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## Williston falls to Belleview 42-35 after big lead at homecoming



**Williston senior running back Brian Williams bursts through a ring of fire and smoke with his teammates close behind to begin homecoming.**

**Story and Photos By Terry Witt**

**Senior Reporter © Nov. 5, 2016 at 6:07 p.m.**

**WILLISTON** – The Williston High School Red Devils Varsity Football Team nearly toppled a giant Friday night (Nov. 4) when it pinned Class 5A Belleview High School's Rattlers against the ropes in the first half, but the homecoming game ended instead in heartbreak for the Red Devils.

The Red Devils lost 42-35 to the Rattlers after giving away a 35-7 lead at halftime that withered as Belleview's powerful air and ground game and its defense began to dominate.

Williston is a Class 1A team with many young players. Belleview is four classifications bigger than Williston. Their king size defensive line put heavy pressure on Williston quarterback C.J. Strange in the second half, pressuring him on every play and disrupting Williston's passing game.

Red Devil Head Varsity Football Coach Justin Wentworth told his players the lesson they should learn from the game is to finish what they start, but he gave Belleview credit for not giving up when they were trailing by 28 points at the half.

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“They’re a 5A football team with 26 transfers from Vanguard and all over the place; good job by Coach (John) Brantley and his staff to not give up; they could have folded their tents; they didn’t, and its hats off to him. I expected nothing less from his program,” Wentworth said. “Good luck to them in the playoffs. Our program is headed nothing but in the right direction. I’m real proud of our kids. We just need to learn how to finish.”

Coach Wentworth told the players after the game their motto for next season is to “finish.”



**Star Red Devil running back Gerard Williams rounds right end with blocker Jarrett Jerrels accompanying him.**

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**Jeremiah Williams makes his cut as he looks to head up field for Williston.**



**Defensive back Quinyon Mitchell breaks up a pass in the end zone for Williston, sending the ball careening off to the right.**

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Williston dominated the first half. Belleview dominated the second half.

Many of the Red Devils players were injured in the game. The loss of middle linebacker T.J. Pitts late in the first half and the loss of lead running back Gerard Williams III in the second half reduced Williston's effectiveness on both sides of the ball.

Williston grabbed an early 8-0 lead when Strange threw an 8-yard touchdown pass to Albert Fuller and followed it with a two point conversion pass to Fuller.

Belleview got on the scoreboard when a Williston punt was blocked into the end zone and recovered by the Rattlers for a touchdown. The extra point was good. Belleview wouldn't score again in the first half.

Williston added to its lead in the second quarter when Williams sprinted around left end to score. Strange threw the two point conversion pass to Jarrett Jerrels to extend the Red Devil lead to 16-7 with 10:18 left in the half.

The Red Devil defense shut down Belleview on its next drive. Williston took over on downs and drove from its own 13 to score on a 5-yard run by Williams. Brian Williams ran for the two point conversion, leaving the score 24-7.

Williston scored on an 80-yard touchdown pass to Jeremiah James with 3:12 left in the half. Gerard Williams ran for the two point conversion, leaving the score 32-7.

The Red Devils could do nothing wrong in the first half. Williston recovered a fumble on Belleview's next possession. Williston drove to the 19-yard line. Braden Major kicked a 29-yard field goal to extend its lead to 35-7.

When the second half started, Belleview scored twice in the space of 2 1/2 minutes. Its mojo was working. The Rattlers scored again to start the fourth quarter and scored yet again with 2:56 left in the game. But the tide seemed to turn in Williston's favor on the extra point.

A 5-yard penalty against Williston on the extra point was accepted by Belleview even though the kick was good. The penalty moved the ball half the distance to the goal line. The extra point was erased. Belleview decided to punch the ball into the end zone with a two point conversion run.

It didn't work.

Williston's Will Thompson and platoon of Red Devils stopped the run short of the end zone, leaving the Red Devils with a thin lead of 35-34 with 2:42 left on the clock.

The Red Devil drive on its next possession went terribly wrong when Strange, under extremely heavy pressure from the muscular Belleview defensive line, heaved a pass toward the sidelines and was intercepted Belleview's Gavin Pate. He returned the ball to the Williston 21.

Zian King, Belleview's quick running back, scored three plays later to put Belleview out in front 40-35 with 1:06 left. King ran for the two point conversion to extend the lead to 42-35.

When Williston got the ball back for its final drive, Belleview continued to exert enormous pressure on Strange when he attempted passes. Williston ran out of downs. Belleview ran out the clock.