

## Kennedy hurt by strange call in Dubuque

Written by Clete Campbell

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DUBUQUE – Referees deemed Derek Jacobus' razzle dazzle Made-For-SportsCenter's Top 10 performance too much, and a gritty Dubuque Hempstead defense resolved the showstopping Cedar Rapids Kennedy quarterback wouldn't be the death of their playoff dream Friday night.

On Jacobus' only real mistake of an otherwise brilliant night, Blake Thurston stepped in front of big Cougars tight end Killian Magee in the right corner of the end zone to intercept Jacobus with 40 seconds left and seal the Mustangs' crazy 30-27 homecoming victory over Kennedy at Dalzell Field.

"I saw the ball in the air and said, 'That's mine,'" Thurston remarked. "I've got to get it for the team."

An unstoppable Jacobus fronted the playoff-bound Cougars' bid to nail down a first-round home game for the 4A tournament in often-spectacular fashion. He rushed for 191 yards and three scores on a mere 13 carries, including a 73-yard touchdown blast on the game's second play.

Jacobus broke three tackles on that wowing score. But it was the one play he couldn't make that was haunting the senior the long bus ride home.

"Credit to (Thurston)," Kennedy Coach Tim Lewis said. "He made a great play.

"I feel bad for Derek. He had a great game. He's the kind of kid who's totally going to blame

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himself for that, and he shouldn't. There's a lot of plays in a game, and unfortunately it had to end like that."

An unstoppable Jacobus drew gasps from the Dalzell crowd when he hurdled 5-foot-5 Hempstead defensive back Lucas Hodge in open field early in the fourth quarter, but he drew a costly unsportsmanlike penalty flag from an unimpressed officiating crew.

Jacobus followed up the jaw-dropping leap over Hodge with a shake-and-bake spin move that earned him another 5 yards en route to an apparent gain of 24 yards. But officials, deciding Jacobus' move was reckless and put Hodge in danger, flagged him 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct. Kennedy coaches drew another 15-yard flag when they questioned the crew about the call.

"I've never heard of that (rule)," Lewis said. "I'm going to look it up, because I need to know for my own peace of mind because that was huge. We were driving down the field and we had a ton of momentum because of that run, and then they call it back on a penalty I've never heard of."

The twin flags were a drive killer and halted Kennedy's pursuit of an insurance score early in the fourth quarter as they safeguarded a precarious 27-22 lead. Penalties and a lack of discipline were the Cougars' downfall. Kennedy (5-3) was flagged 13 times for 113 yards, including five personal fouls.

But Jacobus' penalty was the most baffling of the night for Lewis.

"What's frustrating is they didn't know how to mark it (on the field). They put their minds together real quick and said, 'Let's do this.' We had to accept it and we didn't accept it very well. We let it get into our heads."

Hempstead, an 0-9 club a year ago now en route to the postseason at 4-4, refused to fold despite failing to find any kind of clue on stopping Jacobus, surrendering another 151 yards to chain-moving Cougar back Miles Moa and allowing Kennedy to cash in on a huge gamble - a

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successful 4th-down-and-13 conversion from its own 30-yard line in the second quarter.

"We (won) with physicality," said Hempstead Coach Bob McIntyre, a strong candidate for Mississippi Valley Conference Coach of the Year for his quick revival of a slumping program. "We told our kids it's a 48 minute game. We just had to play it six seconds at a time."

Taking advantage of the Kennedy flags, Hempstead's defense killed the Cougar drive at their own 34 and immediately went on the attack. A Matt Zenner 16-yard run and another Kennedy personal foul – this time a face mask – allowed the Mustangs to quickly gallop into the Cougar red zone.

Zenner (who bulled his way to a hard 90 yards on 16 carries) bounced outside for a go-ahead 14-yard score with 8:29 left, and quarterback Bailey Paulsen converted a beautiful naked bootleg on the two-point conversion attempt to give Hempstead a 30-27 advantage.

The opposing defenses traded three-and-out stands before Jacobus attempted to lead Kennedy on a game-winning march from his own 11 with 4:30 left to play. The Cougars marched without opposition, converting five first downs on their way to the Hempstead 13.

But the 5-foot-9 Thurston, giving away a ton of size to Magee, was in perfect position to deny Jacobus, and deny Kennedy momentum heading into next week's big season finale with Iowa City High. Meanwhile, the Mustangs booked themselves a spot in the second season.

"That was one hell of an effort," McIntyre told his team afterward. "Congratulations, we're headed to the playoffs."

Kennedy has earned itself nine consecutive playoff lives, but the Cougars want this life to be their longest. To hang around beyond Halloween, Kennedy will have to play a more disciplined, composed brand of football behind Jacobus.

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"Hopefully, we'll bounce back," Lewis said before pausing, looking briefly back at his locker room and adding, "I know we will."

HEMPSTEAD 30, KENNEDY 27

CRK	DH	
First downs	22	12
Rushes-yards	48-354	31-163
Passing yards	79	92
Comp-Att-Int	8-16-1	5-8-0
Fumbles-lost	1-1	0-0
Punts-avg.	2-30.5	3-42.5
Penalties-yards	13-113	5-39

Kennedy	7	14	6	0 - 27
Hempstead	7	7	8	8 - 30

CRK – Derek Jacobus 73 run (Mark Schulz kick)  
DH – Jacob Hodge 4 run (Chris Francis kick)  
CRK – Jacobus 1 run (kick blocked)  
DH – Hodge 11 (Francis kick)  
CRK – Jacobus 8 run (Nathan Althoff pass from Jacobus)  
CRK – Miles Moa 2 run (kick failed)  
DH – Carter Daack 3 run (Chris Francis run)  
DH – Matt Zenner 14 run (Bailey Paulsen run)

### Individual Statistics

#### Rushing

Kennedy - Jacobus 13-194, Moa 28-151, Peyton Imhof 5-8, Drew Heitland 1-2, Jay Blank 1-2.  
Hempstead - Matt Zenner 16-90, Paulsen 11-53, Hodge 3-23, Jacob Harrison 1-minus 3.

#### Passing

Kennedy - Jacobus 8-16-1-79.

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Hempstead - Paulsen 5-8-0-92.

Receiving

Kennedy - Heitland 2-38, Logan Wedo 1-8, Jacob Shannon 2-9, Blank 1-2.

Hempstead - Hodges 3-64, Zenner 1-20, Evan Kolker 1-8.