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ALERT

TOP STORY

BULLDOGS 14, EAGLES 13

Flagstaff Eagles let Homecoming game slip away to Winslow Bulldogs, losing 14-13 at home

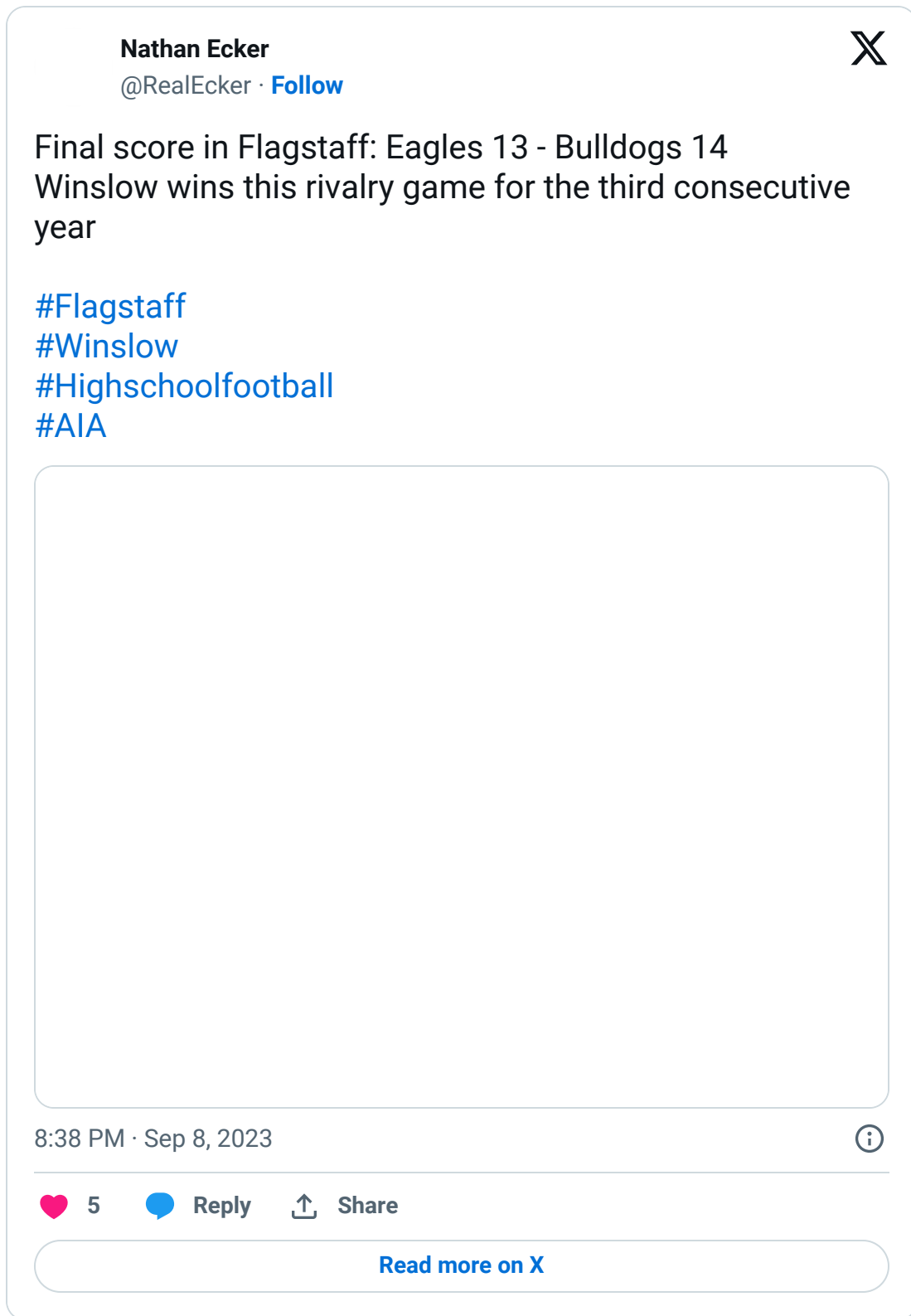
NATHAN ECKER Special to the Daily Sun
Sep 9, 2023



Flagstaff's James Pena (66) makes a tackle during a football game against the Bulldogs Friday at home in the Walkup St
Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

The Flagstaff Eagles football team found itself in a familiar predicament Friday night against the Winslow Bulldogs as once again a fierce rivalry came to a head and resulted in a physical contest in the Walkup Skydome.

