

By KEVIN CHROUST - editorial@kcchronicle.com

Second-half output carries North Stars

BATAVIA – The extreme north of the Tri-Cities is going into Week 2 knowing it's capable of playing team football and winning even in the absence of a playmaker.

The extreme south of the Tri-Cities is going into Week 2 trying to figure out how to move the football.

St. Charles North found ways to put points on the board without running back Jordan Huxtable while its defense shut down Batavia in a promising 43-13 win Friday night at Batavia. North (1-0) held Batavia to eight yards of first-half total offense, but only led 9-7 after 24 minutes.

"[The defense] kept us in the game the first half," North coach Mark Gould said. "... The defense did great all game. They did a heck of a job."

The second half provided more in the way of theatrics from the get-go. Jeff Stolzenburg returned the second-half kickoff 95 yards to extend North's lead to 16-7.

"That just lit a fire under everybody," Gould said. "Not that the defense needed it, but the offense kind of needed it. I think it helped us play more relaxed. Nine-7, you're a little bit tight. That extra score helped to relax things."

Less than 2 minutes later, the North Stars extended the lead to 23-7 on a 42-yard pass from Jake Bergren to Michael Ghanem. The score came four plays after Sean Davidson recovered a fumble by Batavia quarterback Noel Gaspari.

Things got even uglier two Batavia possessions later when North linebacker Dominic Imbordino returned another Batavia fumble 41 yards for a touchdown.

"It was a total team effort and that's what we're looking for," Gould said. "I think last year we didn't have any run backs. We didn't have any defensive returns for touchdowns. We probably didn't have a lot of big plays. We said we need those kind of things."

Before the end of the quarter, Bergren, who played the second half and showed some quickness, ran the score to 36-7 on a 6-yard run up the middle.

"He looked real good getting through the line on a couple of those runs," Gould said.

Connor McShane took the snaps in the first half for North, and Gould said he plans on doing some experimenting at the position in the first few weeks. Matt Schiltz also took some late snaps.

"I told all three guys in these next two games they're going to play," Gould said. "There's no guarantees how much, but that they would play."

The Bulldogs didn't have a first down until the 3:08 mark in the second quarter, and never moved the ball until the game was out of hand. The Bulldogs ran for 85 yards, virtually all of which came after North's top defense was off the field.

Things didn't come any easier in the air. Gaspari went 4-for-18 for 23 yards with an interception. His last 10 passes fell incomplete before leaving the game for Kevin Flinn. Flinn went 5-for-12 for 62 yards after taking over behind 29 points.

Copyright © 2009 The Chronicle. All rights reserved.