

Hawks a winner in Bliss' debut

Written by Mike Condon

Saturday, 29 August 2015 20:27 - Last Updated Sunday, 30 August 2015 06:17



Mark Bliss' first quarter as Prairie's head football coach didn't go all that well.

But the final three of his first game were nothing but pure bliss for the first-year coach.

Bliss' Hawks fell behind Linn-Mar 10-0 and were in danger of falling down 13-0 late in the quarter as the Lions lined up for a field goal attempt.

Martavian Borseth broke through and blocked Alexy Boehm's 43-yard attempt and it was a different game from that point on.

"That was huge," Bliss said. "Absolutely huge. It switched the field and gave us the field position in which we could go down and score."

Prairie scored twice in the second period and never looked back, going on to a 31-17 win Saturday night at Linn-Mar Stadium in game postponed from Friday night because of thunderstorms.

The Hawks players celebrated by jumping the fence and slapping hands with their fans before

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gathering on the field for another celebration.

As the Hawks sprinted to the locker room, Bliss gave them the credit for turning things around after a shaky first 12 minutes.

"I think a lot of it was just the maturity on our kids' part," he said. "We told the kids all summer, big game, big rival, expect adversity. And the team that overcomes it is usually the team that ends up winning.

"The kids maintained the course. They rebounded and they did a nice job taking control of the game."

The first quarter was all Lions. Alexy Boehm opened the scoring with a 28-yard field goal. The Linn-Mar defense stood tall and the next Lions' drive resulted in a 23-yard scoring strike from Reese Phillips to a wide-open Josh Gassmann in the back of the end zone.

"I couldn't be more proud of the way we came out," said Linn-Mar Coach Bob Forsyth. "I told the kids and the (assistant) coaches that we have enough here to work with. We just have to work hard to get better.

"We just made too many mistakes," he continued. "This is going to be a hard one to look at because we had some chances."

The first and most key missed chance was the blocked field goal. It took Prairie just seven plays after the block to get on the board as Trevor Northrup scored from the 1.

After stopping the Lions, Prairie broke out the big play as quarterback Tyler Nunemaker found a wide-open Joseph Meyer behind Lion defense for a

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64-yard score. That put Prairie up 14-10 at the break.

"We had (three receivers) to the right and they brought the high safety over," Nunemaker said of the long scoring play. "When we motioned off that, it threw their guys off a little bit and it opened up for us."

The Prairie lead grew to 21-10 on another long pitch-and-catch in the third quarter as Nunemaker found Jojuan Simpson with a pass that turned into a 61-yard scoring play.

After a Joel Collett 26-yard field goal made it 24-10, Linn-Mar pulled within seven when Phillips and Gassmann hooked up again, this one from 60 yards away. Linn-Mar had the ball with a chance to tie, but a drive stalled on the Prairie 30. The Hawks then put it away on Northrup's second TD of the game, a 5-yard run.

The Lions actually outgained the Hawks, 391-332. Phillips completed 17 of 29 passes for 226 yards and two scores. Nunemaker was 6 of 11 for 174 yards and two scores. Phillips, a junior making his first start, was the leading rusher in the game with 71 yards on 15 carries.

"I couldn't be more proud of that kid," Forsyth said of Phillips. "He's everything you look for in a quarterback. He's got some things to learn, but he is a kid who is going to make some plays."

Prairie hosts Cedar Rapids Jefferson next Friday while Linn-Mar travels to Pleasant Valley.

PRAIRIE 31, LINN-MAR 17

Prairie □ LM

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First downs	11	22
Rushes-yards	35-158	39-165
Passing yards	174	226
Comp-Att-Int	6-11-0	17-29-1
Fumbles-lost	2-1	1-1
Punts-avg.	4-27.7	3-18.0
Penalties-yards	6-40	5-25

Prairie 0 14 10 7 - 31

Linn-Mar 10 0 7 0 - 17

LM - FG Alexy Boehm 28

LM - Josh Gassmann 23 pass from Reese Phillips (Boehm kick)

P - Trevor Northrup 1 run (Joel Collett kick)

P - Joseph Meyer 64 pass from Tyler Nunemaker (Collett kick)

P - Jojuan Simpson 61 pass from Nunemaker (Collett kick)

P - FG Collett 26

LM - Gassmann 60 pass from Phillips (Boehm kick)

P - Northrup 5 run (Collett kick)

Individual statistics

Rushing

Prairie - Joel Northrup 12-55, Jalen Rima 5-50, Tyler Nunemaker 10-36,

Hunter Johnson 4-0, Jake Pinter 1 (minus-1).

Linn-Mar - Zach Luehring 19-69, Daniel Gorsich 4-25, Reese Phillips 15-71.

Passing

Prairie - Tyler Nunemaker 6-11-0-174.

Linn-Mar - Reese Phillips 16-29-1-226.

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Receiving

Prairie - Jalen Rima 2-8, JoJuan Simpson 1-61, Joseph Meyer 1-64, Hunter Johnson 2-41.
Linn-Mar - Daniel Gorsich 7-93, Josh Gassmann 6-91, Cevan Walton 1-13, Kirby Kerr 1-11,
Josh Strauss 1-18.