

Refs' calls blur Prairie loss to IC West

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 21 September 2013 00:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 21 September 2013 00:58



Their names are Joel Hibbs, Troy Hibbs, Neil McCubbin, John Koop and Brian Crawford.

If you cheer for the Cedar Rapids Prairie football team, keep their names in mind and don't invite them to any of your parties or offer them a free bag of popcorn.

They were the officials at John Wall Field Friday night and if you were there, you know it was a night filled with mass confusion due to missed calls, overturned calls, no calls and calls that left you scratching your head.

The referees may not have cost Prairie a chance to upset No.6 Iowa City West, but they sure did not help in any way, shape or form.

Iowa City West escaped, 21-14, in a Mississippi Valley Conference battle that had Prairie fans booing the officials much of the night.

Prairie Coach Mike Morrissey and his players picked their words carefully after the game, but were clearly upset.

"Our kids are winners," said Morrissey. "I thought they played a great game. I thought they were really good, considering the circumstances."

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Iowa City West (4-0) scored two touchdowns in the fourth quarter to erase a 14-7 deficit and get out of town with a victory, even though the Trojans fell far short of matching their pre-game averages of 52.3 points and 523 yards per game.

Prairie (1-3) appeared to take a 20-14 lead in the fourth quarter, but a 21-yard touchdown scamper by Jesse Vizzini was negated when one of the officials called a holding penalty after Vizzini had crossed the goal line.

"I'm not sure how you can call that," Morrissey said diplomatically.

The Hawks ended up losing the ball on downs, then the Trojans went 64 yards the other way and took a 20-14 lead of their own on a 25-yard burst by Micah Kelsay. That touchdown stood and proved to be the game-winner.

Iowa City West was trailing, 14-7, late in the third quarter when West receiver Anthony Batie clearly pushed Prairie defensive back Mitch Dellamuth before making a 24-yard catch along the sideline to the Prairie 18.

No penalty was called, but the official - apparently thinking high school players need to have two feet in bounds instead of just one - said the pass was incomplete and the ball was returned to the Prairie 42.

That brought a howl of protest from Iowa City West Coach Brian Sauser, who argued that Batie legally made the catch with one foot in bounds.

About 10 minutes later, the officiating crew agreed with Sauser and put the ball at the 18. "They were a little confused on that," Morrissey said with tight lips.

None of the officials apparently saw Batie push Dellamuth before making the catch. "I tried to bring it up," said Morrissey. "It was a little too late, unfortunately."

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Prairie fans booed lustily when the play was overturned.

"Obviously I don't agree with the call," said Dellamuth, who played courageously with giant padding on his right arm to protect a broken hand. "First he said he was out, then he changed his mind and said he was in.

"One ref overruled him. Eventually it got overturned."

Iowa City West scored four plays later when Kelsay bulled across the goal line from just inches away on fourth down. That made it 14-13 and Connor Gordon tied the game for the Trojans, 14-14, with the PAT with 11:23 left in the contest.

Iowa City West grabbed its 21-14 lead with 3:12 remaining, giving Prairie enough time to respond. They nearly did.

Prairie quarterback Trey Beckman, enjoying his best game of the season, completed a 13-yard pass to Vizzini to the Prairie 49-yard line, where Iowa City West linebacker Kevin Dowell clearly hit Vizzini after he was several steps out of bounds.

A 15-yard penalty for a personal foul would have put Prairie at the Iowa City West 36-yard line with plenty of time remaining, but nothing was called.

"You can't do anything about it," said Vizzini. "The refs will miss calls at times. The refs are human beings. They make mistakes once in awhile."

The Hawks eventually reached the Iowa City West 32, but they failed to connect on three straight pass plays and lost the ball on downs with 1:07 left.

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The Trojans ran out the clock and claimed the win.

The referees called 11 penalties on both teams, so at first glance it might look like an evenly called ballgame. Prairie fans would beg to differ.

"You have to overcome adversity, I guess," said Vizzini.

Iowa City West snapped the ball 76 times and collected 351 yards of total offense, including 257 yards on the ground and 94 through the air. Prairie snapped the ball only 48 times and finished with 245 yards, so the visitors had a clear advantage.

Iowa City West also collected 24 first downs to 13 for Prairie. So again, advantage Trojans.

It's not like Prairie deserved to win, but they certainly could have won if a few calls had legitimately gone their way.

"There are things we can control and things we can't, and there were enough things that we could control that would have put us in a better position," said Morrissey.

Iowa City West quarterback Nathan Boland gave Iowa City West a 6-0 lead with a 13-yard touchdown run in the first quarter.

Beckman tied the game with a 10-yard keeper of his own, and Prairie took a 14-7 lead when Beckman and Vizzini connected on a 31-yard pass play in the third quarter.

IOWA CITY WEST 21, PRAIRIE 14

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ICW	CRP		
First downs	24	13	
Rushes-yards	56-257	32-124	
Passing yards	94	121	
Comp-Att-Int	7-20-0	8-16-1	
Fumbles-lost	1-0	2-0	
Punts-avg.	2-27.0	2-51.5	
Penalties-yards	11-90	11-86	

Iowa City West	7	0	0	14 - 21
Prairie	0	7	7	0 - 14

ICW - Nathaniel Boland 13 run (Connor Gordon kick)

CRP - Trey Beckman 10 run (Sam Drysdale kick)

CRP - Jesse Vizzini 31 pass from Beckman (Drysdale kick)

ICW - Micah Kelsay 1 run (Gordon kick)

ICW - Kelsay 25 run (Gordon kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Iowa City West - Raffensperger 14-99, Kelsay 15-68, Boland 17-63, Greene 2-21, Moel 2-9, Dowell 4-4, Team 2-minus 7.

Prairie - Christensen 21-58, Beckman 6-25, Pinter 2-22, Vizzini 3-19.

Passing

Iowa City West - Boland 7-20-0-94.

Prairie - Beckman 8-16-1-121.

Receiving

Iowa City West - Batie 4-67, Martin 1-10, Kelsay 1-9, Bleil 1-8.

Prairie - Vizzini 6-71, Pinter 1-32, Simpson 1-18.