

Walsh reaches 2,000, but Marion falls

Written by Clete Campbell
Friday, 09 October 2015 23:00 -

EPWORTH – For Kory Walsh, the road to 2,000 career rushing yards was paved with blood, sweat, grit and a ton of pain.

In spite of all the Marion football team's immense struggles over the past two years, every yard was worth it for Walsh. But the Indians' senior tailback would trade every one of his milestone 2,013 yards for more victories for his win-starved program.

"I'd trade 1,000 yards for anyone on this team (to experience a win)," Walsh said.

Friday night was an all too familiar story for Marion fans, but the gutsy Walsh delivered a bright spot and a historical footnote in the black and blue and severely short-handed Indians' rough 38-20 setback to Western Dubuque at Buchman Field.

"It's something that's cool, but at the same time it's not something that means that much to me," Walsh said. "I just want to do the best I can for my team and be there for them."

Walsh's 11-yard second-quarter surge pushed him over 2,000 rushing yards for his career. With 40 yards on 10 carries, the 6-foot-1 burner seemed destined to pass Ben King (2,085 yards) for fifth place on Marion's career rushing chart in the second half.

But a late second-quarter hit left Walsh with a concussion, knocking him out of the game. It was just one of several tough hits for the critically short-handed Indians on Friday.

Marion, which started the game missing 13 players to the flu, also lost Walsh, electric playmaking tailback/wide

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receiver Gage Kray to the flu, and two other players to head trauma injuries by halftime.

Still, the Indians played all-out until the end, putting two fourth-quarter scores on the board to prevent Western Dubuque – which led 38-6 early in the final frame – from blowing them off the field.

“That's the way it's been this year,” Indians coach Tony Perkins said. “Kory would have had a lot more yards if he hadn't gotten a concussion. When Gage goes out with the flu in the second quarter, that takes away a lot of your offense.

“They're giving everything they've got. We show signs of playing very well, and we have letdowns.”

Marion's 15th consecutive loss opened with a familiar story line: An early turnover leading to the Indians falling behind quickly. Matt Simon intercepted Isaak Hahn in the Bobcats' red zone to kill a prime quick scoring chance for Marion.

Western Dubuque (2-5, 1-3 Class 3A District 4) promptly transformed the turnover into a 81-yard scoring march that culminated in Dylan Gotto's 10-yard touchdown pass to Chaz Bergfeld with 6:17 left in the first quarter.

Missed chances burned the Indians, who responded with a 14-play, 68-yard drive that frustratingly died at the WD 7-yard line with the Bobcat secondary tipping away Hahn's touchdown attempt intended for Blair Brooks.

The Bobcats, who've been laboring through a dry fall of their own, upped their lead to 14-0 with some trickeration. Halfback Mitch Kramer riddled the Marion defense and hit Gotto all alone in the left corner of the end zone on a 6-yard scoring pass.

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"We'd been waiting to use that one," said Gotto, who hit on his first six pass attempts en route to a sharp 8-for-12, 132-yard, two-touchdown night.

Marion (0-7, 0-4) answered with its best drive of the night: A 15-play, 72-yard march punctuated by Walsh's 1-yard power push into the end zone.

But the Indians couldn't mount another drive of substance as three turnovers and the killer injuries to Walsh and Kray derailed promising Marion drives and erased potential points. Simon and Nick Lembezeder hijacked passes for WD, which nearly nabbed two other picks.

"We didn't give any big plays," Bobcats coach Justin Penner said. "We made them run the field on us, and our defense was ready."

Western Dubuque quickly regained control of the game before halftime behind Gotto, who found Tyler Gansen on a 22-yard touchdown pass, and broke into the end zone on a 1-yard run with 16.5 seconds left before intermission. WD headed to the break up 28-6.

Dain Gansen's 1-yard fourth-quarter score extended the Bobcat lead to 38-6 and had the Indians on the verge of facing a running clock blowout. But Marion kept battling with tailback Owen Carstensen (who netted a hard-earned 95 yards on 19 carries) – taking over for Walsh – pushing forward behind Marion's battered, but unrelenting offensive line for a 4-yard touchdown.

Hahn, 11-for-22 passing for 189 yards in a gritty effort, found Brooks on an 81-yard strike with 5:21 left in a highlight reel play that exemplified the Indians' resolve Friday night.

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"I've been where Marion is when I coached at Mason City," Penner said. "I feel for Coach Perkins and what the Indians are going through.

"It's hard not to pay attention to losses and not let losses define you when you're in a habit of losing. It's incredibly difficult as a coach. You want your young men to feel good. My heart goes out to Coach Perkins and his kids.

"Look at Gage Kray. He switched from quarterback to receiver last year unselfishly to try to do what's best for the team. You wish a kid like that could feel great."

Marion's trying 2015 season has two weeks left. Perkins expects his team to go all out until the season's final snap, no matter how outmanned it may be in its remaining tests against Dubuque Wahlert and District 4 champion Xavier.

"Never give up," Perkins said of his expectations for his club for the rest of the season. "I want them to know it means something. Play with heart and never give up."

WESTERN DUBUQUE 38, MARION 20

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First downs 17 15

Rushes-yards 47-180 31-185

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Passing yards 189 132

Comp-Att-Int 11-22-2 9-13

Fumbles-lost 3-1 0-0

Punts-avg. 2-27 5-30.1

Penalties-yards 5-28 4-30

Marion 0 6 0 14 - 20

W. Dubuque 8 13 10 7 - 38

Scoring plays

WD – Chaz Bergfeld 10 pass from Dylan Gotto (Evan Ellis 2 pass from Gotto)

WD – Gotto 6 pass from Mitch Kramer (run failed)

M – Walsh 1 run (run failed)

WD – Tyler Gansen 22 pass from Gotto (Ellis kick)

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WD – Gotto 1 run (Ellis kick)

WD – Ellis 35 FG

WD – Dain Gansen 1 run (Ellis kick)

M – Owen Carstensen 4 run (pass failed)

M – Blair Brooks 81 pass from Isaak Hahn (Carstensen run)

Individual statistics

Passing

Marion – Issak Hahn 11-22-2, 189.

Western Dubuque – Dylan Gotto 8-12-0, 132, Mitch Kramer 1-1-0, 6.

Rushing

Marion – Owen Carstensen 19-95, Kory Walsh 10-40, Gage Kray 6-47, Clayton Mohwinkle 3-7, Ryan Bettenga 1-4, Ben Knapp 1-2, Hahn 7-minus 15.

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Western Dubuque – Dain Gansen 13-65, Kameron Kramer 13-50, Reid Hoefler 5-37, Gotto 4-23, Josh Buerger 3-11, Mitch Kramer 1-3, Zach Funke 1-1, Cory Wernimont 1-minus 3) Team 1-minus 2.

Receiving

Marion – Blair Brooks 4-125, Tylor Fairbaks 4-34, Mohwinkle 2-20, Carstensen 1-25.

Western Dubuque – Chaz Bergfeld 2-83, Mitch Kramer 2-17, Kameron Kramer 2-14, Tyler Gansen 1-12, Bergfeld 1-10, Gotto 1-6.