

WEEK TWELVE
NORTH CAROLINA at PITTSBURGH

Pickett accounts for 3 TDs, Pitt edges UNC 34-27 in OT

PITTSBURGH -- The play gave Pittsburgh quarterback Kenny Pickett the option of keeping it or handing it off to running back Vincent Davis.

Only it really wasn't an option at all. Pickett knew he was going to keep the ball before he even took the snap on first-and-goal at the North Carolina 3 in overtime on Thursday night.

"Judging by the way they were playing, I (felt) like it's going to be one-on-one and (I'd) make a guy miss and score," Pickett said.

Done and done.

Pickett's 3-yard sprint over left tackle gave the Panthers the lead in the extra period and Pitt's defense made it stand up, giving the Panthers a 34-27 victory over the Tar Heels that kept Pitt in the mix for a second straight Atlantic Coast Conference Coastal Division title.

"It was a personal game," said Pickett, who threw for 359 yards and a touchdown and added 53 yards and a pair of scores on the ground. "We made it personal this week. A lot of those guys have never lost to Pitt on that team ever. It was a really good feeling to get that win."

The Panthers (7-3, 4-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) ended a six-game losing streak against the Tar Heels when North Carolina quarterback Sam Howell threw incomplete on fourth-and-16. Pitt players and staff poured onto the field in celebration when Howell's heave for Michael Carter in the end zone fell well short.

"Those guys believe in each other and like I said, that's as big a team win as you can have offensively, defensively," Panthers coach Pat Narduzzi said. "They made plays when they needed to. . . Guess the monkey is off the back."

Howell finished 27 of 43 for 322 yards with three touchdowns and an interception for North Carolina as the Tar Heels rallied twice in the fourth quarter to force overtime. Antonio Williams ran for 107 yards and Dazz Newsome caught 11 passes for 170 and a touchdown.

Howell threw two touchdowns in an 88-second span to erase a 24-10 deficit. Pitt moved back in front on a 24-yard field goal by Alex Kessman with 5:18 to play but Howell responded by taking North Carolina 60 yards in 13 plays. Noah Ruggles hit a 32-yard field goal with 13 seconds left in regulation, setting the stage for another tight finish. All seven meetings between the schools as conference rivals have been decided by a touchdown or less.

"That's our second overtime loss," North Carolina coach Mack Brown said. "I'm proud that the kids fight so hard. We, as coaches, have got to figure out how to get them over the hump."

Pitt, which entered the game second in the country in sacks, got to Howell five times, including a sack by Jaylen Twyman that pushed the Tar Heels back to fourth-and-long in overtime.

The Panthers have relied heavily on Pickett this season, partly by design following the arrival of first-year offensive coordinator Mark Whipple, and partly out of necessity with the running game struggling to find anything resembling consistency.

Against the Tar Heels, Pickett found time to let loose. He completed passes of at least 25 yards to five different receivers, including a beautiful rainbow to Shockey Jacques-Louis midway through the second quarter that the sophomore wide receiver turned into a 74-yard touchdown that gave the Panthers a 17-7 lead.

In a series that's found a way to be both lopsided and tight at the same time -- North Carolina's six victories over Pitt entering Thursday came by a combined 26 points -- the Tar Heels didn't go quietly. Howell's fearless play in the second half sparked a comeback that proved North Carolina is heading in the right direction in Brown's return.

A TWO-WIN DAY?

Narduzzi took a not exactly thinly veiled shot at the officiating. The Panthers lost safety Damar Hamlin in the second quarter when he was ejected for targeting. Officials made the call on a play in which Hamlin appeared to make a diving attempt at an interception and instead slammed into Newsome.

"We got two good wins today, beat everybody on the field today," Narduzzi said, later adding, "we had a couple victories out there today. One against UNC and we'll leave it at that."

BIG PICTURE

North Carolina: Howell can sling it. The freshman kept his poise despite being under heavy pressure most of the night. As he matures, the Tar Heels figure to be on the upswing. Still, North Carolina will need wins in each of its final two games to earn a bowl berth.

Pitt: Pickett's competitiveness is the main reason the Panthers have a shot at a rare Coastal repeat. He absorbed a pair of late hits on consecutive plays in the third quarter and took a series of shots yet kept getting back up.

