

Refs made right call against Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Upon further review, Kennedy football coach Tim Lewis acknowledged the officials made the correct call against the Cougars in their 30-27 loss to Dubuque Hempstead Friday night at Dalzell Field in Dubuque.

Kennedy quarterback Derek Jacobus was flagged for a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty when he leaped over a Hempstead defender on a running play in open field. Lewis questioned the call Friday, saying he'd never seen a penalty like that in 22 years as a high school coach.

He checked the rulebook and discovered the officials were right. It's a safety rule, meant to protect the player who is being vaulted.

"They got it," Lewis said Saturday. "They were right. It's a 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalty."

Jacobus, a state long jump champion and a top hurdler, leaped over Lucas Hodge, a 5-foot-5 defensive back, on the play. Jacobus would have been OK if Hodge had been lying on the ground, but Hodge was upright with his feet on the ground.

"This kid had both feet planted on the ground," said Lewis. "It's kind of amazing."

It was a key play. Kennedy was nursing a 27-22 lead when the play began at the Kennedy 47-yard line. Jacobus ran 35 yards to the Hempstead 18, but the Cougars were assessed a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and the ball was placed at the Kennedy 38.

That's a difference of 44 yards - the Kennedy 38 instead of the Hempstead 18. The Cougars, shaken by the call, committed a five-yard infraction on their next play and did not score on that possession.

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Hempstead later scored a touchdown and a two-point conversion for the 30-27 victory.

"It was a big momentum swing for us," said Lewis. "It ended up hurting us. We needed to bounce back, and we didn't."

Lewis had never seen anything like that bizarre play in all his years of coaching.

"I was baffled by it. So was everybody else," he said. "And they (the officials) admitted it. They said you don't see it very often, but it is there. They were right."