the game, Stephens, a junior, took a hit to the head that looked like it kinda hurt...

Anderson received kudos for sportsmanship for his kneel, but, just asking, why the pass to begin with?...This week's opponent, Hollidaysburg, is 2-3 with wins over Butler (33-13) and Altoona. Two of the Tigers' losses were to Maryland teams, Ft. Hill and Allegany...