Final	1	2	3	4	OT	T
UNC	7	3	0	17	0	27
PITT	3	14	7	3	7	34

Scoring Summary -----

	UNC	PITT
FIRST QUARTER		
PITT FG 8:32 Alex Kessman 41 Yd Field Goal		3
11 plays, 38 yards, 3:58	0	
UNC TD 6:14 Beau Corrales 21 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)	7	3
6 plays, 78 yards, 2:18		
SECOND QUARTER		
PITT TD 12:03 Kenny Pickett 2 Yd Run (Alex Kessman Kick)		10
9 plays, 72 yards, 3:10	7	
PITT TD 9:41 Shockey Jacques-Louis 74 Yd pass from Kenny Pickett (Alex Kessman Kick)		17
1 play, 74 yards, 0:12		
UNC FG 7:36 Noah Ruggles 25 Yd Field Goal	10	17
5 plays, 67 yards, 2:05		
THIRD QUARTER		
PITT TD 2:12 A.J. Davis 8 Yd Run (Alex Kessman Kick)		24
14 plays, 85 yards, 6:33	10	
FOURTH QUARTER		
UNC TD 13:11 Dyami Brown 10 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)	17	24
11 plays, 74 yards, 4:01		
UNC TD 11:43 Dazz Newsome 34 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)	24	24
3 plays, 57 yards, 1:00		
PITT FG 5:18 Alex Kessman 24 Yd Field Goal		27
12 plays, 69 yards, 6:25		
UNC FG 0:13 Noah Ruggles 32 Yd Field Goal		27
13 plays, 60 yards, 5:05	27	
OVERTIME		
PITT TD Kenny Pickett 3 Yd Run (Alex Kessman Kick)	27	34
6 plays, 25 yards		

Team Stats	UNC	PITT
First Downs	27	27
Passes for First	15	14
Rushes for First	8	9
Penalties for First	4	4
Third Down Efficiency	6-14	8-15
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-3	1-2
Total Yards	458	498
Total Plays	78	78
Avg Gain Per Play	5.9	6.4
Net Yards Rushing	136	139
Rushes	35	37
Yards Per Rush	3.9	3.8
Net Yards Passing	322	359
Comp-Att	27-43	25-41
Yards Per Pass	7.5	8.8
Times Sacked	5	1
Yds Lost To Sacks	-29	-4
Interceptions	1	0
Punts	3	2
Punt Average	44.3	38.0
Penalties	7	10
Penalty Yards	90	83
Fumbles	1	1
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Time of Poss	28:03	31:57

Individual Stats

RUSHING

	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
NORTH CAROLINA					
Antonio Williams	12	107	8.9	0	59
Michael Carter	11	34	3.1	0	7
Javonte Williams	5	25	5.0	0	11
Team	1	-7	-7.0	0	0
Sam Howell	6	-23	-3.8	0	6
PITTSBURGH					
A.J. Davis	19	58	3.1	1	8
Kenny Pickett	12	53	4.4	2	14
Shockey Jacques-Louis	2	20	10.0	0	12
V'Lique Carter	1	6	6.0	0	6
Vincent Davis	1	6	6.0	0	6
Team	2	-4	-2.0	0	0

PASSING

	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
NORTH CAROLINA							
Sam Howell	27	43	322	7.5	3	1	53.7
PITTSBURGH							
Kenny Pickett	25	41	359	8.8	1	0	84.1

RECEIVING

	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
NORTH CAROLINA					
Dazz Newsome	11	170	15.5	1	34
Beau Corrales	5	92	18.4	1	26
Dyami Brown	5	35	7.0	1	10
Rontavious Groves	2	9	4.5	0	10
Michael Carter	2	7	3.5	0	13
Garrett Walston	1	5	5.0	0	5
Carl Tucker	1	4	4.0	0	4
PITTSBURGH					
Shockey Jacques-Louis	4	104	26.0	1	74
Taysir Mack	6	83	13.8	0	48
A.J. Davis	2	33	16.5	0	28
Aaron Mathews	1	30	30.0	0	30
Jared Wayne	4	30	7.5	0	10
Nakia Griffin-Stewart	1	28	28.0	0	28
Will Gragg	3	26	8.7	0	13
V'Lique Carter	2	24	12.0	0	15
John Vardzel	2	1	0.5	0	2