

J-Hawks look to take next big step

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 01 October 2014 17:50 - Last Updated Thursday, 02 October 2014 10:14



The Jefferson J-Hawks snapped a couple of serious losing streaks last week when they defeated Kennedy in overtime at friendly Kingston Stadium, but now comes an even bigger challenge for the J-Hawks.

Jefferson will try to beat the Cedar Falls Tigers in the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls Thursday night, giving the J-Hawks a tougher opponent in an environment that can be imposing for visiting teams.

The kickoff is scheduled for 7:15 p.m.

In other Metro games Thursday night, Linn-Mar visits Kennedy at Kingston Stadium and Prairie plays winless Iowa City High at Bates Field in Iowa City.

Jefferson is 3-2 overall and 1-0 in Class 4A District 5. Cedar Falls is 4-1 overall and 1-0 in the same district.

If Jefferson knocks off Cedar Falls, it probably would be time to start etching Brian Webb's name onto the Metro Coach of the Year certificate. There are several good candidates for Coach of the Year, with Paul James of Washington and Duane Schulte of Xavier both leading top-ranked teams, but neither one of them inherited the mess that Webb willingly assumed when he became Jefferson's coach three years ago.

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The J-Hawks had lost 25 straight games to Metro opponents before they topped Kennedy last week and they had lost 12 straight to the Cougars since 2002. These J-Hawks have become streak-busters, however, and they'll be hunting for their biggest victory of the season when they face the tradition-rich Cedar Falls Tigers.

Jesse Furrow, the gunslinger who moved to Cedar Rapids this year from Indiana, has passed for 832 yards and nine touchdowns, including the game-winner to Valentino Green on fourth down in overtime last week. Manny Olutunde has caught eight of Furrow's passes for 268 yards, a whopping average of 33.5 yards per grab.

Tavian Rashed has rushed for 345 yards and scored six times for the J-Hawks. Mason Furnish has seven catches for 175 yards.

Cedar Falls quarterbacks Trey Hansen and Taylen Alexander have passed for 573 yards and five TDs. Denison Harrington has carried the ball 70 times for 281 yards. Tra'Von Fagan has three TD catches. Tyler Schmidt has 13 receptions and Ben Fienup has 12.

LINN-MAR at KENNEDY
Kingston Stadium, 7:15 p.m.
KGYM 1600 AM, 107.5 FM

Records: Linn-Mar (4-1, 1-0 Class 4A District 5), Kennedy (0-5, 0-1 Class 4A District 5)

Kennedy's offense took a big step in the right direction last week when Sammy Lizarraga hit Shaun Beyer with three TD passes in a 27-24 overtime loss to Jefferson.

The snakebit Cougars would have won that game with a chip-shot field goal in the final second of the fourth quarter, but the boot sailed wide right. Earlier this season, the Cougars lost at Iowa City West when the Trojans threw a touchdown pass on 4th-and-15 in the final minute.

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Instead of being 2-3 and feeling fairly good about themselves, Kennedy finds itself staring at an ugly 0-5 record heading into a tough contest against Linn-Mar.

Kennedy would get a boost if tailback Logan Wedo and linebacker Terrance Hall return to action after missing last week's game against Jefferson with injuries.

Wedo has rushed for 274 yards this season and Tyler Dralle has 269 and four TDs. Lizarraga has passed for 639 yards and seven touchdowns, hitting 52 percent of his tosses. Beyer has 13 catches for 199 yards and four touchdowns.

Ryan Schmidt has passed for 506 yards and three touchdowns for Linn-Mar. He's also a threat as a runner with 226 yards on the ground and a Metro-best 10 touchdowns.

Speedster Perrion Scott has rushed for 408 yards and scored five touchdowns. He's also caught seven passes. Garret Evans and Bryce Miller have eight receptions. Trevor Noble has six catches for 132 yards and has intercepted three passes.

PRAIRIE at IOWA CITY HIGH
Bates Field, 7:15 p.m.
KGYM 106.3 FM

Records: Prairie (3-2 overall, 1-0 Class 4A District 6), Iowa City High (0-5, 0-1 Class 4A District 6)

The winless City High Little Hawks have fallen on tough times this year with five straight losses by a combined count of 170-43, but the Prairie Hawks better beware.

All five of City High's losses have come against quality opponents in Cedar Falls, Bettendorf,

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Ames, Iowa City West and Ottumwa, so the Prairie Hawks better come with their helmets strapped on tight.

City High quarterback Nate Wieland has thrown 150 passes in five games for 687 yards and two touchdowns. Bryson Runge has caught 19 passes for the Little Hawks and has rushed for 246 yards. Griffin Fellows has 16 grabs.

Prairie quarterback Trey Beckman missed last week's victory at Burlington as a precaution after suffering concussion-like symptoms the previous week against North Scott. Sophomore Dakota Simonsen ran the club at Burlington, but Beckman will get the ball if he's ready to play again.

Keagan Pinter has rushed for 584 yards and six touchdowns for Prairie. Jalen Rima has 20 catches for 275 yards and four touchdowns. Jojuan Simpson has 19 receptions for 274 yards.

JoJo Simpson is the Metro's leading punter at 41.8 yards per boot. Coen Brown has intercepted four passes.