



Nathan Becker/Index

Redshirt freshman Kendrick Blue knifes through the Emporia State defense during Saturday's Homecoming game. Blue had three catches for 82 yards and a touchdown in the Bulldogs' come-from-behind win against the Hornets. The Bulldogs trailed by as many as 14 points before mounting a comeback and winning 33-30 in overtime.

## 'Dogs win 33-30 in overtime contest

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The Bulldog defense stood firm when it mattered most.

After Emporia State University scored 30 points in regulation, the 'Dogs allowed just one yard on the Hornets' three offensive plays in overtime and forced a 41-yard field goal attempt from Johnny Torres, which fell short.

That set the stage for sophomore kicker Mickey Masucci, who blasted a 32-yard field goal between the uprights on the Bulldogs' ensuing possession to finalize the Truman football team's 33-30 comeback victory at the Homecoming game Saturday at Stokes Stadium.

"It was looking bleak there at times," head coach Shannon Currier said. "But we had a lot of good things go our direction, and somehow we pulled it off."

The field goal was Masucci's second chance at a game-winner in a matter of minutes. He pulled a 44-yard attempt wide left with 18 seconds remaining and the game tied at 30-30 in the fourth quarter. But Masucci received a second chance for heroics after the Bulldogs gained nine yards on their overtime

drive to set up the field goal.

The Bulldogs could have tried for a fourth-down conversion, only needing one yard for a first down, but Currier elected to send on Masucci, who converted four of five field goal attempts.

"I thought [the offense was] just going to knock it in there, and I wouldn't even have to go out on the field," Masucci said. "But they ended up calling on me, and it helped that the coaches had confidence in me all game. So I was ready for my kick."

For the defense, the overtime stand proved to be redemption after it allowed more than 300 yards rushing for the third consecutive week.

"We really stepped it up as the game progressed," senior safety Jesse Cooper said. "As we got to the third and fourth quarter, the 'D' really knew that it was our game win."

Junior linebacker Jason Thier tackled Emporia's Justin Wiese after just a two-yard gain on the first play of overtime, which forced the Hornets into a passing situation. After a completion for a loss of a yard, the Bulldogs forced an incompletion on third down, setting up Torres' third missed field goal of the day.

"I wish we could figure that out every series," Currier said. "We'd love to do that every time."

Truman held Emporia to just 40 passing yards Saturday.

The overtime victory erased the Hornets' 21-7 halftime lead. The Bulldogs were on the verge of tying the game late in the second quarter when they reached the Hornets' 25-yard line, but Emporia's Travis Lee tipped and intercepted junior quarterback Matt Ticich's pass. Lee then raced 92 yards up the sidelines, returning the interception for a touchdown.

"It was an underthrown ball, but we surely didn't expect it to come down the sideline [for a score]," Currier said. "... That was a big blow. It was a tight game the way it was, and then we were looking to maybe get points, and now you're giving them up. We were fortunate to overcome that."

Ticich avenged his interception with a sizzling second half in which he completed 20 of 30 passes, including a stretch of eight consecutive completions in the fourth quarter.

With the Bulldogs trailing 30-22 and just more than four minutes re-

maining in regulation, Ticich guided the team on a four-play, 66-yard drive, capped by a 48-yard touchdown pass to redshirt freshman wide receiver Kendrick Blue.

The touchdown came on third down and four, and Ticich elected to hoist a deep pass to Blue — the third receiving option on the play — instead of just settling for a shorter completion to simply pick up a first down.

"[Blue] kept telling me on the sidelines, 'I can beat this corner[back] on the post. Give me a chance,'" said Ticich, who passed for 323 yards and three touchdowns.

The touchdown left the 'Dogs trailing by two, but Ticich connected with junior wide receiver Tyler Fenton for the conversion on what Ticich called a busted play. Ticich rolled to his right and fired to Fenton, who had fallen on his knees but recovered and made a diving catch to tie the game.

"Tyler just finds a way to get open," Ticich said. "... He's our money receiver."

Fenton has just 10 receptions for the Bulldogs this year but four have gone for touchdowns, which supplemented his crucial catch Saturday.

With the game tied, Truman's defense limited Emporia's final drive of the fourth quarter to just three plays. Following a 22-yard punt from Torres, the Bulldogs received field position at the Hornets' 49-yard line with a chance to win the game in regulation.

The offense drove down to the 15-yard line before Emporia's Blake Ringwall sacked Ticich for a 13-yard loss. This forced the failed long field goal attempt from Masucci.

Ticich was under heavy pressure all afternoon. He was sacked five times and received hits on numerous more occasions.

"You have to take your lumps," Ticich said. "You have to stay in the pocket and deliver the ball. Sometimes I have to buy myself some time so I can find some receivers open."

Currier said his quarterback was not completely healthy Saturday. But he battled through the adversity.

"The intangibles really make him the quarterback that he is because he couldn't run [Saturday]," Currier said. "He's banged up right now. But we felt we needed his presence out there and his mind and his throwing ability."

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