A hobbled quarterback in sophomore Chase Brown and a strong Eagles defense were able to halt the Bulldogs for a majority of the game, but a solid rushing attack in the second half was the difference as 3A Conference Winslow won the battle for a third consecutive season, 14-13, spoiling Flagstaff's Homecoming night.



After being reignited in 2021, the rivalry between Flagstaff and Winslow has resulted in similar results every time. The Bulldogs won both of the previous matchups 14-12 and only needed two scores again to come out victorious. This game also marked the 100-year anniversary of Flagstaff football versus Winslow football.

Eagles coach Mickey Clements has seen the same ending three times now and feels for his team -- which now sits at 0-3 -- that has not been able to get over the hump.

“Very similar feelings at the end where you just really want the guys to get over the top and want so badly for these guys to get a win,” he said.



Flagstaff center Orion Yoyhoeoma (54) snaps the ball to quarterback Chase Brown (1) during a football game against the Winslow Bulldogs Friday at the Walkup Skydome.

Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

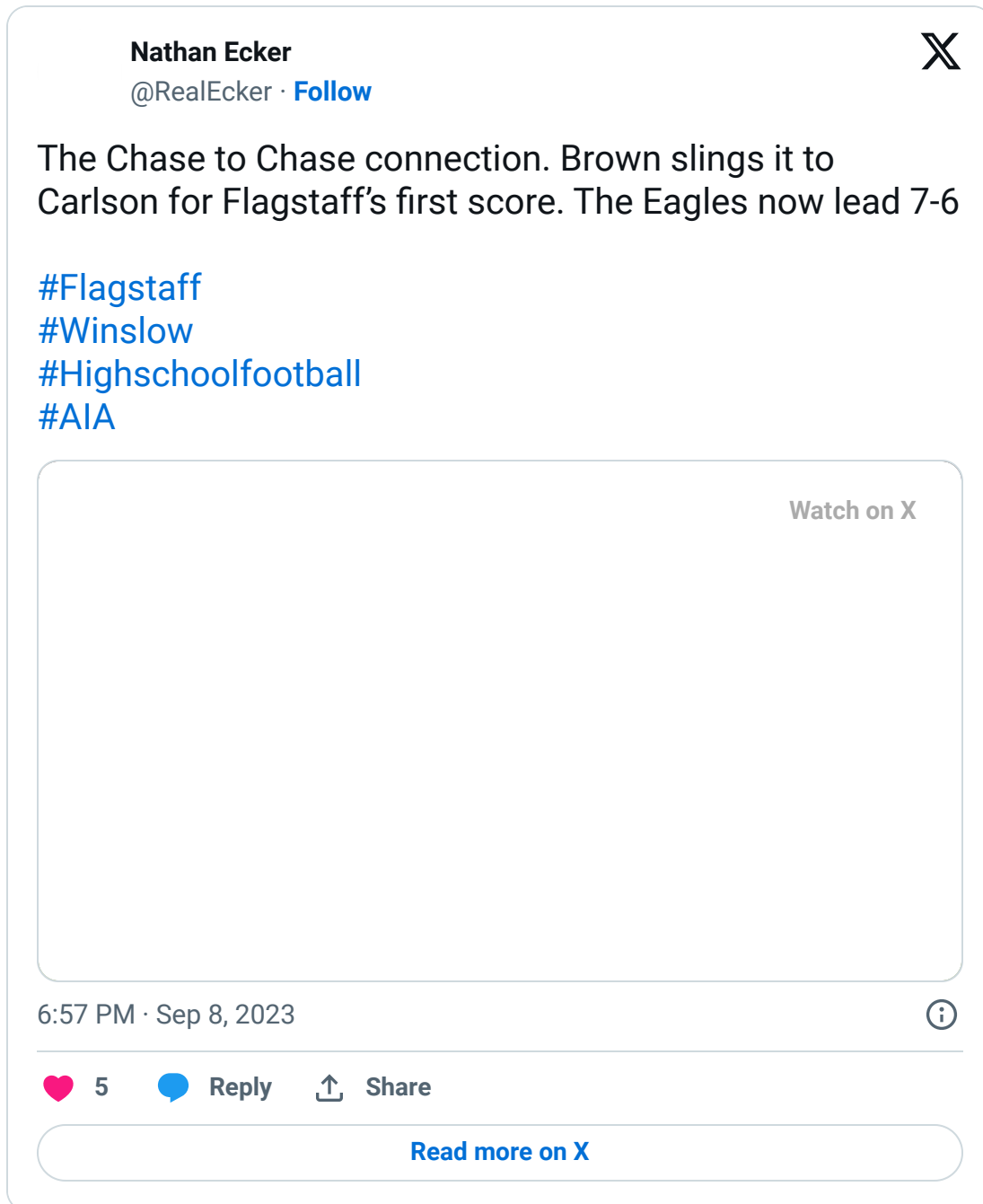
Winslow came back after being down 7-6 at halftime and improved to 3-1 overall.

