

No. 6 Lions roll; Jeff makes playoffs

Written by Mike Condon

Saturday, 25 October 2014 00:36 - Last Updated Monday, 27 October 2014 05:38



Good football teams get big plays when they need them from their key players.

Linn-Mar is a good football team and its key players on offense have been Trevor Noble and Ryan Schmidt. The senior tandem came to the front when the Lions needed them most in Friday's regular-season finale against Cedar Rapids Jefferson.

Schmidt and Noble hooked up for four touchdown passes as the Lions rallied from a 14-7 deficit to win going away, 42-21, on a foggy Friday night at Linn-Mar Stadium.

The Lions (8-1, 5-0) had already locked up the Class 4A District 5 title after Week 8. Coach Bob Forsyth's team will host a No. 4 seed Davenport Central in a first-round playoff game on Wednesday night.

Jefferson (4-5, 2-3) got into the playoffs as a No. 4 seed. The J-Hawks will be on the road against a No. 1 seed and unbeaten Bettendorf on Wednesday night.

Noble, who caught three TD passes and returned an interception for a score in last week's win at Waterloo West, said the Lions weren't overlooking the J-Hawks.

"We knew they were a great team coming in here," he said. "They were playing for (the playoffs) today. They were playing as hard as they could, so we knew we had to step up our game."

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Coach Brian Webb had his Jefferson defense geared up to stop the run, daring the Lions to win through the air. Linn-Mar's option attack was bottled up most of the first half as the J-Hawks swarmed Schmidt and tailback Perrion Scott.

The Lions took a 7-0 lead when Schmidt hit Noble on a 6-yard slant pass midway through the first quarter. Some Jefferson teams of years past may have hung their heads and given up.

Not the 2014 edition.

Mason Furnish ran 35 yards almost untouched to cap an impressive drive just 2:32 after Linn-Mar scored. The defense stopped the Lions and on the first play after a punt, quarterback Jesse Furrow found Colton Knox on a 50-yard scoring play to put Jefferson up, 14-7.

"The thing is, we played (Linn-Mar) tough," Webb said. "We're no longer that team that people look at on the schedule as an automatic (win). They know they are in for a dogfight and in the first half I thought we really fought our tails off."

Jefferson appeared primed to take the 14-7 lead into halftime when a Schmidt pass intended for Noble in the end zone was underthrown. The ball bounced off the hands of a J-Hawk defender into Noble's arms for a tying score with 1:09 left in the half.

"It was a little underthrown," Noble said. "I just tried to get in there and tip it up and it knocked right off (the defender's) hands and I was able to grab it."

Forsyth said adjustments were made at halftime.

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"We made a couple of corrections at the half," Forsyth said. "Formationally, we did a couple of different things. We switched up a few things but the big thing was that our guys just played harder in the second half."

One Lion who played hard all game long was senior linebacker Trevor Long. He sacked Furrow three times and had four other tackles for loss.

"We just prepared for this all week," Long said. "We got great coaching. It started on Monday and we were prepared to play."

After one of Long's tackles for loss ended a J-Hawk drive midway through the third quarter, the Lions took the lead for good when Schmidt hit Noble from 21 yards out with 3:01 remaining. Scott broke loose for a 32-yard scoring run on the final play of the quarter, putting Linn-Mar up 28-14 heading into the final 12 minutes.

Jefferson responded with a long drive, capped by a Tavian Rashed 2-yard run with 9:04 left, cutting the gap to 28-21.

But Linn-Mar wasn't to be denied on this night. After a short kickoff put the Lions in business near midfield, it took just three plays, the key one a 41-yard run by Logan Benter. That set up Schmidt for a 1-yard run around end for the score.

The Lion defense then forced a Furrow fumble that was recovered by Sam Bries. Schmidt and Noble hooked up again, this time from 15 yards out and the celebration was on.

"This is what we've been playing for all season," Noble said. "We wanted to win tonight to keep the momentum going into the playoffs."

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There will be little sleep for the Lion coaching staff.

"We'll wait to see who we play, then the coaches will meet about 4 a.m.," Forsyth said. "We'll start putting together things on our opponent, then bring the kids in later in the morning and start getting ready for Wednesday."

LINN-MAR 42, JEFFERSON 21

Jeff L-M

First downs 16 18
Rushes-yards 33-141 34-201
Passing yards 188 197
Comp-Att-Int 11-22-0 14-23-0
Fumbles-lost 1-1 0-0
Punts-avg. 6-39.0 6-38.5
Penalties-yards 9-78 6-50

Jefferson 7 0 0 7 - 21
Linn-Mar 7 7 14 14 - 42

LM - Trevor Noble 6 pass from Ryan Schmidt (Sean Zimmerman kick)
Jeff - Mason Furnish 35 run (Caleb Kesterson kick)
Jeff - Colton Knox 50 pass from Jesse Furrow (Kesterson kick)
LM - Noble 19 pass from Schmidt (Zimmerman kick)
LM - Noble 21 pass from Schmidt (Zimmerman kick)
LM - Perrion Scott 32 run (Zimmerman kick)
Jeff - Tavian Rashed 2 run (Kesterson kick)
LM - Schmidt 1 run (Zimmerman kick)

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LM - Noble 15 pass from Schmidt (Zimmerman kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Jefferson - Tavian Rashed 14-58, Mason Furnish 2-38, Mason Short 4-32, Jesse Furrow 4-(minus 16), Bryce Lund 7-29.

Linn-Mar - Perrion Scott 14-84, Ryan Schmidt 11-55, Logan Benter 2-43, Daniel Gorsich 4-24, Team 3-(minus 5)

Passing

Jefferson - Jesse Furrow 11-22-0-186

Linn-Mar - Ryan Schmidt 14-23-0-197

Receiving

Jefferson - Bryce Lund 4-75, Mason Short 2-13, Tavian Rashed 4-50, Colton Knox 1-50

Linn-Mar - Trevor Noble 5-94, Daniel Gorsich 3-50, Perrion Scott 2-15, Garret Evans 3-35, Jordan Junkins 1-3