

Round 3: Pilot Point vs. Godley

2009 was the 2nd year in a row we would be playing football the week of Thanksgiving. I remember it being such an exciting feeling in 2008. The whole experience was new. In 2008 we had just come off of two hard fought, tough victories in the first two rounds. We would be facing off against a tough Winnsboro team and we were just happy to be there. We would go on and win that game by a last second field goal to extend our season one more week. 2009 was different. It wasn't exciting because we expected to be here. It wasn't new, because we had been here before, and we weren't just happy to be here. This was just one more step towards the ultimate goal.

The team we would be facing this week was the best team we'd faced since Muleshoe hands down. Godley was the mirror image of us. They ran a spread style offense with their main focus being to run the ball out of it. They had a big physical offensive line. They had a great runner as their QB, and he was their biggest game changer on that side of the ball. They were disciplined and didn't turn the ball over. Their defense was a basic 4-3 style defense that played their assignments well and did so physically. When you matched personnel position by position, it seemed to be a mirror image of ourselves. One thing that makes me laugh when thinking about it is, we had Carter Street who wore #2 and was 6'3" 260lbs. He played D-line and H-back when we needed one on offense. Godley had a player who was 6'3" around 270lbs, wore #4, and played D-line and H-back for them. It was the first team we had played in 2 seasons that matched up with us pretty well position by position. Godley would enter Saturday afternoon with a record identical to ours at 12-0 and had also defeated Boyd in route to that record. That year the website Texas2afootball.com had a link to a high school football game picker that you could match-up any two teams in the state and it would tell you who was favored and by how much. It was the only game we played all year that we weren't the favorite to win. I think they had Godley favored by 2.5 points. From what I remember, that week of practice was a pretty quiet week. As a holiday week there was no school, but we all came in every day and understood the challenge we were facing. We did get thanksgiving totally off, but we were right back to work on Friday. At this point in the season, you don't need long, hard practices. All the physical work has been done and you just need to keep yourself focused mentally. The grind is long, but we knew the game plan and we were ready to execute come Saturday afternoon.

Saturday afternoon felt like a college football atmosphere. We arrived at Ranger stadium in Saginaw early that day and grills were set up where parents and fans were already there tailgating and ready for the game. When we unloaded the bus, it reminded me of what I see on College Gameday every Saturday morning where the college team has fans lined up along each side of their walk from the bus into the locker room. Our fans showed up and showed out. They were there with their game faces on and they were ready to bring the energy.

When it was time to take the field for warmups you could feel the energy. It was very similar to the atmosphere of the Aubrey game. Both sides were already full and doing their part to make the players feel their energy. I'll give Godley fans credit. They were there ready to bring it as well. They were booing while we were stretching. I loved it. I remember putting my hand up to my ear telling them I couldn't hear them and kind of egging them on. As our fans heard Godley fans booing, our fans responded with cheers loud enough to drown out their boos. We were ready to compete on the field and the fans were going to compete as well. Speaking of the fans, the place was packed. One of my cousins brought her family to watch and got there 15 minutes before kickoff. The home side was sold out and they told her to run to the visiting side because they had some tickets left but not very many. Her family got 4 of the last 10 tickets left on the visiting side. Another sold out venue for a 2A high school football game.

We were to receive the opening kick, which was pretty normal, and we needed to go out and set an early tone. The first drive was indicative to exactly how the whole game was going to be. We put together a long TD drive to start the game. Godley was everything we thought they were. They made us earn every single inch we gained for all 4 quarters. We were repeatedly finding ourselves in 3rd and shorts and even a 4th and short early. Finally, after a 7+ minute drive we scored on a 9-yard play action pass from Seth Tilley to JP Price. We failed on our 2-point try and had a 6-0 lead. Godley had their first chance of the day and needed an answer. After their defense let us know we would have to earn everything, our defense did the same, but this was a heavy weight fight. Godley took the ball and put together a 6-minute TD drive to answer our 7-minute TD drive. They scored on a 1-yard run by their playmaker QB Riley Good. They converted their PAT and it was Godley 7 Pilot Point 6. We got the ball for our second possession of the game and it was already the 2nd quarter. We picked up exactly where we left off on the first drive. We were slowly working our way down the field 4 yards at a time. We came to the first big moment of the game on

