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Nate Leerar (left) and Kaden Graves (right) provide blocking at the line of scrimmage for Bishop Garrigan as teammate Carter Schwab (back right) prepares to be the pulling guard on the play. Photo by Zeb Besch

# Gritty Golden Bears rally for state title win

By Greg Grabianowski  
Sports Editor

CEDAR FALLS—Trailing 36-14 heading into the final 12 minutes of play, the chances were not looking so well for top-ranked Bishop Garrigan as they were striving for their second eight-man football title in the last three years.

But someone forgot to tell the gritty black-and-gold squad they were in trouble as the Golden Bear rallied to score 30 points in the final frame to squeeze out a wild 44-42 comeback win on Thursday, Nov. 20 to capture the state title over a talented No. 2 ranked Woodbine Tigers squad.

C.J. McGregor set up the winning touchdown with a 36-yard pass reception with 33 seconds left down to the Woodbine four-yard line. Two plays later Ethan Marso plowed his way one-yard for a touchdown and Tate Foertsch dashed around left end for the winning two-point conversion.

“I was supposed to run a 5 route which is like a post route,” said C.J. of the big late reception. “I saw that Landon Blum settled underneath so I ended up going a little more vertical on the route to make a nice alley for Tate to throw the deep ball.

“I looked up and saw the ball coming and I said to myself I better not drop this. I caught it; I wanted to score a touchdown but I knew as soon as I caught it we had a great chance to win the game.

“It was awesome to see Marso just pound it in that final yard for the score. Two years ago I was sitting in the stands wishing I could have been out there on the field like my brother was so today it all came true for me. It is a great feeling and now I want to come back and do it again next year.”

Bishop Garrigan received the opening kickoff and went 60 yards in six plays as C.J. McGregor broke free up the middle for a 33-yard touchdown run. The conversion failed but the black-and-gold led 6-0 with 7:46 left in the opening frame.

Woodbine answered immediately with six-play, 58-yard drive to dead lock the game at 6-6. Four minutes later, the Tigers took the lead on a two-yard pass play and led 14-6 at the end of the first period.

The Woodbine lead grew to 20-6 with 8:34 left in the first half. The Golden Bears got a huge score just

before intermission as Foertsch plunged one yard for a score on the final play of the first half and added the successful two-point conversion to make the score 20-14 at intermission.

The Tigers took the second half kickoff and went 48 yards in just four plays to extend their advantage to 28-14 with 1:28 gone in the second half.

Woodbine then went 63 yards in just four plays late in the third period to increase the lead to 36-14 on a 30-yard touchdown pass and that was the score heading into the fourth quarter.

Bishop Garrigan started their huge comeback on the fourth play of the final frame when Marso scored on a three-yard run and added the successful two-point conversion run to cut the lead to 36-22 and gave the black-and-gold a little momentum.

Four plays later, the Golden Bear defense gave the team the big lift they needed when Marso picked off a fourth down pass to give them the ball at the Tigers’ 30-yard line.

“I knew we needed a turnover as we had been having trouble stopping them during the first three quarters,” said Marso of his interception. “My interception was huge for us. I mean, I do not know how I got the ball but it was crazy. I guess I was just in the right place at the right time.”

It took Bishop Garrigan six plays as Foertsch ran the final eight yards for the score. The PAT pass was knocked but the black-and-gold had sliced the lead to 36-28 with 7:59 remaining in the contest.

The defense forced a three-and-out before the offense went 76 yards in 11 plays as Foertsch ran the final nine yards for the touchdown. Foertsch ran in the successful two-point conversion as the game was tied at 36-36 with 2:32 to play.

But Woodbine responded by going 55 yards in seven plays to regain the lead on a one-yard run with 1:09 remaining in a wild fourth period.

Foertsch ran 20 yards on a quarterback draw on first down to start the game-winning drive before hitting C. J. McGregor two plays later for a 36-yard gain down to the Tiger four-yard line with 33 seconds left to play.

After a timeout, Foertsch advanced the ball to the one-yard line where Marso just got across the goal line to tie the game at 42-42 with nine seconds left.

Foertsch sprinted untouched around left end for the winning two-point conversion.

“I knew I had to keep low, keep the pad level low and the legs churning as there was going to be a lot of bodies at the line of scrimmage,” said Marso of the score. “I knew I was across the goal line but had to wait a little bit before the ref finally signaled that it was a touchdown.

“Me and C. J. kept telling each other to hold on to the damn ball and not let go during the fourth quarter. We wanted to keep pounding the rock and kept it going. I do not think any of us got tired and that was a big key in the comeback.”

Woodbine had one more chance for a Hail Mary try from their 20-yard line but the Golden Bears knocked down the pass setting off a wild celebration on the UNI-Dome field.

“It feels very good, it has always been a dream of mine to get an undefeated state title,” said senior Carter McGregor. “We won a state dual wrestling title last winter for Algona but this one feels a little more special because it is with the kids you went to school with for the past 12 years.

“You just have a longer connection with them as you see them every day since you started school in kindergarten. Yeah, my role on the team is to do a lot of the dirty work on both sides of the ball. But if that is what it takes to win a state title, sign me up.

“Our goal as seniors was to win a state title so every day in the locker room, we preached on how we had to be mentally tough, be ready for any tough moments and today that all happened. I always believed we were going to win. I knew we just had to keep pounding the rock and doing the things that we do best.”

