

&gt;

By Dan Glickman  
Freelancer for MPM

[Print Page](#)

September 27, 2014 12:00PM

## Midlakes football stuns Marcus Whitman in OT

Jordan Miller found Sam Pierce for the winning touchdown

GORHAM — Midlakes stunned host Marcus Whitman on Friday, 34-31, in the first overtime game in Wildcat Field history. Screaming Eagle Sam Pierce pulled down a pass in the end zone from Jordan Miller to trump the Wildcats overtime field goal and get the Midlakes its first victory of the season.

"There's no describing this for us," said Pierce, a senior. "It's the best feeling in the world to come away with such a win."

"Overtime, catching that ball, the whole crowd roars, it's unbelievable, your heart's going a million miles an hour," he added. "It's awesome."

It was an improbable victory in many ways, coming after the loss of the speedy senior Alex Hassam late in the third quarter and requiring two touchdowns and a two-point conversion in the final three minutes of regulation to force overtime. In addition, throughout the game it had seemed like Marcus Whitman (1-3) was dominating the Screaming Eagles (1-4), leading them in almost every offensive category.

"We had that never-give-up attitude," said Midlakes head coach John Lombardi, who had a tub of Gatorade thrown on him after the game, "They had it in them, they had that fire in them tonight."

"They never put their heads down," he added. "We just tell them, 'That's why they play the game,' you never know."

For most of the game, there was, however, one thing that everyone did seem to know: Whitman was going to keep utilizing their senior running back Lane Brown. Given 39 carries for 256 yards, Brown seemed involved in nearly every Wildcats play, finding the end zone three times in the first half.

Nearly as involved, however, was Hassam, who was able to accelerate with ease from the Whitman defense whenever he found space. In the first half alone, he broke out on touchdown runs of 73 and 80 yards. The second touchdown, coming with just under four minutes left in the first half, gave the Eagles a 14-13 lead after Robert Middlebrook ran in the two-point conversion. That lead, it would turn out, would be the only one that Midlakes would have during regulation.

After Brown's third touchdown of the half with 2:13 left in the second quarter, the score would be 21-14 Wildcats going into halftime. It could have been greater, as a late fumble by Midlakes quarterback Jordan Miller gave Whitman the ball with seconds left, but a final Lane Brown attempt came up just short of the end zone.

Although no scoring would take place in the third quarter, a potential turning point did occur with a bit over four minutes left, as Hassam, who had had 161 yards rushing and 70 yards returning, appeared to suffer a leg injury after a running play in Whitman territory. Down on the field for several minutes, he was helped off the field, clearly hobbling and was later removed from the sideline in a cart.

"It was kind of a rally point for our kids," said Lombardi. "When he got hurt our kids said, 'Let's win this one for Alex.'"

Still, without Hassam, it was not until late in the fourth quarter that Midlakes would find the end zone again, as Middlebrook broke loose for an 89-yard touchdown run with around three minutes left in the game. However, that enthusiasm was soon deflated when a two-point conversion was stopped, making the score still 21-20 in Whitman's favor. Worse for Midlakes, the Wildcats recovered the onside kick and Lane Brown was able to go 46 yards for his fourth and final touchdown of the game, making it 28-20 after a Ben Sennett extra point.

The momentum in the game soon shifted again on the kickoff, as Collin Farrell, a junior, was able to take the kick back 95 yards for a touchdown. Jordan Miller was then able to find Andrew Landschoot for a game-tying two-point pass, which would force overtime.

In overtime, Midlakes' defense stood firm, holding Whitman to a field goal. On third down, Miller found Pierce, who was able to pull down the throw in center of the end zone for the winning score.

The win made Lombardi emotional:

"I was in tears," he said, "I see how hard my kids work in practice, and I felt pure joy for my kids. Not for myself, pure joy for my kids to feel the taste of victory." He noted how the group of juniors and seniors had never won a game on JV or varsity before, making this their first win in competition at the high school level.

On the other side, Whitman coach Matt Silco expressed regret over the Wildcats' penalties and lack of execution. Whitman had seven penalties for 70 yards.

"That's not our brand of football," he said, "You can't win football games that way. We had a bit of a mental breakdown there."

Midlakes returns home to face Mynderse at 7:15 p.m Friday, while Marcus Whitman will look to rebound at Lyons at the same time.

<http://www.mpnnow.com/article/20140927/SPORTS/140929643>

Print Page