

Clarkson/Leigh earns program's first playoff win

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HARTINGTON -- The class D1 first-round match-up between Clarkson/Leigh and Hartington-Newcastle featured two new-look programs attempting to make history by achieving a first-time playoff victory.

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Ultimately, the accomplishment belonged to Clarkson/Leigh by way of a 34-26 win in a game that was every bit as close as the score indicates.

“Since Clarkson and Leigh joined forces, that’s our first playoff victory, which is something we talked about all week,” Patriots coach Jim Clarkson said. “This is our third year, and we finally got over that hump.”

Securing the win was anything but easy, with H-N using time-consuming drives--eight of them that consisted of more than eight plays--that challenged C/L’s defense all game long, including the final 4:50 of the contest when the Wildcats marched from their own 15-yard line to the Patriots’ 22 before free safety Bradley Bunner clinched the win with an interception with under a minute to play.

“Our defense has had some struggles this year,” Clarkson said. “We do a pretty good job, and then we allow that big play to happen. I was very excited for our guys to finally step up and make a few big plays toward the end of the game and finish it out for us.”

The two teams ended the game with nearly identical offensive totals, with H-N accumulating 357 total yards (210 rushing and 147 passing) and C/L totaling 356 (250 rushing and 106 passing).

However, the Wildcats style of play picked up 19 first downs to just eight for the Patriots, a statistic that demonstrates C/L’s ability to score from long distance because of its speed in the backfield.

Kobe Paprocki, for example, scored on a 37-yard run in the second quarter, while teammate Christopher Konicek scored two rushing touchdowns in the third quarter from 59- and 33-yards out.

Coach Clarkson anticipated H-N’s ability to move the ball on offense, but felt that his team’s game plan could benefit from it.

“Lengthy drives are what we want to face defensively,” he said. “We don’t want to give up the big play. We want them to have to drive the field and hopefully fumble the ball or something.

The flip side is that our offense is pretty explosive, and they kept us off the field. Our defense was out there a long time, but luckily we were able to make some stops, and our offense was able to keep pace. Konicek had a nice game again tonight, and our quarterback (Paprocki) had some nice runs.”

Konicek led all rushers with 130 yards on 15 carries. with Paprocki adding 71 on seven attempts. Paprocki also completed four-of-nine passes for 106 yards.

Each team scored on its first possession. The Patriots scored first on a 15-yard run by Konicek, with H-N answering when Ethan Morton caught a 17-yard pass from Kolby Jueden. Two-point conversion attempts made a difference, with C/L failing on a run-attempt and the Wildcats’ Morten running successfully to put H-N up 8-6 early.

But the Patriots scored twice in the second quarter--Morten scoring from 37-yards on an option-keep and again on a 10-yard run--to go up 18-8, with unsuccessful two-point PAT attempts following both touchdowns.

Hartington-Newcastle got a touchdown pass from Jueden to Morten, coming up short on its PAT run, to trail 18-14 at the half.

Both teams scored twice in the third period, in alternating fashion, which concluded scoring in the game.

The Wildcats took their last lead of the game at 20-18 on a 21-yard pass from Jueden to Chase Dendinger, which lasted until C/L’s first offensive play after the ensuing kickoff when Konicek broke loose for a 59-yard touchdown and also ran in the two-point attempt to put the Patriots up 26-20.

A 24-yard touchdown pass from Jacob Tanderup to Jueden, who lined up as a receiver at times, produced the game’s only tie score at 26-26 before C/L’s Konicek ran 33 yards for the go-ahead touchdown. Paprocki’s PAT pass to Kolton Krause established what became the game’s 34-26 final score when the fourth quarter was scoreless.

“We had a great year,” Wildcats’ coach Blair Kalin said. “We started the consolidation with Newcastle this year and brought in some good kids that blended in well with our kids, and there’s some disappointed kids over there. In the playoffs somebody’s going to win, and somebody’s going to lose. They just made a couple more plays than we did tonight which is part of the game.”

“We thought ball control was going to be the key, because they’re pretty explosive,” he said. “Konicek has some speed, and we don’t have anybody on our team that can run that fast. But we got down in their territory where we could have had a couple more scores and didn’t. Give Clarkson/Leigh credit, they played a nice game.”

D1 football playoff

C/L 6 12 16 0--34

H-N 8 6 12 0--26

Scoring summary

FIRST QUARTER

C/L: Christopher Konicek 15 pass from Kobe Paprocki (pass failed), 8:24.

H-N: Ethan Morten 17 pass from Kolby Jueden (Morten run), 4:56.

SECOND QUARTER

C/L: Paprocki 37 run (run failed), 11:29.

C/L: Paprocki 10 run (pass failed), 5:27.

H-N: Morten 38 pass from Jueden (run failed), 1:22.

THIRD QUARTER

H-N: Chase Dendinger 21 pass from Jueden (run failed), 5:51.

C/L: Konicek 59 run (Konicek run), 5:37.

H-N: Jueden 24 pass from Jacob Tanderup (pass failed), 2:18.

C/L: Konicek 33 run (Kolton Krause pass from Paprocki), :46.

Individual statistics

RUSHING: (C/L) Konicek 15-130, Paprocki 7-71, Bradey Bunner 3-24. (H-N) Jueden 13-76, Chris Pavlik 23-74, Morten 13-42.

PASSING: (C/L) Paprocki 4-9-1, 106. (H-N) Jueden 5-13-0, 93. Tanderup 3-4-1, 53. Chris Pavlik 0-1-0, 0.

RECEIVING: (C/L) Konicek 2-39, Matt McMullin 1-64. (H-N) Morten 3-63, Pavlik 3-39, Jueden 1-24, Chase Dendinger 1-21.