a 4th and goal from the 2-yardline. From the film, it looked like we tried to pull an old trick that we used against Pottsville in 2008 and the offensive line blocked as if we were running a dive right up the middle, but we tried to sneak Tilley out on the right side, but Godley wasn't biting. They were disciplined and tricks weren't going to work on them. They brought 2 guys off the edge we were trying to sneak out on, and it was stuffed for a loss. We did kill a significant amount of time off the clock and left Godley about 4 minutes to go 94 yards before half time. The slugfest continued and Godley started to march. With just over 1 minute to go before half time we had Godley facing a 3rd and 8 and the QB ran a sweep to the left. The corner on that side did a good job driving the blocking WR into the QB and stood him up for a 2 yard gain but before help could get there and wrap him up, Riley Good regained his balance and carried it for 8 more yards and just inside 1 minute to go in the first half, Godley had the ball 1st and goal. They followed that up with 2 run plays and called their last timeouts. The Second big moment of the game was here. 3rd and goal from the 2-yardline with 3 seconds left and Godley had no timeouts. This would be the last play of the half. QB Riley Good was pressured and rolled to his left. Our Corner had great coverage on the play, but Riley good threw a jump ball to WR Ty Young and he was able to go up and get it with 0:00 remaining in the first half. Godley converted the extra point and going into halftime it was Godley 14 Pilot Point 6 after both teams only getting 2 possessions in the entire half.

Every championship team faces adversity in one way or another throughout a championship season. Most of the time they face it many times over. How they get through those moments shows their character and is what makes them champions. We were in a heavy weight fight with a team that seemed to be our equal. We had failed to convert a 4th and goal from the 2. We had failed to stop them on a 3rd and goal from the 2 as time expired in the half. We had played a great half of football and we were losing. If you would have walked in that locker room at half time you would have thought, we were winning by a few scores. We had our position group meetings. We went over the adjustments and after that we had about 5 minutes to spare. During that 5 minutes there was this sense of calm in the locker room that is hard to describe. Every player I've ever talked to about this game felt it. It's hard to describe, but it's like someone told us everything would be fine and to just keep at it. I believe we had that feeling because of something I've said multiple times over this blog series. We were battle tested. We had played in big games before. We had been losing in the 4th quarter in big games, and we fought through and found a way to win. We were

aware of what our limits were as a team and we knew what we were capable of. We knew we were going to win this game.

On another note in reference to half time is a funny story that happened. Cam Feldt and I were very superstitious when it came to playing football. We each had our exact things we had to wear every game day and nothing could be different. We didn't follow that protocol twice in 2008 and that was the game against Sanger and the game against Muleshoe. So, this year we would take no chances. However; I had injured my left hand the week before where my pinky finger was jammed; it caused my hand to be swollen and painful. At my request, Coach Allen dug through the equipment closet and found a padded glove for me to wear during the game on my injured hand. The problem with this was that I don't wear gloves. So, in our sense of Zen during half-time I looked down at my hand and slowly raised it up in front of my face. Cam saw me do this and we both realized it at the same time. The only reason we're losing is I'm wearing this stupid glove. I decided that I'd be fine dealing with the pain, so I had to take the glove off. It was skintight and got stuck on my swollen pinky while taking it off, so I had to just yank it off and when I did, "POP". It pulled my pinky out and my hand was immediately better. The game might have well ended right then and there. We were destined to win now.

