

No. 9 Cougars aiming for No. 5 Warriors

Written by Jim Ecker

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It's always fun to head into a big high school football game when you have no clue how it's going to turn out.

That's the case heading into Friday night's showdown between the ninth-ranked Kennedy Cougars and fifth-ranked Washington Warriors at Kingston Stadium.

Based on last year's results, you'd have to make the Warriors a heavy favorite. But based on how things are shaping up this year, it could be a toss-up.

The picture can change quickly in high school sports. Washington reached the Class 4A state championship game last season and finished with a sparkling 13-1 record. Kennedy, meanwhile, began the season with a six-game losing streak and had to hustle to finish 3-8.

Washington returned a host of outstanding skill players this season, but the Warriors took a heavy hit on the offensive line. Now it's Kennedy that has a strong offensive line that helped tailback Tyler Dralle rush for 265 yards and four touchdowns last week in an exciting 34-31 victory over Iowa City West.

Washington was locked in a 14-14 battle with Jefferson last week before the Warriors broke away for a 27-14 victory, with its rebuilt offensive line opening some nice holes when it mattered.

Now comes the big game between the Cougars and Warriors.

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Kennedy needs to improve its pass rush and pass defense after Iowa City West quarterback Alex Henderson torched them for a state-best 357 yards and three touchdowns. If the Cougars don't fix their pass defense, Washington quarterback TJ Vogel is capable of picking them apart with receivers like Isaiah Nimmers, Alex Herzog and O'Rien Vance at his disposal, along with running backs Tavian Patrick and Johnny Dobbs.

Patrick, who rushed for 1,191 yards last season, carried the ball only nine times for 19 yards against Jefferson. He'll probably play a bigger role against Kennedy, if Washington's new offensive line can lend a hand.

New Kennedy quarterback Nick Duehr hit 8 of 11 passes for 103 yards in his debut and carried the ball six times for 49 yards, making him a dual threat.

Kennedy and Washington have good ballclubs, but both of them need to improve to become very good. It will be interesting to see how it turns out Friday night, but it appears the Cougars have a chance to get a victory and improve to 2-0.

JEFFERSON (0-1) AT PRAIRIE (1-0)

The Prairie Hawks topped Linn-Mar, 31-17, in their debut under new head coach Mark Bliss last Saturday at Linn-Mar Stadium.

New Prairie quarterback Tyler Nunemaker passed for 176 yards and two touchdowns. The Hawks also ran for 152 yards in a balanced attack that produced 328 total yards.

New Jefferson QB Jared Eivins had a good day against Washington. He hit 17 of 27 passes for 217 yards and two touchdowns. The J-Hawks rushed for only 56 yards and need to get moving on the ground.

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DAVENPORT ASSUMPTION (0-1) AT XAVIER (0-0)

Davenport Assumption gave Class 4A No. 3 Bettendorf a tough game in the season opener before falling, 35-28. Joe Argo passed for 171 yards and three TDs for Assumption and carried the ball 23 times for 91 yards.

Will Ontiveros caught 12 passes for 142 yards and two touchdowns.

Xavier was supposed to open the season against Class 4A power Dowling Catholic last Friday night, but the game was wiped out by a thunderstorm and not rescheduled because Dowling did not want to return on Saturday.

LINN-MAR (0-1) AT PLEASANT VALLEY (1-0)

New Linn-Mar quarterback Reese Phillips hit 16 of 29 passes for 226 yards and two touchdowns against Prairie last week. He also carried the ball 16 times for 71 yards.

Daniel Gorsich caught seven passes for 93 yards and Josh Gassmann had six grabs for 91 yards and two touchdowns.

Pleasant Valley quarterback Terry Saul ran for 50 yards and passed for 27 yards in a 14-7 victory over North Scott.

MARION (0-1) AT WASHINGTON, IOWA (0-1)

The turnover bug hit Marion again Saturday in a 37-14 loss to Mount Vernon, leaving Coach Tony Perkins still needing one victory to match Les Hipple for the most wins in school history (105).

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Kory Walsh carried the ball 14 times for 154 yards for the Indians and Owen Carstensen ran eight times for 76 yards. New quarterback Issak Hahn hit 11 of 17 passes for 93 yards.

Washington lost to Class 3A No. 1 Pella, 42-24, last week. Quarterback Ryan Reighard carried the ball 24 times for 117 and two touchdowns. He completed 6 of 12 passes for 84 yards.

CEDAR VALLEY (1-0) AT CLARKSVILLE (0-2)

Cedar Valley received a vote in the Associated Press rankings this week after beating Harmony, 65-6, in the opener last week for the second victory in school history (both against Harmony).

Cole Telecky did not throw often, but he hit 4 of 7 passes for 114 yards and one touchdown. He also ran 10 times for 62 yards and three scores.

Apollo Betsworth ran for 76 yards and two touchdowns, Caleb Herr ran for 62 yards and Colin Heeren netted 47 yards as the Huskies collected 270 on the ground.

Clarksville has opened the season with losses to Colo-Nesco (84-16) and West Central (47-26).