

Marion Indians stuff Benton, 28-14

Written by Tom Fruehling

Saturday, 03 September 2011 00:09 - Last Updated Saturday, 03 September 2011 02:54



On a stifling hot Friday night at Thomas Park field, the Marion defense absolutely stifled the Benton Bobcats in a 28-14 victory.

Except for a couple of missed opportunities early and a rash of banged up players, the Indians might have put the game away sooner as they steamrolled to a 28-0 lead midway through the third quarter.

Benton Community could muster merely 10 yards rushing and no pass completions until late in the game when Marion Coach Tony Perkins cleared the bench.

In the end, the Bobcats gained just 50 yards on the ground and had a single pass play of 32 yards with two minutes to go. They had three first downs for the night.

"Our defense kept them off balance all night and really ran to the ball," said Perkins after his team went to 2-0 for the year.

On offense, the Indians racked up 240 yards rushing but it took 11 different ballcarriers to do it. "Our offensive line was outstanding," the coach said.

The leading rusher was fourth-string tailback Brennan Kelly with 53 yards on 10 carries. Hunter Banes totaled 43 yards on 10 carries. Tyler Gunderson gained 37 yards on the same number of touches and scored two touchdowns.

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Starting senior tailback Colton Storla, who led the Indians with 113 yards on 23 rushes and both touchdowns in a 14-10 victory over Mount Vernon last week, scored from three yards in the first quarter Friday night but then left the game for good.

Perkins said his star runner has an unknown medical issue and will be evaluated Monday. It's hoped he'll be ready for the game at Western Dubuque next week.

Likely lost for the year is junior back Andrew Davis, who broke his arm after catching a slant pass over the middle early in the second quarter. He left the stadium in an ambulance. Lineman Spencer Toms broke a finger and his status is unclear.

"It was definitely a MASH kind of night with all the injuries," Perkins said. "It was a case of next man in. But that's why you dress 44 players.

"Considering everything that happened, I thought the boys played very, very well. You hope the team makes big strides from week one to week two, and I think we definitely showed that. We played a lot better."

After Storla's score, Gunderson scored the first of his two touchdowns from four yards with 6:56 to go in the opening stanza.

Shifty left-handed quarterback Cale Cannoy hit Davis and then Gunderson on extra-point passes to give the Indians an early 16-0 lead.

Both scores were set up by interceptions by Banes deep in Bobcat territory.

In the second quarter, a 35-yard touchdown scamper by Trev Biery was called back by a penalty and a long punt return by Gunderson was nullified by an illegal block.

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The Indians scored just before the half when Bobcat punter Austin Cassell kicked the ball off a teammate's helmet and the ball rolled back into the end zone. Marion defensive back Devin LeBeau recovered to close the half at 22-0.

The Indians' last score came with 5:30 left in the third quarter when Gunderson fell in from the 1-yard line.

Benton finally got on the scoreboard on the very next play when Brandon Beaver streaked straight up the middle for 75 yards on the ensuing kickoff.

Bobcat quarterback Jake Stenberg closed the scoring with a three-yard run with a little more than a minute to go in the game for Benton (0-2).

MARION 28, BENTON 14

Benton 0 0 7 7 - 14

Marion 16 6 6 0 - 28

Marion - Colton Storla 3 run (Andrew Davis pass from Cale Cannoy)

Marion - Tyler Gunderson 4 run (Gunderson pass from Cannoy)

Marion - Devin LeBeau blocked punt recovery in end zone (PAT failed)

Marion - Gunderson 1 run (PAT failed)

BC - Brandon Beaver 75 kickoff return (kick good)

BC - Jake Stenberg 3 run (kick good)

Team Stats

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Marion Benton

First downs 17 3

Rushing 58-240 27-50

Passing 5-9-0-30 1-11-2-32

Punts 3-47.6 7-27.3

Penalties 6-40 4-20

Fumbles/lost 2/2 0/0