

Wash tops Jeff, gets Kennedy next

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Washington Warriors have been waiting for two long months to get another shot at the Kennedy Cougars.

Now it's here.

TJ Vogel fired three touchdown passes Monday night as the Warriors topped Jefferson, 42-21, in the second round of the Class 4A playoffs at Kingston Stadium for their 23rd victory in their last 25 games.

Washington (10-1) will battle Kennedy (11-0) in the quarterfinals Friday night at Kingston Stadium, with the winner earning a trip to the Class 4A semifinals in the UNI-Dome.

Kennedy nipped Washington, 28-24, in the second game of the regular season on Sept. 4. Now they'll meet again in a high-stakes showdown of Metro powers.

The Warriors were hoping to draw the Cougars and their wish has been granted.

"That's who we want to see," Vogel said. "We've wanted to get them back all year."

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"We've been waiting for this game since we lost to them, so it's going to be a big game for us," said Isaiah Nimmers, who caught two touchdown passes Monday night. "We'll try not to get too hyped for it, but we'll go out there and fight hard and try to win."

"It will probably be a great atmosphere, knowing that we're the only two Cedar Rapids teams left. It will probably be a great atmosphere, a great crowd. It will be fun."

The Warriors had their hands full with the J-Hawks Monday night. The game was tied, 21-21, in the third quarter when Washington took control with two touchdowns in a span of just 17 seconds.



Vogel and Nimmers connected for a 24-yard touchdown pass to give the Warriors a 27-21 lead with 4:09 left in the third quarter and the PAT by Ross Kennedy made it 28-21. Then came one of the strangest -- and biggest -- plays of the season.

On the ensuing kickoff, Connor Geuder of Washington booted what appeared to be a routine squib kick that an opponent normally falls on with ease. Only this time, the J-Hawks missed several chances to clutch the slippery pigskin as it kept squirting loose and squirting loose, batted and kicked and snubbed all their way toward their own goal line.

The comedy of errors finally ended on a sad note for Jefferson when Ian Thomas of Washington recovered the ball at the 1-yard line, about 40 yards away from

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where the misadventure began. Vogel scored on a quarterback sneak on the first play from scrimmage and it quickly became 35-21 with Kennedy's PAT.

"That was pretty awesome," Vogel said about the wacky squib kick. "We didn't expect that at all and it just kept rolling and rolling and rolling. And we got the ball, so that was pretty awesome."

But the J-Hawks, true to their gritty nature, never quit. They drove all the way to the Washington 7-yard line midway through the fourth quarter, looking to pull within 35-28 with plenty of time remaining, but Jefferson quarterback Jared Eivins was shaken up on a pass play and had to leave the game after being planted into the artificial turf.

Dylan Hart replaced Eivins at quarterback and the J-Hawks went backward. The opportunity slipped away when Rudy Eckhardt intercepted Hart's pass in the end zone on fourth down.

Eivins returned with 4 1/2 minutes left in the game, looking for a miracle, but he threw a pass that O'Rien Vance intercepted and returned 20 yards to the 4-yard line, where Eivins shoved him out of bounds. Johnny Dobbs scored on the next play for Washington and Kennedy's PAT made it 42-21 with 3:59 left.

Jefferson gave Washington a pair of tough games this season, including a 27-14 battle earlier in the year that was tied in the fourth quarter. The J-Hawks finished with a 7-4 record, highlighted by their first playoff victory in 23 years last Wednesday.

"You can't take away from what we've accomplished this season," Jefferson coach Brian Webb said, clutching his team's playoff trophy. "This senior class is the one I came in with and they've pointed us in the right direction."

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The Jefferson program was knee-high to a grasshopper when Webb took over four years ago and turned things around.

The J-Hawks went down fighting, personified by a magnificent 59-yard touchdown run by Valentino Green in the third quarter when Jefferson pulled into a 21-21 tie. Green was bottled up by a gang of Washington tacklers, broke free, was bottled up again by another gang of Warriors, broke free again and raced all the way to the end zone.

Earlier in the game, Green caught a screen pass in the middle of the field and zoomed 40 yards for a touchdown.

"I don't care what anyone says, that kid is a football player," Webb said. "The effort is just great."

Webb was proud of his players for a successful season, and James was equally proud of his guys for reaching the quarterfinals this season despite heavy graduation losses from last year's state runner-up.

"We've got good players, good coaches and kids that work hard," James said. "When you have talent, and the talent wants to work hard, good things happen."

James was especially proud of Vogel, who has been slowed this season by a knee injury. Vogel passed for 193 yards, with TD strikes of 32 and 24 yards to Nimmers and another TD strike of 48 yards to Keion Wills.

"He stepped up to the plate," James said. "He's been slowly coming back, and people don't always understand what's going on."

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"It's kind of what they're running into at Iowa a little bit. When a quarterback's legs get dinged up, it affects their arm."

Vogel has missed playing time this season, but keeps bouncing back.

"Here and there I've gotten dinged up," he said, "but no mater what, I'm going to come out and keep fighting."

The next fight will be a back-yard brawl with the Kennedy Cougars.

"We're just glad to be in (the quarterfinals) and we'll see what happens," James said. "Both teams have constantly improved. So, short week. We've got to nurse injuries and get ready to play on Friday."

Tavian Patrick rushed for 122 yards for Washington.

WASHINGTON 42, JEFFERSON 21

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First Downs	14	18
Rushes-Yards	30-163	47-189
Passing Yards	125	193
Comp-Att-Int	9-23-2	8-17-1
Fumbles-Lost	4-2	2-0
Punts	5-42.2	5-38.4
Penalties	3-17	6-48

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Jefferson 7 7 7 0 - 21

Washington 14 7 14 7 - 42

Scoring plays

J - Brock Hunt 8 pass from Jared Eivins (Zeb Render kick)
W - Isaiah Nimmers 32 pass from TJ Vogel (Ross Kennedy kick)
W - Keion Wills 48 pass from Vogel (Kennedy kick)
W - Johnny Dobbs 1 run (Kennedy kick)
J - Valentino Green 40 pass from Eivins (Render kick)
J - Green 59 run (Render kick)
W - Nimmers 24 pass from Vogel (Kennedy kick)
W - Vogel 1 run (Kennedy kick)
W - Dobbs 4 run (Kennedy kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Jefferson - Green 4-73, Rashed 10-57, Eivins 8-37, Olutunde 4-9, Stewart 1-1, Short 1-minus 1, Hart 2-minus 13.
Washington - Patrick 23-122, Dobbs 13-38, Vogel 6-14, Stewart 2-9, Nassif 2-8, Team 1-minus 2.

Passing

Jefferson - Eivins 8-20-1, 121; Hart 1-3-1, 4.
Washington - Vogel 8-17-1, 193.

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Receiving

Jefferson - Green 3-64, Hunt 2-36, Short 2-13, Rashed 1-8, Unkel 1-4.

Washington - Nimmers 3-91, Wills 1-48, Hobbs 1-18, Nassif 1-13, Vance 1-12, Dostal 1-11.