

Atwell catches 3 TDs, Louisville tops Western Kentucky 38-21

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- No starting quarterback, no problem for the Louisville Cardinals in their 38-21 victory over Western Kentucky on Saturday in a neutral-site nonconference game at Nissan Stadium. Louisville announced prior to kickoff that starting quarterback Jawon Pass would miss the game due to a foot injury. Redshirt sophomore quarterback Malik Cunningham directed four first-half scoring drives before leaving in the third quarter following a hit to the head. True freshman Evan Conley finished up and threw a 62-yard touchdown pass on his second throw of the game as the Cardinals (2-1) dominated the Hilltoppers (1-2).

In fact, Louisville coach Steve Satterfield hinted after the game that he would be fine playing any of the Cardinals' top three quarterbacks so long as whoever is under center moves the offense.

"We always go into every week (seeing) who's healthy. That's obviously No. 1. And who's going to give us the best chance to move the offense? I don't care. I tell our quarterbacks all the time, 'I don't care who plays. I really don't.' I just want whoever is playing to move our offense," Satterfield said. "As we go throughout the week, we'll evaluate it. I think our team feels good about anybody that's playing. Evan came in and did a good job. I think they love Malik and they love (Pass). Whoever gives us the best chance of winning, that's what our team wants from our quarterback."

Cunningham, who could have gone back into the game according to Satterfield, completed 7 of 10 passes in the first half for 114 yards and two touchdowns as Louisville built 31-7 halftime lead. A 9-yard shovel pass to Tutu Atwell gave Louisville a 7-0 first-quarter lead with 4:18 left. On the Cardinals' next offensive series, Cunningham and Atwell hooked up again on a 46-yard touchdown throw.

Western Kentucky closed to within 14-7 when Steven Duncan found Joshua Simon for a 77-yard TD pass. But the Hilltoppers gave up 17 unanswered points to close out the first half, including a 30-yard score on a fumble return by Rodjay Burns with 47 seconds remaining in the first half.

Hilltoppers first-year coach Tyson Helton said the Cardinals dominated his squad at the line of scrimmage, and that was the difference in the game.

"They just overpowered us, to be honest with you. Defensively for them, they controlled the line of scrimmage. They were able to hold the point and control it," Helton said. "I thought the O-line battled. They were doing the right things. They just got a little bit outmatched here and there. Defensively for us, I think they do a good job in the run game. They can cover the whole field. I thought our defense did fairly well. They moved the ball, but we were able to keep them at bay, but they were able to get those shots down the field, and that's what really hurt us."

For the game, Cunningham completed 8 of 13 passes for 119 yards and added 46 yards rushing on 16 carries. He left with 4:54 remaining in the third quarter on a hit by Western Kentucky's Jeremy Darwin that knocked his helmet off.

THE TAKEAWAY

Louisville: No matter the quarterback, Tutu Atwell proved to be a big-play receiver for Louisville on Saturday. He caught four passes for 141 yards for the Cardinals, with three of the receptions going for touchdowns. Atwell caught touchdown passes of 9, 46 and 62 yards on Saturday. The Cardinals were balanced on offense with 205 yards passing to go with 210 yards rushing.

Western Kentucky: After trailing 31-7 at halftime, Western Kentucky's offense played much better in the second half, but it was highly one-dimensional. Steven Duncan, who had a 77-yard touchdown pass for the Hilltoppers' only first-half points, threw for two more scores in the second half and finished 25 of 47 for 245 yards. Gaej Walker, who came into the game ranked 11th in FBS with 252 yards rushing, was held to 41 yards on 14 attempts.

INOPPORTUNE REVIEW

A fourth-quarter sequence that ended with a fourth-down conversion that was taken away because a third-down play was reviewed, ended up getting Louisville's Jack Fagot ejected for targeting. Western Kentucky, facing third-and-14 from its own 44, got a 12-yard completion from Duncan to Xavier Lane, setting up fourth-and-2. The Hilltoppers ran a fourth-down play and picked up the first down. But the officials blew the play dead.

A replay of the third-down play was instigated, and after review, Fagot was ejected from the game for a late hit on Lane. It left Louisville coach Satterfield perplexed about the whole sequence.

"There were a couple of things I didn't quite understand today. We were all shocked on that because they snapped the ball on fourth down," he said. "We thought they were reviewing the fourth-down play but they said they were reviewing the third-down play, and I thought it was whether he caught the ball or not. Then, they said it was targeting."

LONG TIME

Conley's 62-yard touchdown pass to Atwell marked the longest touchdown completion by a true freshman quarterback since Brian Brohm threw a 74-yard touchdown pass against Houston on Nov. 20, 2004.

