

## Late spree keeps Conquest on a roll



**ALBANY** The rolls were so delicious, the Albany Conquest barely had room to finish their steak.

After a glut of touchdowns in the opening minutes, the Conquest offense slowed it down and found themselves in a tight game against Mahoning Valley on Saturday night, but came up with one big swallow in the fourth quarter, scoring four touchdowns to defeat the Thunder, 61-49, at the Times Union Center.

Since opening the season with a loss at Mahoning Valley, Albany (3-1) has won three straight, and the Thunder (1-4) have lost four straight.

The Conquest's first three possessions amounted to three total plays, all touchdown passes by Dan Cole in building a 20-7 lead with just 4:47 elapsed.

Still, it took two touchdowns by Antwun Williams and one each from Chris Bocage and Vernard Abrams in the fourth to put the Thunder away.

---Conquest QB Dan Cole attempts a third quarter first down near the Mahoning Valley goal in arena football action Saturday night in Albany.

Bocage's 13-yard score from Cole gave the Conquest a 54-42 lead with 6:08 left, and Abrams iced it one play after a wild sequence on a blocked field goal attempt. Offsetting penalties gave Albany another crack at the field goal from the two, and head coach Jeff Hoffman scrapped that idea and ran a play for Abrams instead, which resulted in a two-

yard touchdown to produce the final score with 56.9 seconds left.

"We felt like if we put some points up, we could take the game over, but we didn't end up doing it until the fourth quarter," said Cole, who completed just 13 of 32 passes after his initial burst of production on the first three plays of the game.

"We had two big one-hitters, then a short field [for a touchdown], and I tried to get a little ball control in the first half to control the clock a little bit, and all of a sudden, we got a little sloppy offensively," Hoffman said.

The Conquest cleaned their plate, though.

Albany burned defensive back Melvin Matlock all night, including Bocage's touchdown from the 13. At the snap, he took a hard step to the outside and cut inside to catch Cole's pass in stride to make it 54-42.

"We had No. 24 all day," Bocage said. "We knew that if we got up on him and gave him a stem and ran our routes really crisp, we could beat him. So coach looped me in motion, I gave him an outside corner step, went to the post and it was wide open.

"That's his job. We're out here to kick his butt, and that's what we're going to do to that guy. I don't feel bad for him at all. We knew we had a matchup [advantage], and executed it better than they did."

Mahoning Valley answered with a quarterback keeper by backup John Tackmann from the one to cut it to 54-49, and Albany's inability to score on first-and-goal situations in the game almost came back to haunt the Conquest again on the next series.

On fourth down from the two, Albany went for a field goal to go up by eight, but a bad snap led to Jason Fralicker's kick to line-drive into the back of one of his teammates.

He was able to collect the bouncing ball and was facemasked as he spun around to throw it. The penalty was offset by an offside, and given another chance from the same spot, Hoffman decided to go for the touchdown this time.

Abrams ran a quick slant, and Cole delivered on the money to make it 61-49.

“When they blocked that one, I’m not giving them another opportunity,” Hoffman said. “I went to the drawing board and went with the play we scored the two-point conversion on again. They were playing press across the board, and gave me what I wanted.”

**Bocage’s touchdown was set up by a big defensive stand.**

On third down from their own 15, Mahoning Valley quarterback Josh Swogger threw two incomplete passes, scrambling on fourth down and chucking one down the middle that wasn’t close to anyone, leading Conquest defensive lineman Ed Greene to celebrate as he left the field.

After sitting out two games, Greene had a nice night pressuring Swogger.

“Ed had something to prove,” Hoffman said. “He came out with a vengeance and made some things happen.”

“It was horrible sitting out,” Greene said. “I never sat a game in my life. I was depressed. I felt that if I came in here and did something to help my team, it would be worth it. The coaches told me I had to prove myself again.”

Fullback Tim Murphy, playing in just his second game of the season, had a huge night for Mahoning Valley, with three touchdowns, 52 yards running on three carries and eight catches for 108 yards.

Williams and Bocage, filling in for the injured Jared Jones, each had six catches for the Conquest. Williams had four touchdowns and 163 yards, and Bocage proved to be a productive complement.

**“Chris is quietly a very good football player,” Hoffman said. “He doesn’t say much, takes great notes. He protects the ball. He’s steady.”**

Mahoning Valley 14 7 14 14-49

Albany 20 14 0 27-61

First quarter

A – A. Williams 38 pass from Cole (Fralicker kick), 14:20.

MV – Murphy 43 pass from Swogger (Schorejs kick), 12:28.

A – A. Williams 34 pass from Cole (Fralicker kick), 11:10.

**A – Bocage 6 pass from Cole** (kick failed), 9:13.

MV – Murphy 15 pass from Swogger (Schorejs kick), 2:10.

Second quarter

A – Brady 20 fumble return (Fralicker kick), 6:06.

MV – Tolbert 25 pass from Swogger (Schorejs kick), :47.

A – DeLuise 1 run (Fralicker kick), :01.

Third quarter

MV — Murphy 4 run (Schorejs kick).

MV — Tolbert 32 pass from Swogger (Schorejs kick), :50.

Fourth quarter

A — A. Williams 21 pass from Cole (Fralicker kick), 13:57.

MV — Tackmann 2 run (Schorejs kick), 11:59.

A — A. Williams 45 pass from Cole (Fralicker kick), 10:27, 10:27.

A — Bocage 13 pass from Cole (pass failed), 6:08.

MV — Tackmann 1 run (Schoresj kick), 3:19.

A — Abrams 2 pass from Cole (Fralicker kick), :56.

Team statistics

First downs — MV 21, ALB 17. Rushing — MV 11-77, ALB 8-17. Passing comp-att-int-yds — MV 17-30-1-210, ALB 16-35-0-245. Total offense — MV 43-287, ALB 43-262. Kickoff return yards — MV 6-149, ALB 6-136. Fumbles-lost — MV 3-2, ALB 0-0. Pen-yards — MV 8-75, ALB 7-41. Sacked by-yds — MV 0-0, ALB 2-17.

Individual statistics

RUSHING

MV-Murphy 3-52, Tolbert 6-84, Swogger 2-6, Tackmann 2-4, Lane 1-(-1). ALB-Bocage 2-14, Bauer 1-3, DeLuise 1-2, Cole 4-(-2).

PASSING

MV-Swogger 17-30-1-227. ALB-Cole 16-35-0-245.

RECEIVING

MV-Murphy 8-108, Tolbert 6-84, Rafe 2-23, Majors 1-12. ALB-A. Williams 6-163,

Bocage 6-56, Abrams 3-16, Hobbs 1-10.