

Warriors' magical run continues

Written by Ryan Suchomel

Saturday, 19 October 2013 00:00 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 October 2013 00:49



The Magic Men from Cedar Rapids Washington did it again Friday night.

Reid Snitker hit Jake Bjornsen with a 24-yard scoring pass with 9.7 seconds left to snap a 14-14 tie and give the surging Warriors a 21-14 victory over Prairie at John Wall Field.

Washington (5-3, 4-1) began the season with three straight losses, but they've won five straight games and are headed to the playoffs.

The victory also put the Warriors in the driver's seat for the Valley Division title in the Mississippi Valley Conference. If Washington and Xavier both win next week and finish 5-1 in the Valley Division, the Warriors will be the champs because they upset the Saints three weeks ago.

"We're one step away from a conference championship," Coach Paul James said. "That's all we care about now. We can do that next week. That's our goal right now."

Washington closes the regular season Thursday against Dubuque Wahlert (2-6, 0-5) at Kingston Stadium.

"It's crazy," Snitker said. "I wouldn't have thought we'd be on this streak. We're beginning to get

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a lot of confidence."

Prairie (4-4, 3-2) also clinched a playoff berth. The Hawks play at Waterloo West (4-4, 2-3) next Friday.

"Next week is big," Prairie Coach Mike Morrissey said. "You can't dwell on this. We have to bounce back and be able to play."

The Prairie Hawks led 14-6 after three quarters and seemed to be in control of the game after Mitch Dellamuth came up with an interception off Snitker with 10:50 to play.



But three plays later, Washington senior Kyle Malcolm came up with an interception off a tipped pass to set the Warriors up at the Prairie 40. After Snitker hit Isaiah Nimmers for a 37 yard gain - Nimmers finished with three catches for 84 yards - Snitker dove in for the touchdown to pull the Warriors within two, 14-12.

Washington went for the 2-point conversion and Snitker found Jake Bjornsen wide open in the back corner of the end zone to tie it up, 14-14.

Snitker said Bjornsen was not the first or second option on the play. "Nope," Bjornsen confirmed. "It was supposed to go to the outside guy. I was standing open in that corner, and he found me."

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"That was huge. Those two points made the difference in the game."

Connor Vincent came up with a big sack for the Warriors on the next Prairie drive, but the Warriors ended up having to punt.

The Hawks got the ball at their own 4-yard-line with 5:23 to play and drove it past midfield, but on a 4th-and-1 ended up just inches short on a run by junior quarterback Trey Beckman. Washington got the ball at their own 44-yard line with 1:08 left to play.

"I thought I had it on the reach," Beckman said. "But I guess they didn't count the reach. You can't do anything about it."

Morrissey had the confidence to go for it on fourth down.

"We wanted to win the game," Morrissey said. "We have a lot of confidence in our defense as well. I felt like if we converted, at worst we'd run the clock out.

"You can second-guess it here and there. But I have faith in my kids. We just, unfortunately, came up a little bit short."

The Warriors moved down the field, getting a 14-yard gift on a tipped pass from Snitker to Mason Taylor. That helped set up the 24-yard scoring strike from Snitker to Bjornsen down the seam with 9.7 seconds left.

"It was exciting, everyone was on their toes," Bjornsen said. "It was a tight window, but he threaded the needle and hit me right on the money."

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It was the fifth straight win for the Warriors and fourth by a touchdown or less.

"They do what it takes to win," James said. "Our biggest margin of victory, strange as it is, was over the No.1 team in the state (26-10 at Xavier).

"It's not so much that we are so much better than other teams. We just find a way to win."

Snitker finished 12-of-20 passing for 190 yards. He also ran the ball 19 times for 57 yards, and that's after a first half in which he had six rushes for minus-6 yards.

"He had a number of scrambles," James said. "That's the kind of athlete he is. He's a competitor."

"He did it all," Bjornsen said. "He never gets down on himself. He's a competitor. He does everything."

Johnny Dobbs had 34 rushing yards, including a TD run for Washington.

Prairie won the yardage game with 321 yards to 284 for Washington. The Prairie Hawks had 21 first downs to 14 for Washington.

Mitch Christensen ran for 90 yards on 22 carries and Beckman had 73 yards on 15 carries for Prairie. Beckman was also 8-of-20 passing for 102 yards.

"I can't explain it," Beckman said. "This is the worst I've ever felt after a sporting event. We had it. The ball didn't bounce our way tonight."

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"It's just one of those deals," Morrissey said. "The breaks went their way. They made plays. We couldn't capitalize on some things offensively."

The Washington players know their team is a lot different than the one that started the season 0-3, and their coach agrees.

"This just says a lot about the character of the kids and their never-say-die attitude," James said. "We've shown that in a number of games throughout the season, after we got our feet on the ground after the first three."

WASHINGTON 21, PRAIRIE 14

CRW	CRP
First downs	14 21
Rushes-yards	33-94 45-219
Passing yards	190 102
Comp-Att-Int	12-20-2 8-20-1
Fumbles-lost	0-0 0-0
Punts-avg.	3-44.3 3-36.7
Penalties-yards	5-25 6-40

Washington	0	6	0	15	- 21
Prairie	7	7	0	0	- 14

CRP - Trey Beckman 7 run (Sam Drysdale kick).

CRW - Johnny Dobbs 1 run (kick failed).

CRP - Kentrel Smith 8 pass from Beckman (Drysdale kick).

CRW - Reid Snitker 3 run (Jacob Bjornsen pass from Snitker).

CRW - Jacob Bjornsen 24 pass from Snitker (Jacob Bjornsen kick).

Individual Statistics

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Rushing

Washington - Reid Snitker 19-57, Johnny Dobbs 11-34, Mason Taylor 3-3.

Prairie - Mitch Christensen 22-90, Trey Beckman 15-73, Jesse Vizzini 8-56.

Passing

Washington - Reid Snitker 12-20-190-2.

Prairie - Trey Beckman 8-20-102-1.

Receiving

Washington - Isaiah Nimmers 3-84, Connor Vincent 3-49, Jacob Bjornsen 2-28, Landen Akers 2-10, Mason Taylor 1-14, Clayton Bjornsen 1-5.

Prairie - Jomaryon Simpson 3-33, Kentrel Smith 2-33, Keagan Pinter 2-19, Jesse Vizzini 1-17.