

Warriors escape Jeff's upset bid

Written by Jim Ecker

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Cedar Rapids Washington fullback Tavion Stewart had carried the ball only once all day when he took a simple handoff in the fourth quarter and saw nothing but daylight between him and the end zone far away.

He had one thought as he raced 75 yards to paydirt.

"Don't stop running. Keep going. Don't slow down," he said.

Stewart's long gallop snapped a 14-14 tie and helped the Warriors beat Jefferson, 27-14, in the season opener Saturday afternoon at Kingston Stadium.

The cross-town rivals were supposed to play Friday night, but a severe thunderstorm sent everyone home early and made the teams wait another day to knock heads.

Washington was ranked as high as No. 2 in some preseason polls after playing for the Class 4A state title last year, but the Warriors had their hands full for three quarters against a team that finished with a 4-6 record last season.

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"I saw a much improved Jefferson team," Washington Coach Paul James remarked. "I thought they played hard. They've got some good players. You can tell the coach (Brian Webb) has done a great job with them."

Washington jumped to a 14-0 lead in the first half on two short runs by Johnny Dobbs, but new Jefferson quarterback Jared Eivins threw a pair of touchdown passes and the game was deadlocked heading into the fourth period.

"When it was tied 14-all, it was decision time: What are we going to do?," said James. "And I really like the way we responded with the two touchdowns."

Washington had to rebuild its offensive line this season following heavy graduation losses. The O-Line was a great strength for the Warriors last year, and the new blockers appeared to need a little time before asserting themselves in the fourth quarter.

First Stewart broke loose on a simple trap play for his 75-yard touchdown, then Tavian Patrick iced the game with a 15-yard touchdown with 6:08 left to make it 27-14 and finish a 67-yard drive.

Benjamin Nassif had a 40-yard run on the final touchdown drive and quarterback TJ Vogel scrambled for 23 yards to get the Warriors into scoring position and secure the victory.

"I think it took awhile for all of us to click and kind of realize we were in our first game," said Vogel. "Last night kind of took us off our mental edge. We all need to improve. I need to improve, too."

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The Warriors (1-1) escaped a bid for the No. 1 spot in the state championship last Saturday, 29 August 2015, when they defeated the Jeffers (1-1) 28-14. The Warriors' defense held the Jeffers to a season-low 14 points, while the offense scored 28 points, including a late-game touchdown drive. The Jeffers' offense struggled, failing to score in the second half. The Warriors' defense was led by linebacker (Name), who had 10 tackles, and defensive end (Name), who had 8 tackles. The Jeffers' defense was led by defensive end (Name), who had 10 tackles, and linebacker (Name), who had 8 tackles. The game was played at the Jeffers High School stadium. The Warriors' coach, (Name), said his team was proud of their performance and looked forward to the state championship. The Jeffers' coach, (Name), said his team was disappointed but proud of their effort.