We kicked off to Godley to start the second half. They were coming off the momentum of the score to end the first half and it carried into the second half. They had a few chuck plays on this drive, so it wasn't as time consuming as any of the first half drives and they ended it with a 10-yard pass from Riley Good to Jacob Ramirez. The extra point was no good and 9:28 left the 3rd quarter it was Godley 20 Pilot Point 6. There was still no doubt on our sideline, but we knew it was time to start making our move. Part of being battle tested like we were was we understood we didn't need to get it all back on one play. We trusted that our defense would make stops and we needed to get points on the board. We put a drive together, but unfortunately it stalled out on Godley's 7-yardline. Coach Feldt called for Ruben Martinez to come in and kick a 24-yard field goal. It was his first attempt of the day and he had the wind at his back. Ruben was automatic and the kick split the upright. 6:53 into the 3rd quarter we had cut the score to Godley 20 Pilot Point 9. The defense had been pushed all night and they were ready to push back. They came out and forced a Godley 3 and out and the first punt for either side of the day. Godley QB was good at a lot of things, but punting wasn't it. They used a quick kick type strategy where they would line up in the shotgun like a normal play and right before the snap, he would back up. Godley snapped it and

Good punted. He kicked it straight out of bounds and the ball ended up around the 50-yardline. Field position would play a huge role going forward. We took that ball and marched right down the field; we were catching a rhythm. We were faced with a 3rd and 4 from Godley's 13-yard line when QB Seth Tilley rolled right. WR Gareth Gengenbach "G-baby" ran a 6-yard curl from his slot position. Tilley hit him right in the chest with the pass which allowed G-Baby to spin to his left, which made a defender miss, and G-Baby took it the last few yards for a 13-yard TD. That TD pass tied Seth Tilley with Danny David for most TD passes in a single season (20) by any Pilot Point QB ever. We had to go for two and failed to convert again. With 2:59 left in the 3rd quarter the score was Godley 20 Pilot Point 15. Our defense flexed their muscle again by only allowing 1 first down on the next drive and forcing another Riley Good punt. Once again, the punt wasn't "Good". He still barely got the ball to mid-field. The Godley defense showed that they could make a stop too and held us to a three and out and into our first punting situation of the day. We had a real punt team and Mason Guthrie was lined at our own 47-yardline to punt the ball. Mason looked like Ray Guy with his punt and the punt rolled out at the Godley 1-yardline with seconds left in the 3rd quarter. The decision to punt and the execution of that punt turned out to be huge. Godley busted a chunk play that got them to mid-field before we forced a 4th and 1. The fact they had gained around 45 yards on the drive and were still only around mid-field made this 4th down call a tough one on their part. But to their credit, they were tough, and they weren't going to back down from the challenge. This was the 3rd big moment of the game. On 4th and 1 it was pretty obvious they were going to run with their QB. We knew it, they knew we knew it, and it was just them betting their guys were better than our guys. At the snap of the ball Austin Accettura created penetration which cause Good to try and bounce it outside and safety Justin Chambers was there to clean it up and made the tackle for no gain. We had the ball again at mid-field in the 4th quarter with an opportunity to take the lead. We capitalized on that opportunity with 9-yard TD run by Jarman Johnson with 5:36 remaining in the 4th quarter. We failed the 2-point conversion but had clawed back to take 1-point lead. Pilot Point 21 Godley 20 with 5:36 to go. After a short kick and a gaining a first down already, Godley was faced with a 2nd and 8 from their own 46-yardline when what looked like disaster struck for us. QB Riley Good was an explosive athlete and was the fastest guy on the field when Godley was on offense. Riley Good took the snap and ran a sweep to the left when a big hole opened up. Safety Willie Davis tried to fill the hole, but Riley Good made him miss and it looked like he would cruise into the endzone for a

touchdown. At the snap of the ball Senior Tyler McNairy was playing in his cornerback position on the opposite side of where the ball was ran giving his WR about a 5-yard cushion. At the snap of the ball he took a few steps backward until he realized it was a sweep to the opposite side. When he recognized it, he could have just given up on the play, or he could have started loafing in the direction of the ball, but that isn't the character of a champion. When Tyler saw the play he immediately began sprinting across the field. He should have never had a chance to impact this play. As Good started getting up field Tyler had to adjust his angle, but he shouldn't even be in the play. Tyler didn't quit. Tyler McNairy ended up chasing the guy who was the best athlete on the field directly from behind him. Tyler played corner and had good speed, but he himself would tell you he was not the fastest guy on the field. Many kids in his position would've given up many times on this play, but that isn't the character of a champion. Tyler McNairy chased Riley Good down from across the field and behind and tackled him down at the 6-yardline to prevent a TD. Watching the play, it doesn't really make sense how he did it, but he did it. The defense would hold Godley to 1 yard on the next 3 plays forcing a 4th and goal from the 5. Godley, down by 1 decided to kick the field goal. Godley Kicker Troy Hunt made the 22-yard field goal and with 2:09 seconds left in the game the score was Godley 23 Pilot Point 21.