Bishop Garrigan set a state championship game record with 72 rushing attempts that netted a total of 331 yards. Foertsch carried the ball a career-high 36 times for 157 yards.

Marso added 105 yards in his 25 carries while teammate C.J. McGregor contributed 10 trips for 63 yards and Michael Joyce had one carry for eight yards.

Foertsch completed 9 of 13 pass attempts for 131 yards as Weston Rosenmeyer was the leading receiver with three catches for 35 yards.

Joyce hauled in three pass receptions for 26 as C.J. McGregor, Dalton Klenz and Madden Miller each snared one aerial in the win.

“Our kids just kept fighting the whole game long,” said Coach Wadle after the game. “We got Woodbine in some third-and-long situations in the fourth quarter that they were not comfortable with and that was a huge factor in our comeback.

“We work on our two-minute offense every Thursday in practice so the kids were familiar with it when we had to at the end. Tate did a great job on first down on that quarterback draw and C.J. made a big catch for us; I think it was like his third one of the year.”

Joyce led the Golden Bears in total tackles with seven closely followed by both Titan Troyer and Miller with six; Foertsch contributed five stops.

Carter McGregor and Marso added four tackles with Carter Schwab, C.J. McGregor and Karson



Bishop Garrigan's Ethan Marso scored the game-tying touchdown with nine seconds remaining and was named the Quik Star Player of the Game in the Golden Bears' comeback 44-42 win in the UNI-Dome. Photo by Zeb Besch

Kramer all having three. Marso had an interception as the only turnover in the game.

“It really comes down to our seniors as usual,” said Coach Wadle of his team’s success. “They grew whiskers over the years, they just kept working hard over the years and they just kept rolling in the right direction.

“They all remember what happened last year in the semi-finals and I think that motivated them all season. They just did everything they needed to do to get better.

“They are multi-sport athletes that compete hard in other sports too. Today we faced as much adversity as anybody could have in a high school football game and to their credit, these kids never blinked an eye.”

<b>Scoring Plays</b>		
7:46—1 <sup>st</sup> —C.J. McGregor 33-Yard Run (Run Failed)		
5:26—1 <sup>st</sup> —Micah Moores 4-Yard Run (Run Failed)		
1:41—1 <sup>st</sup> —Ayden Coenen 2-Yard Pass From Brodyn Pryor (Moores Pass From Pryor)		
8:34—2 <sup>nd</sup> —Moores 2-Yard Run (Run Failed)		
0:00—2 <sup>nd</sup> —Tate Foertsch 1-Yard Run (Foertsch Run)		
10:22—3 <sup>rd</sup> —Landon Blum 38-Yard Pass From Pryor (Brennen Sullivan Pass From Pryor)		
1:47—4 <sup>th</sup> —Blum 30-Yard Pass From Pryor (Sullivan Pass From Pryor)		
11:16—4 <sup>th</sup> —Ethan Marso 3-Yard Run (Marso Run)		
7:59—4 <sup>th</sup> —Foertsch 8-Yard Run (Pass Failed)		
2:32—4 <sup>th</sup> —Foertsch 9-Yard Run (Foertsch Run)		
1:09—4 <sup>th</sup> —Moores 1-Yard Run (Pass Failed)		
0:09—4 <sup>th</sup> —Marso 1-Yard Run (Foertsch Run)		

Game Stats	Woodbine	BG
First Downs	14	23
Rushing Attempts	24	72
Rushing Yards	127	331
Passes Attempted	21	13
Passes Completed	13	9
Interceptions Thrown	1	0
Passing Yards	214	131
Total Yards	341	444
Fumbles—Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties—Yards	3-15	5-35
Punts—Yards	2-98	2-65
Average Per Punt	49.0	32.5

**Individual Stats**  
**Rushing—Woodbine**—Micah Moores 21-106, Brodyn Pryor 3-21; **Bishop Garrigan**—Tate Foertsch 36-157, Ethan Marso 25-109, C.J. McGregor 10-63, Michael Joyce 1-8  
**Passing—Woodbine**—Pryor 13 of 21, 214 Yards, 3 TD's, 1 Int; **Bishop Garrigan**—Foertsch 9 of 13, 131 Yards, 0 TD's, 0 Int  
**Pass Receiving—Woodbine**—Landon Blum 8-116, Dillon Reid 1-46, Jax Pryor 1-23, Brandon Wagner 1-14, Brennen Sullivan 1-13, Ayden Coenen 1-2; **Bishop Garrigan**—Weston Rosenmeyer 3-35, Joyce 3-26, C.J. McGregor 1-36, Madden Miller 1-22, Dalton Klenz 1-12  
**Tackles (Solos-Assists—Total)**—Joyce 4-3—7; Miller 2-4—6; Titan Troyer 2-4—6; Foertsch 3-2—5; Marso 3-1—4; Carter McGregor 2-4—4; Carter Schwab 3-0—3; C.J. McGregor 1-2—3; Karson Kramer 0-3—3; Matt Besch 0-2—2; Klenz 1-0—1; Carter Cink 1-0—1



C.J. McGregor gets ready to haul in a big 36-yard pass reception in the final minute that set up the game-winning points in the state eight-man championship game on Thursday. Photo by Zeb Besch