

Undefeated Army Wins 10th Straight Topping UAB 44-10 in Return Home

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West Point, N.Y. – Yes, Army dominated in its 44-10 rout of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (1-5, 0-3) on Saturday at Michie Stadium. But Head Coach Jeff Monken knows that the Black Knights are far from a perfect team.

It is the schedule that has Monken concerned. Each of the opponents that Army has played so far has had serious flaws. Sure, the Black Knights executed their fundamentals and assignments well and came away with a half dozen victories, but it should be noted that each of those opponents – which featured bigger, faster and more athletic players – has a losing record. Army has yet to face a team that is performing well. While the cadets have exploited weaknesses of other squads, no opponent has been able to push their flaws.

“I'm proud of our guys and happy for them that they get to play in the postseason,” Monken said, referencing how Saturday's sixth win made the Black Knights eligible to be considered for Bowl invitations. “But it's two months away and I think we've got a mature enough team that they'll focus and get prepared for this week.

“I hope there's more (performance) out there. We're making enough errors and there are enough things that I see that need improvement. If we don't fix those, we're not going to be able to continue to win.”

Against UAB, an Army victory never seemed to be in doubt. The Black Knights, who extended their longest winning streak in the nation to 10 games, won the coin toss and deferred receiving the kickoff until the second half. The Blazers started on their own 25 Quarterback Jalen Kitna came out throwing – an incomplection to start followed by a couple of short catches that left the visitors facing a fourth-and-1 on their own 34. Kitna handed off to Lee Witherspoon but Army linebacker Kalib Fortbroke through the Blazers line and tackled Witherspoon for no gain.

Army gained possession on downs and an offsides penalty by UAB gave Army a first-and-10 on the Blazers 29. Army QB Bryson Daily took the first snap and immediately cut left, angling forward slightly as he tried to get around the outside of the UAB defense and pulled off the attempt with ease, sprinting 29 yards into the endzone. The one-play drive took just 10 seconds off the clock and Army, which has never trailed this year, was in the lead for good.

UAB responded with its most successful meaningful drive of the day, an 11-play, 42-yard effort that culminated with a 51-yard field goal by Blazers' kicker Jonah Delange. Army padded its advantage on the next possession as Daily directed an eight-play, 65-yard drive that ended with Daily charging 9 yards on a slight delay run off Right Guard Paolo Genneralli. A failed two-point conversion run left the Black Knights ahead 13-3.

On the second play of UAB's next drive Kitna's pass was intercepted by junior Casey Larkin, who added a second Pick late in the second quarter. They were his first interceptions in college competition.

"The quarterback stared down the receiver that he was trying to go to," Larkin said. "Everybody was doing their job, so it made the play easy for me. The ball just ended up in my hands – it could have been anyone.

"It's a blessing (to get the interceptions). I think it's a blessing every day just to play this game for as long as I have. I've been playing since I was five years old, and to play with these guys, they make my job 100 percent easier. The picks don't happen without them. I just love playing on this team. My best friends are on this team. I'll do anything I can just to play as hard as I can for them, and they're going to do the same."

Larkin's first interception and 9-yard return gave Army the ball on the UAB 37. In a trio of shotgun formations, Daily blasted forward for a 21-yard gain on the first play, Fullback Kanye Udoh followed with a 3-yard push, and Daily found the goal line with a 13-yard charge. Trey Gronotte, who was 5-for-5 in PAT (31-for-31 on the year) and a 23-yard Field Goal, made his kick to boost the score to 20-3.

Army finished with 515 total yards (413 yards rushing and 102 yards passing) compared to UAB's 303 (61 and 242). Daily ran 12 times for 136 yards and four TD, Udoh had 17 carries for 97 yards and a TD, while Noah Short had 4 rushes for 42 yards. Daily completed three passes on the day – Casey Reynolds caught the first two (for a 34-yard gain and, three plays later, for a 50-yard touchdown) and Cam Schurr (18-yard catch) grabbed the third.

Defensively, Elo Modozie (2 tackles for loss, sack), Brett Gerena (tackle for loss, sack), Eric Ford (tackle for loss, sack) and Kalib Fortner (tackle for loss) led a balanced team effort that saw Andon Thomas log a team-leading six tackles and 16 players get at least two.

Next Saturday at noon, Army will host East Carolina (3-3) and Coach Monken will be looking to correct some mistakes that have happened in various games this year.

"The team we're going to face this week is a really good football team," Monken said. "If we're going to have a chance to beat them, we're going to have to do all the things that we do even better, and the areas where we're falling short, we've got to get those corrected and get those fixed. We can't miss tackles. We can't let people slide off of blocks. We can't miss opportunities in the passing game and the kicking game. We can't rough the punter. We can't have drive-stopping penalties.

"There's just a lot to improve."

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