The following kick off was fielded on the hop by Jarman and returned out to the Pilot Point 27-yardline. 2:00 minutes left in the 4th quarter. Down by 1 and headed into the wind. This is what those sprints in the summer were for. This was what every extra rep in the weight room was for. This is what all the extra stuff us players decided to do AFTER practice EVERY week was for. This is where the tough games against Boyd and Gunter in 08 & 09 and the '08 game against Winnsboro would pay off. We had 2 minutes to become legends or become the guys who might have if only. We practiced the 2-minute drill every Thursday during walk throughs. Truth be told, I can only think of 1 time we ever used it in a game, and it was in 2008 against Sanger and it went disastrously. None of that mattered. We knew we were going to do it.

1st & 10 PP 27, 2:00 incomplete pass

2nd & 10 PP 27, Seth Tilley to Mason Guthrie for 6-yards

3rd & 4 PP 33, Seth Tilley to Justin Chambers for 24-yards.

1st & 10 G 43, Seth Tilley to Jarman Johnson for 8-yards

2nd & 2 G 35, Seth Tilley to Collin Noe for 7-yards

1st & 10 G 28, Seth Tilley to Tyler McNairy, incomplete in the endzone.

The 1st & 10 G 28 play is one that was frozen in my mind. We called the play and a Sophomore WR asked Tyler to switch sides with him on that play. The route Tyler ran was crossing from the right side to the left side. During the right Seth scrambled right and Tyler broke off his route and started sprinting in the same direction as Seth towards the endzone. He was covered well but Seth threw a beautiful ball. It was tight coverage, so it was the only place he could put it to give Tyler a chance. Tyler laid out with everything he had and caught the ball. You could feel the crescendo from the crowd and I looked over and coach Feldt had leaped into the air with his hands up but as Tyler was coming down, he brought the ball into his gut and landed directly on the ball. It popped out and was an incomplete pass. I'll never forget the crowd start to build and then immediately let out an "aww" all at once. But the drive continues:

2nd & 10 G 28, :29 seconds left: Tilley to Gareth Gengenbach for 8-yards

3rd & 2 G 20, :24 seconds left: Jarman Johnson 6-yard run

1st & 10 G 14, Seth Tilley spiked ball to stop clock with :11 seconds left

2nd & 10 G 14, :11 seconds left: Jeremy Jackson lost 2-yards. Timeout Pilot Point

3rd & 12 G 16, :08 seconds left: Jarman Johnson 7-yard run. Timeout Pilot Point with :03 Seconds left.

We had executed a beautiful 2-minute drill to set up a 26-yard field goal with :03 seconds left to win the game. Our kicker Ruben Martinez's story is pretty funny. During Week 9 of the 2008 season he was a Freshman in P.E. and didn't play football. He knew nothing about football and had no interest in playing football. Some kids talked him into playing and we desperately needed a kicker. His first actual field goal attempt in his career was in the 3rd round of the playoffs in 2008 win a tie game with 7 seconds left. He didn't know the situation and didn't really care either way. He was coming out there to kick and he hit the 25-yard field goal in that game to give us the 27-24 win. Well now, Ruben had a full year experience, but a few things hadn't changed. He still knew nothing about football and didn't really care. He was out there for one thing and that was to kick that football through that goal post. So, while everyone in that stadium's blood is pumping and everyone is incredibly nervous, holding their breath... Ruben was the most relaxed guy in that stadium. We lined up. The snap. The hold. The kick... 26-yards into the wind..... Right down the middle. Pilot Point 24 Godley 23 Final. The ball didn't make it through by too far and the wind tried it's hardest to push it out, but it went through. The moment the kick went through we all went wild, running around like crazy. The bench had emptied and all the coaches and players

where on the field. There were grown men I know of who didn't even have kids on the team, jumping up and down, hugging and crying. I looked back at the Godley players and you could tell they had left everything they had on the field. No one doubted that and my heart went out to them because I respected them as an opponent. They were the type of team any true champion wants to test themselves against. They gave us everything they had, and we gave them everything we had. As unfortunate as it was, someone had to lose this game and it wasn't going to be us.