Flagstaff finished its three-game homestand to open the season without a win.

Though Flagstaff did not come out victorious, it had flashes that showed promise to Clements. Junior Jadon Wetzel ran for 155 yards, including a 21-yard run late in the game to set his team up in the red zone. Wetzel punched it in on the following

play for the second Eagles touchdown of the game.

The Chase-to-Chase connection also flourished in passing situations. Brown linked with junior Chase Carlson multiple times to propel the offense, and the most impressive throw came near the end of the second quarter to give Flagstaff its only lead of the game. Brown found himself in a collapsing pocket, but stepped forward to sling a 25-yard pass to Carlson, who dragged a Bulldogs defender with him into the end zone.



On the other side of the ball, Clements was impressed with the way his defense adjusted against a heavy rushing unit.

“Our defensive backs played well,” he said. “Credit to Winslow, they played a good game, but we made some adjustments that slowed them down and gave the offense opportunities.”



Flagstaff's Jadon Wetzel (2) runs the ball during a Homecoming football game against the Winslow Bulldogs Friday at the Walkup Skydome.

Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

Outside of the drives that resulted in Winslow touchdowns, Flagstaff showed poise at the point of attack. The three-headed combo of Ty DeSpain, Bryce Williams and Izaiah Romero have rushed for an average of 119 yards this season for Winslow, but outside of two scoring drives they were not able to find the open field.

In fitting fashion, the end of the game came down to the defense of both teams.

With just over two minutes to play, the Bulldogs found themselves in goal-to-go territory. They repeatedly pounded the ball through the heart of the Flagstaff defensive line, but the Eagles picked up on the pattern and forced a turnover on

their own 5-yard line. One side's defense stood tough, and now it was time for the offense to shine.

Flagstaff forces a turnover following a play in which the Eagles recovered a fumble, but the runner was ruled down. The call was a controversial one here in the dome, but the Eagles respond immediately on the next play#Flagstaff#Winslow#Highschoolfootball #AIA
pic.twitter.com/zslJoeZy7n

— Nathan Ecker (@RealEcker) September 9, 2023

Flagstaff came into the final drive deep in its own end with just under two minutes on the clock. Though a comeback was attempted, nothing came from the final Flagstaff plays on offense as the Winslow defense swarmed Brown and recorded consecutive sacks.

The hardest part about the loss for Clements was that his team could not celebrate a win on such a special night. The Eagles have put in a lot of hard work and overcome adversity to get to a position where they can be successful. It seems every player has a fire to play for the guy standing beside them. They find reasons to succeed, even if they have yet to find sustained success on the field.



Flagstaff's Chase Brown (1) catches a snap during a football game against the Winslow Bulldogs Friday at the Walkup Skydome.

Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

“The way they play together, the way they love each other and support each other, you just really want for them to have success,” Clements said.

The Eagles (0-3, 0-0 Grand Canyon) will travel to Maricopa Friday for their first road game of the season against Desert Sunrise.

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