

## **Cedar Valley squished again, 72-0**

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Sometimes statistics do lie.

In their first-ever home football game at LaSalle Middle School Friday night, the Cedar Valley Christian Huskies lost to Valley Community of Elgin, 72-0.

And it would have been much worse if the visitors had not played their junior varsity squad after going up 58-0 and if the scoreboard clock had not run continuously from the second quarter on.

But the 300-or-so Cedar Valley fans cheered throughout. Their boys played hard right to the end.

And Huskies Coach Ed Betsworth was still calling out plays as the clock mercifully ticked down.

“Run, Danny, run,” the coach instructed after inserting junior Danny Mafuta during a timeout with 24 seconds left to go.

The play called for Mafuta, a spindly speedster who moved to Cedar Rapids from the Congo in August and has never played football before, to go downfield as fast as he could and hope a Hail Mary pass came close enough to catch. Like most everything else the woefully mismatched Huskies tried all night, it didn’t work.

But there were no downtrodden faces, even in the aftermath of a thorough drubbing.

Up in the press box, public address announcer and Cedar Valley Principal Jeff Pospisil remained upbeat.

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“For these kids, they get a chance to play under the lights on a Friday night. It doesn’t get any better than that; even if we’re getting killed,” he said.

The small private Christian school fielded its first eight-man team last year with a four-game schedule - all on the road - and this year has a full nine-game slate with five home dates.

The Huskies lost their opener last week, 76-0, to HLV in Victor.

“The score is irrelevant,” Betsworth said. “If we’re talking about winning and losing, this was an ugly game.

“But these kids don’t have any experience and they’re playing against teams that do. What I look at is what we can do to help them improve.

“Last week in practice, for instance, we worked on pass coverage. And tonight, we got an interception. So, no, I’m not discouraged.”

Neither, obviously, are the 16 resilient boys who form the entire Cedar Valley roster.

“It was great,” said sophomore Eric Gustafson, the only one on the team who had played any organized football before last season. “We did better than last week. And the thing is, we played as hard as we can.

“I can’t wait until next Friday night.”

Against Valley of Elgin, with 30 experienced players on its roster, the Huskies managed no first downs all night. They completed one out of eight passes for a five-yard gain but lost a total of 102 yards rushing.

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Nor did they make a tackle until after the Tigers ran up a 56-0 lead by scoring the first seven times they touched the ball. When the Huskies finally stopped Valley and forced a punt with 4:45 to go in the first half, there were high-fives all-around and cheers from the bleachers.

“This will take patience,” Betsworth said. “Rome wasn’t built in a day.

“The kids are having fun. They’re not giving up. And little by little, day by day, they’re learning how to play football.”

Grant Wagner scored four touchdowns for Valley (1-2, 1-0) and Mike Burgin scored two times.