

Cougars tripped by No.5 Trojans, 12-9

Written by Jim Ecker

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IOWA CITY - Cedar Rapids Kennedy football fans had to like their chances when Iowa City West faced a 4th-and-15 predicament late in the game and the Cougars clinging to a slim 9-6 lead.

One more stop. One more tackle. One more play and Kennedy would have come from Iowa City with a satisfying victory.

It didn't happen.

Iowa City West quarterback Aaron Bleil avoided the blitz and hit Gabe Huinker for a 33-yard touchdown pass on that 4th-and-15 play with 1:59 left to give the Trojans a 12-9 victory in a non-district ballgame.

"The thing about football, sometimes it comes down to one play," said new Kennedy Coach Brian White. "If the kid drops the ball, we're celebrating. If we get the sack, we're celebrating. We didn't."

Kennedy blitzed two linebackers on the touchdown pass, hoping to sack Bleil before he could deliver the ball. Somehow, Bleil deftly avoid several Cougars and hit Huinker over the middle at about the 15-yard line.

Huinker cut into the end zone from there and scored without a Cougar laying a mitt on him.

Bleil made a terrific play to give new Iowa City West Coach Garrett Hartwig a victory in his first

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try.

"We thought the kid was going down," said White. "We had guys around his legs and he made a play. Sometimes it just comes down to making great plays."

Kennedy owned a 9-0 lead in the third quarter on a 10-yard touchdown run by Tyler Dralle and a 24-yard field goal by Mark Schulz, but Iowa City West rallied.



Bleil scored on an 11-yard run to pull the Trojans within 9-6 in the third quarter, setting the stage for his winning TD pass late in the game.

Bleil completed 14 of 30 passes for 192 yards, with Oliver Martin catching eight of those passes for 106 yards.

Sammy Lizarraga hit 12 of 28 passes for 93 yards and one interception in his first start for Kennedy. Shaun Beyer caught five passes for 44 yards.

White wants Kennedy to have a balanced offense this season after featuring a power running game in recent years, but the running game held the upper hand again Friday with Logan Wedo rushing for 89 yards, Jay Blank netting 69 and Dralle finishing with 50.

The Kennedy defense held Iowa City West to just 37 yards on the ground, but Bleil made big plays for the Trojans at key times.

"We played outstanding defense," said White. "They're a good football team. And if they really

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are the fifth-best team in the state, then we have some things to be happy about and some things to be proud of.

"We did some nice things offensively," he said, "but we have a long ways to go."

Kennedy hosts Washington at Kingston Stadium Thursday night.