Football drops season opener to Shepherd

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

On Thursday, Sep. 5, the Owls fell in a one-sided affair 23-0 versus the Shepherd University Rams of Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

In the fan-filled season opener at Jess Dow Field, the Owls dropped their third straight head-to-head game to the Rams in a sloppy offensive performance that left the team with no answers.

"So, these guys are always ready. Great coaching staff for those guys," Head Coach Tom Godek said. "I thought our players were prepared. I just think we just gave some things away that normally we wouldn't do."

Facing the Rams has been no easy task for most teams over the last four decades. Since 1981, the team has had only four losing seasons with the most recent in 2003. Excluding 2020, in the last four seasons the Rams have made a deep run in the NCAA Division II playoffs.

"When you play Shepherd University, they're a perennial NCAA playoff team," Godek said. "They're a playoff team that advances in the tournament more than the first round. So, these guys are always ready."

After a blowout loss in 2022 which was handed to the Owls by future Chicago Bears quarterback Tyson Bagent and a nail-biting defeat a year later, the university showed no match to their opponent this time around.

The Rams won the toss and elected to defer to the second half. The Owls went three and out with their first possession as the Rams drove down the field only to punt inside the Owls' 30-yard line, pinning the Owls to their own one. Soon after, the Owls' long snapper snapped the ball over the head of punter Andreas Picarella, a sophomore, out of the back of the endzone for a safety.

The Rams would score two touchdowns in the second quarter and would go up 16-0 at halftime. In the first half, both teams punted in a combined 10 drives for three of the ten and turned the ball over on downs on four of the remaining seven drives.

The Owls offense kept hitting roadblocks in the second half as Ridley completed 17 passes on 29 attempts, throwing for 111 yards as running back E'lijah Gray, a senior, led the team with 54 yards on the ground and 31 by air.

Gray said, "We just got to execute a little bit more. I just feel like we just left a lot on the field. Shot ourselves in the foot a couple times on the offense, but that's a great opponent over there. I can't take anything away from them."

As the last quarter started to wind down, defensive back Quinton Haughton, a junior, jumped the Rams receiver's route in the endzone for a touchback.

An extraordinary read and playmaking ability from Haughton jolted the crowd into a frenzy. The Owls delayed their taxing fate for a moment but were too late, as they could not transform the momentum offensively.

"I didn't see the interception," defensive end Ray Magliozzi, a senior, said. "We have a great defense, even great group of guys, work their ass off every week. But end of the day, it's a team game. There's no offensive-defensive split. So, we should come together and put in the prep this weekend."

The Thursday night battle was tough, and an injury and illness bug left the Owls concerned for their next game against the American International College as they left the field.

"I'm always concerned about that. We are not the deepest team out there," Godek said. "Got a couple kids out with some illness that's running around campus a little bit, and couple kids with some nagging injuries that didn't play, so we didn't have the full contingent out here tonight."



PHOTO | CARLY RUSSELL

Owls enter the field for the home opener versus Shepherd Rams.



University cheerleader poses during a cheer.



Quarterback Keith Ridley Jr., a graduate, set to pass.



Owls defense tackles the Rams running back.

Snapshots of Owls volleyball tri-meets

By Lily Rand
Photographer



Middle blocker Sarah Stark, a sophomore, attempts a block.



Owls Celebrate versus Goldey-Beacom.



Libero Jalie Miller, a freshman, goes for the dig.



Outside hitter Julia Jaworowski, a freshman, goes for the kill.



Libero Emily Sartell, a junior, serves the ball.



Post University and Owls shake hands after the game.