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Vipers snag Sharks for 4th straight

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By SCOTT HOWE

Special to The Times

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas - The Tennessee Valley Vipers are on a roll.

The Vipers won their fourth straight game Saturday night with a 44-36 victory over the Corpus Christi Sharks before 4,446 fans at the American Bank Center.

In a game that was back and fourth, the Vipers won their fifth game in seven games. The Vipers remain a game behind South Georgia in the standings.

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"It was a good road victory," Vipers coach Dean Cokinos said. "We had some new guys playing and it worked out well."

The big play for the Vipers came early in the fourth quarter. With the Vipers facing a 4 and 10 and leading 31-30, quarterback Kevin Eakin threw a pass toward the end zone for Jeremy Grier. The ball went off of Grier's hands into the stands, but the official ruled there was fan interference and had the down replayed. On the mulligan, Eakin was able to find Chris Bocage for a 15-yard gain to the Corpus Christi 12-yard line. On the next play Eakin found Bradley Chavez for the deciding score with 8:04 to play.

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Corpus Christi answered on Gary Cooper's 30-yard bomb to Nate Fricke, but a two-point conversion failed and left the Vipers' lead at two with 4:25 to play.

Eakin was 21-of-33 for 253 yards and four touchdowns. Juan Merritt caught five passes for 60 yards and two scores, all in the second half.

The Vipers trailed 24-17 at the half after a late Corpus Christi (1-5) score, but pulled even on Eakin's 9-yard pass to Merritt early in the third quarter. A 10-yard pass to Grier and Nick Hayes' extra point put Tennessee Valley ahead 31-24 late in the third before the Sharks scored but missed the extra point with 13:32 to play.

The Vipers return to the Von Braun Center to take on the Oklahoma City Yard Dawgz this Saturday. Kickoff is set for 7:30 p.m.

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