

Prairie clips J-Hawks in opener, 24-7

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 29 August 2013 22:57 - Last Updated Friday, 30 August 2013 07:55

The Prairie Hawks were struggling with their running game Thursday night when they decided to put 630 pounds of muscle on the right side of the offensive line.

Their names are Bryce Meeker and Christian Ohrt, and the two behemoths helped Prairie grind out a 24-7 victory over Jefferson in the season opener at Kingston Stadium on a humid night in southwest Cedar Rapids.

Meeker, who stands 6-foot-6 and 285 pounds, normally plays offensive tackle, but he shifted to guard to make room for Ohrt, a Jefferson transfer who measures 6-foot-8 and 345. They helped pave the way for a rushing attack that netted 246 yards as "Air Prairie" took most of the night off.

"It was just a big-man package," said Meeker, who has college offers from Northern Iowa and Illinois State. "We wanted to get the power game working and we got it running real well."

Mitch Christensen, a power tailback, ran for 119 yards and broke loose for a 44-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter that gave Prairie a 21-7 lead.

New quarterback Trey Beckman passed for only 55 yards, a far cry from Prairie's potent passing attack in 2012, but he sprinted 63 yards for a touchdown on Prairie's third play from scrimmage in the first quarter.

"It actually was a broken play," Beckman confessed. "I fumbled the snap. That was my fault. I just picked it up and ran it. I kind of surprised myself."

Jefferson tied the game, 7-7, on a 7-yard pass from workhorse quarterback Layne Sullivan to Dakota Tomkins in the first quarter. The J-Hawks moved the ball in the first half and controlled the time of possession, but never dented the end zone again.

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Jefferson Coach Brian Webb liked the effort, but not the execution.

"You can be emotional and you can be passionate when you're out here, but it comes down to execution," he said. "And we just couldn't execute.

"When you need a clutch play in the MVC, you've got to be able to execute. You have to be able to block, you have to be able to catch. We had opportunities."

The J-Hawks finished with only 184 yards of total offense against Prairie's stingy defense. The Hawks intercepted three passes and outside linebacker Tristan Beyer smothered a bunch of running plays.

"The way we practice, the way we prepared mentally and physically for the week just helped us in the end," said Beyer. "It was a good win, but they're a darned good team. They're going to win some games.

"That's the first building block for us," said Beyer. "Now we move to Week 2 and prepare for Kennedy."

Prairie collected 301 yards of total offense, with 82 percent coming on the ground and only 18 percent through the air. "A little different," Coach Mike Morrissey remarked.

"We have a long way to go, obviously, but I also think a lot of the credit lies on their end.," he said, saluting Jefferson. "That's a tough group and they are a much improved football team."

Beckman, who succeeded Jace Hanna at quarterback, completed 5 of 15 passes for 55 yards, one TD pass and two interceptions. He was happy with the win, but not satisfied with his performance as a passer.

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"No, I'm not," said Beckman. "I know I have to work on that. Everybody who was in the stadium knows that. That can be done. I'll get better. I know I will."

Beckman hit Jesse Vizzini with a 17-yard touchdown pass with just 7.4 seconds left in the first half to snap a 7-7 tie. Sam Drysdale went 3-for-3 on PATs for Prairie and also kicked a 27-yard field goal to finish the scoring in the fourth quarter.

Sullivan supplied most of the offense for Jefferson. He carried the ball 23 times for 51 yards, but the numbers would have looked a lot better if he hadn't been tackled for losses nine times.

Sullivan completed 9 of 20 passes for 81 yards and three interceptions. He also played in the defensive backfield on a hot, muggy night that led to a lot of leg cramps on both sides.

"That's Layne Sullivan," said Webb, who appreciated the effort. "And that's why he's going to go play at the next level. He's a competitor and he never gives up. He's a kid you can trust when he's out there."

PRAIRIE 24, JEFFERSON 7

CRP	CRJ
First downs	15 12
Rushes-yards	39-246 41-103
Passing yards	55 81
Comp-Att-Int	5-16-2 9-20-3
Fumbles-lost	0/0 1/0
Punts-avg.	4-39.3 3-33.3
Penalties-yards	8-53 2-15

Prairie	7	7	0	10	- 24
Jefferson	7	0	0	0	- 7

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Scoring plays

P - Trey Beckman 63 run (Sam Drysdale kick)

J - Dakota Tomkins 7 pass from Layne Sullivan (Nicholas Rocha kick)

P - Jesse Vizzini 17 pass from Beckman (Drysdale kick)

P - Mitch Christensen 44 run (Drysdale kick)

P - Drysdale 27 FG

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Prairie - Christensen 19-119, Beckman 9-87, Pinter 6-33, Kuchemann 2-12, Vizzini 1-5, Team 2-minus 10.

Jefferson - Sullivan 23-51, Moncivais 5-18, Tomkins 3-14, Frazier 3-12, O'Connell 3-5, Floyd 2-3, Gesling 1-2, Team 1-minus 2.

Passing

Prairie - Beckman 5-15-2, 55; Kuchemann 0-1-0, 0.

Jefferson - Sullivan 9-20-3, 81

Receiving

Prairie - Simpson 3-24, Vizinni 1-17, Smith 1-14

Jefferson - Floyd 4-44, Moncivais 2-19, Wiederin 1-10, Tomkins 1-7, Frazier 1-1.