After both teams took some time to gather themselves, we had the handshake at the 50-yardline. You could tell they had just had their hearts ripped out, but every single one of them shook our hands, looked us in the eyes, and told us good game and good luck. I'll never forget how respectful they were in those moments. After the game I saw their star D-Lineman #4 hugging his dad and as I walked by, he waved me over and told me "Y'all better go fu***** win this thing." I shook his hand and told him we would.

I want to recap how evenly matched of a game this was. Godley outgained us on offense by 24 yards that night. They had 8 penalties for 50 yards while we had 5 penalties for 31 yards. They punted twice for 23 yards and we punted once for 49 yards. Neither team had a turnover. Neither team had any negative play worse than 3-yards. Neither team had a play over 41- yards. This was about as clean of a game that two evenly matched teams could play. I firmly believe that the difference in this game was our depth, which allowed us to be fresher in the 4th quarter and the fact we were battle tested. Most of their games that year were over by half time and they had never had a team push back like that. They handled it pretty well, but at the end of the day, I believe that is why we were 1 point better that day. They were the most complete team we ever played, and I will forever respect the hell out of every person on that team.

Something I mentioned earlier in the blog about championship teams facing adversity and a lot of times, facing it many times over. This game was not the biggest adversity we had to overcome. The night that we beat Godley, Henry Melvin Davis, father of our star running back Jarman Johnson and starting safety Willie Davis lost his fight to cancer and passed away. The family knew it was coming. Jarman was at my house that night before he passed, and we talked about it for a while. Jarman was 60 yards from becoming the all-time career rushing leader for Pilot Point high school. We were set to play Brady in the semi-final game and Jarman told me that *"if the first time I touch the ball is more than 60 yards away, I'm going to break the record on that play. I'm going to do it for*

my dad." I told him we would do everything we could up front to make that happen.

THE GAME AT A GLANCE

Pilot Point 24, Godley 23

Godley	0	14	6	3	—	23
Pilot Point	6	0	9	9	—	24

First Quarter

PP — J.P. Price 9 pass from Seth Tilley (run failed), 4:31

Second Quarter

G — Riley Good 1 run (Troy Hunt kick), 11:06

G — Ty Young 1 pass from Good (Hunt kick), 0:00

Third Quarter

G — Jacob Ramirez 10 pass from Good (kick failed), 9:28

P — Ruben Martinez 24 field goal, 6:53

P — Gareth Gengenbach 13 pass from Tilley (run failed), 2:59

Fourth Quarter

P — Jarman Johnson 9 run (run failed), 5:38

G — Hunt 22 field goal, 2:09

P — Martinez 25 field goal, 0:00

THE YARDSTICK

	G	PP
First Downs	15	21
Rushes-Yds	42-348	40-188
Passing Yds.	17	153
Comp-Att-Int	3-5-0	12-22-0
Punts	2-23	1-49
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties-Yds	8-50	5-31

Individual Statistics

Rushing — Godley, Good 30-190, Landry Martinez 12-158. Pilot Point, Johnson 24-139, Tilley 11-40, Jeremy Jackson 5-9.

Passing — Godley, Good 3-5-0 17. Pilot Point, Tilley 12-22-0 153.

Receiving — Godley, Ramirez 2-16, Young 1-1. Pilot Point, Price 3-17, Colin Noe 2-51, Gengenbach 2-21, Mason Guthrie 2-18, Justin Chambers 1-24, Aaron Buckingham 1-13, Johnson 1-8.