MORE LOOKS

The big-play abilities of Atwell certainly caught the attention of Satterfield, who said the Cardinals need to look at more ways to get the football in the speedy wide receiver's hands. Atwell had three touchdowns on his four receptions for 141 yards. He also ran the ball twice for 10 yards.

"We've got to look back and see how many times he was targeted. We've got to find ways to get him the ball," Satterfield said.

SPOTLIGHT ON WKU Helton said he relished the chance to get to play a Power 5 in-state school, and always looks to use those games to get his program more recognition.

"I love the fact that we got a chance to play them. I've said it before and I'll say it again, we'd love to play Louisville or Kentucky every year," Helton said. "We always want to be able to put ourselves on a platform to compete at the highest level and play against teams like that. We've got an inexperienced football team, and I think that was a good lesson for us out there today -- about keep competing and getting better."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
LOU	7	24	7	0	38
WKU	0	7	7	7	21

Scoring Summary -----

	LOU	WKU
FIRST QUARTER		
LOU TD 4:18 Tutu Atwell 9 Yd pass from Malik Cunningham (Blanton Creque Kick)	7	0
10 plays, 58 yards, 4:45		
SECOND QUARTER		
LOU TD 12:04 Tutu Atwell 46 Yd pass from Malik Cunningham (Blanton Creque Kick)	14	0
10 plays, 83 yards, 4:10		
WKU TD 11:12 Joshua Simon 77 Yd pass from Steven Duncan (Cory Munson Kick)	14	7
2 plays, 82 yards, 0:46		
LOU TD 8:08 Javian Hawkins 20 Yd Run (Blanton Creque Kick)	21	7
8 plays, 75 yards, 3:04		
LOU FG 1:23 Blanton Creque 43 Yd Field Goal	24	7
10 plays, 49 yards, 5:10		
LOU TD 0:47 Rodjay Burns 30 Yd Fumble Return (Blanton Creque Kick)	31	7
3 plays, 8 yards, 0:29		
THIRD QUARTER		
WKU TD 11:37 Jahcour Pearson 8 Yd pass from Steven Duncan (Cory Munson Kick)	31	14
7 plays, 36 yards, 2:33		
LOU TD 1:26 Tutu Atwell 62 Yd pass from Evan Conley (Blanton Creque Kick)	38	14
1 play, 62 yards, 0:10		
FOURTH QUARTER		
WKU TD 12:50 Kyle Fourtenbary 3 Yd pass from Steven Duncan (Cory Munson Kick)	38	21
9 plays, 68 yards, 3:28		

Team Stats	LOU	WKU
First Downs	21	14
Passes for First	6	8
Rushes for First	13	3
Penalties for First	2	3
Third Down Efficiency	4-11	4-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-2	1-4
Total Yards	419	289
Total Plays	67	70
Avg Gain Per Play	6.3	4.1
Net Yards Rushing	210	43
Rushes	51	23
Yards Per Rush	4.1	1.9
Net Yards Passing	209	246
Comp-Att	10-16	25-47
Yards Per Pass	13.1	5.2
Times Sacked	1	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-9	-12
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	4	5
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	6	5
Penalty Yards	69	25
Fumbles	1	2
Fumbles Lost	1	2
Time of Poss	31:11	28:49

Individual Stats

RUSHING

LOUISVILLE	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Javian Hawkins	19	93	4.9	1	20
Hassan Hall	12	55	4.6	0	17
Malik Cunningham	16	46	2.9	0	9
Tutu Atwell	2	10	5.0	0	4
Evan Conley	2	6	3.0	0	7
WKU	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Gaej Walker	14	41	2.9	0	7
KeShawn McClendon	2	15	7.5	0	9
Team	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
Joshua Samuel	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
Jahcour Pearson	1	-4	-4.0	0	0
Steven Duncan	4	-6	-1.5	0	1

PASSING

LOUISVILLE	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Malik Cunningham	8	13	119	9.2	2	0	68.5
Evan Conley	2	3	86	28.7	1	0	89.6
WKU	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Steven Duncan	25	47	245	5.2	3	0	50.8

RECEIVING

LOUISVILLE	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Tutu Atwell	4	141	35.3	3	62
Marshon Ford	1	23	23.0	0	23
Seth Dawkins	3	21	7.0	0	10
Devante Peete	1	11	11.0	0	11
Thomas Jackson	1	9	9.0	0	9
WKU	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Joshua Simon	1	77	77.0	1	77
Lucky Jackson	4	40	10.0	0	20
Jahcour Pearson	5	37	7.4	1	9
Jacquez Sloan	6	35	5.8	0	14
Gaej Walker	2	21	10.5	0	17
Quin Jernighan	5	20	4.0	0	11
Xavier Lane	1	12	12.0	0	12
Kyle Fourtenbary	1	3	3.0	1	3