The Pueblo Chieftain

from behind victory earning the RMAC title



Chris Abdelmalek
Pueblo Chieftain

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The CSU Pueblo ThunderWolves hosted the Chadron State Eagles on Saturday, Nov. 15, at home with a chance to clinch the RMAC conference title for the second straight year and solidify their spot in the playoffs.

The ThunderWolves came into the matchup with a 9-1 record and undefeated in conference play. The Eagles came into the game with an 8-2 record and were also 8-0 in conference play.

CSU Pueblo had a rough going with the kicking game. In the first half, it missed two field goals, that would have given it a lead. Instead for the third straight game, the ThunderWolves found themselves down.

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At least thanks to a late score by the offense and the defense stepping up big, the team was only down 14-10 going into the half. In the second half, the kicking woes continued as CSU Pueblo's Jackson Smith missed his third field goal of the day.

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This did not deter the team as the defense was once again able to shut down the Eagles offense. The ThunderWolves offense finally got into a rhythm in the second half, and like the past few games, were able to mount a comeback.

Kiahn Martinez ran in a touchdown to give the ThunderWolves a 17-14 lead, and Keith Mckaney blocked a field goal to keep the lead late in the third quarter. Chadron State answered with a 57-yard field goal to tie the game up in the fourth quarter 17-17.

a field goal to go up 27-24. CSU's Roman Fuller then threw a touchdown pass to Marcellus Honeycutt to win the game 30-24.

"We don't come back from those deficits, and we're not in the position we're in right now, if it's not for the hand of the Lord," CSUP head coach Philip Vigil said after the ThunderWolves third straight come from behind victory.

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"I mean, the hand of Lord has been all over this team, guiding us, and we've got some special players here, and these seniors deserve this today," Vigil said. "I'm so proud of these guys to be able to win back to back (RMAC titles), it's very, very difficult to do, and we faced some adversity, but they never wavered. and the grit of this team is pretty special."

The cardiac 'Wolves went through a gauntlet of games the past three weeks to end the season.

"We played the best three teams in the RMAC the last three weeks, and these guys have just answered the bell every single week," Vigil said. "Maybe not in the way that I would like to in the first half, but they find a way to get it done. That's what's the most important thing is, at the end of the day, they're winning games, and they're champions."

With the playoffs around the corner, the team now awaits the selection committee to see where and when it will play its next game.

"We're going to watch the tape and we're going to figure it out," Vigil said. "We got to stop settling for field goals, and we got to get touchdowns when we get in the red zone. That hurt us today. We'll figure it out tomorrow. We're going to celebrate it right now."