

Conquest squander lead in second half

QB Cole gets battered in Tenn. Valley rally

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Vipers 61, Conquest 49

ALBANY -- Tennessee Valley defensive lineman Terrance Ford had the letters "O" and "R" fall off the back of his jersey by the time Saturday night's arenafootball2 game ended.

The name change was fitting because the Vipers looked like a completely different team in the second half. And so did the Albany Conquest, in all the wrong ways.

Tennessee Valley rallied from a 23-point first-half deficit to beat the Conquest 61-49 before 3,892 fans at Times Union Center.

The Vipers (3-3) scored 36 unanswered points in the second half as Albany (3-2) saw its three-game winning streak end.

"We played a good first half and we played a horrible second half," Conquest coach Jeff Hoffman said. "The defense couldn't stop anyone, the offense couldn't catch the ball and couldn't block."

A ferocious Vipers pass rush sacked Conquest quarterback Dan Cole seven times. Eric Scott had 4 sacks, tied for the third-most in a single game in league history.

Conquest offensive lineman Jacob Hobbs of Schenectady said his team became too comfortable after building its 35-12 lead in the second quarter.

"I think some of us got complacent with the big lead," he said. "Every time we turned around, it seemed like Dan was getting hit, late or when he had the ball. We can just learn from this and get better."

Cole, the Bishop Maginn and RPI graduate, completed 18 of 29 passes for 187 yards and four touchdowns. But the Conquest were limited to 14 second-half points.

"I don't know if we were complacent," Cole said. "I think we just felt apart. We didn't execute. I don't know the reason for it, but we didn't get the job done."

Tennessee Valley began to rally after yanking starting quarterback Brent Dearmon in favor of backup Kevin Eakin with 3:43 remaining in the second quarter.

On his first drive, Eakin threw a 25-yard touchdown pass to Maurice Brown to cut the deficit to 35-18 with 1:29 left before halftime.

Then Tennessee Valley's defense sacked Cole twice to prevent the Conquest from scoring on their final drive of the half.

Albany still led 42-25 when Cole connected with Tramon Douglas for a 6-yard touchdown with nine minutes left in the third quarter.

But Brown caught scoring passes of 28 and 5 yards and Cole was sacked for a safety to bring the Vipers within 42-41 at the end of the quarter.

Then Travis Blanchard scored on a 1-yard run and Eakin threw two more scoring passes to complete the 36-point explosion that gave Tennessee Valley a 61-42 lead.

"I think we needed to come out and finish the game," Conquest wide receiver Chris Bocage said. "We came out and didn't execute on offense and we didn't catch the ball and make the plays we needed to make."

Bocage caught three touchdown passes and returned a kickoff 53 yards for a touchdown.

The Conquest must turn around and play at Daytona Beach on Thursday.

"We've got to respond by 8 o'clock (this) morning," Cole said. "We've just got to get the job done."

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