

LEBANON — Lemeco Miller rushed 27 times for 175 yards and five touchdowns as 17th-ranked Cumberland scored three times in the fourth quarter for a 42-21 victory over Union College on Homecoming Saturday at Nokes-Lasater Field.

Miller set career-highs for rushing yards and touchdowns in the victory, adding to his Mid-South Conference leading rushing total. The Huntsville, Ala., native now has 726 yards and 13 rushing touchdowns for the season, averaging 5.8 yards per carry.

The Bulldogs (5-1) outgained Union, 172-38, in the fourth quarter, starting with a 12-play, 77-yard drive that ended with a six-yard TD from Miller, giving Cumberland the lead for good, 28-21, with 11:15 remaining in the contest.

After a punt, CU moved 76 yards on just five plays, including a 46-yard catch-and-run and a 20-yard scoring scamper from Miller. He added a seven-yard touchdown run on fourth down in the final minute of the game, capping his career day.

The game was tied at seven at the half and tied again at 21 at the end of the third quarter, as both teams scored on their opening possessions of the second half. Cumberland scored again after Union (3-3) knotted the game at 14 and the visitors answered quickly even after missing a field goal, partially blocking a punt and then going for the jugular, with Mike Brinkley hitting a streaking Domonique Jefferson down the sideline for a 44-yard score with 1:32 left in the period.

Cumberland responded with the 12-play drive, finally wearing down the Union defense in the final quarter. The Bulldogs rushed 58 times in the game for 323 yards and six touchdowns, with Thomas Goodloe punching in the other score from 12 yards out. CU kept the ball for just over 12 minutes in the final period as well, keeping Union from catching up. Goodloe finished with 63 yards on 12 carries and the one score, while Reed Gurchiek was 7-for-15 passing (with at least three drops) for 137 yards.

Brinkley kept his team in the game despite the dropsies as well for Union, completing 24-of-42 for 306 yards and three touchdowns.

The first half was full of miscues for both teams, with 12 penalties for 107 yards between the clubs along with three fumbles and one turnover for each squad.

Union gained 44 yards on the opening possession of the game before punting but took the next drive 80 yards on eight plays, with Brinkley completing all five pass attempts for 75 yards, including a 23-yard fade pattern for the touchdown to Domonique Jefferson with 5:17 to play in the first quarter.

The Bulldogs were unable to put together a long drive early in the game, gaining first downs punting on each of the club's first three possessions.

After the teams exchanged fumbles on consecutive plays in the second period, Gurchiek found Marquis Hagewood for a 52-yard completion. Two plays later Miller broke a tackle and dove into the end zone, tying the score at seven with 10:02 left in the half.

Union started the ensuing possession at its own 48 after a good return and a late hit on the Bulldogs. The visitors drove to the Bulldog five-yard line, but three straight incompletions forced a field goal and a high snap threw off the timing, with Alex Peebles missing from 22 yards.

Union drove into CU territory again just before the half, but a sack by Adam Wiss pushed them out of field goal range and Brinkley was unable to find a receiver on fourth down. The teams went to the half tied at seven.

Cumberland took the opening drive of the third quarter and marched 66 yards on 10 plays, with Miller breaking tackles to convert a 3rd-and-9 and Gurchiek keeping on the same option play on fourth down. Three plays later Miller rushed around the rightside, waiting for his blockers for the seven-yard score and a 14-7 Bulldog lead.

Union responded with a six-play, 66-yard drive that took just over a minute, with Brinkley hitting Tyler Ross for a three-yard TD pass, tying the game at 14. UC tried an onside kick but touched

the ball before it went 10 yards, giving Cumberland possession at the Union 39.

Four plays later Goodloe barreled in from 12 yards out, his second touchdown of the year, for a 21-14 advantage. The Bulldogs nearly broke the game open on its next drive, with Blake DeBoard's half-back pass over-shooting a wide-open Daniel Dayton, the strong North wind sailing the pass over the diving receiver.

DiQuan Jefferson then blocked the punt for Union and on the next play, Brinkley hit Domonique Jefferson for a 44-yard TD pass, tying the game at 21 with just over a minute to play in the third period.

Miller capped a 12-play, 77-yard drive midway through the final period with a 20-yard scamper around right end. The senior caught a 46-yard pass on the next drive and finished it with a six-yard TD run for a 35-21 CU lead.

On Union's next drive Anthony Knight forced a fumble with a big hit on Brian Clark and Nick Lennox recovered for CU. The Bulldogs burned off almost six minutes on the ensuing drive, going 46 yards on 12 plays before Miller's final score of the day with just 12 seconds remaining.

Cumberland faces 23rd-ranked Faulkner University next Saturday in Montgomery, Ala., before returning home October 20 to take on Campbellsville University at 6 p.m.