

## **Prairie powers its way into playoffs**

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 24 October 2014 23:21 - Last Updated Friday, 24 October 2014 23:41

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Cedar Rapids Prairie unveiled a brand-new power running attack Friday night and powered themselves into the Class 4A playoffs with a clutch victory.

The Hawks rolled up 330 yards on the ground and overwhelmed Ottumwa, 48-0, in the final game of the regular season at John Wall Field.

Ottumwa, Prairie and Iowa City High all tied for third place in Class 4A District 6 with 2-3 records, but the tiebreakers gave Ottumwa the No. 3 seed and Prairie the No. 4 seed for the playoffs and eliminated Iowa City High.

The Prairie Hawks will face a No. 1 seed in the opening round of the playoffs Wednesday night on the road.

Prairie normally runs a spread offense that features the run and pass, but quarterback Trey Beckman has been lost for the rest of the season after suffering a concussion and the Hawks needed to try something different.

JoJo Simpson and Ben Boldt, two stalwarts on defense, moved into the offensive backfield Friday along with regular tailback Keagan Pinter and the result was a successful dose of smash-mouth football that rocked Ottumwa on its heels.

Prairie ran the ball 49 times and passed only five times all night. Simpson, who had carried the ball only seven times all season, rushed 12 times for 88 yards and a 10-yard touchdown. He was a load to bring down.

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Boldt, who had not carried the ball all year, ran five times for 37 yards and a 9-yard touchdown to begin the scoring.

Pinter ran 15 times for 126 yards and three touchdowns, raising his total to 1,047 yards for the campaign. And Hunter Johnson carried six times for 53 yards as the Hawks socked Ottumwa in the mouth.

Simpson is a powerful defensive end/outside linebacker who has an offer from Wayne State (Neb.), but he looked like a natural in the offensive backfield Friday night.

"The last time I carried it that much was eighth grade," he said with a big smile. "It was so much fun. It brought me back to eighth grade year when I was running all over the place. It was a great game tonight.

"My guys up front, you've got to give them a round of applause," said Simpson. "They were blocking and getting a push. My backs, they were also blocking. I was just getting to the hole."

One of those key blockers was Bryce Meeker, the 6-foot-6, 285-pound lineman who has committed to Iowa State.

Boldt is one of the top linebackers in Class 4A, but he looked like a bruiser in the backfield against Ottumwa. "I think the last time I played running back was eighth grade," he remarked. "It was a big shock. I just knew - run hard and keep two hands on the ball."

Simpson and Boldt also starred on defense. The Hawks held Ottumwa to just 130 yards of total offense and five first downs all night. Prairie intercepted two passes and recovered a fumble, and Coen Brown ran 68 yards with a blocked field goal for one of Prairie's six touchdowns.

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Prairie Coach Mike Morrissey knew he had to try something different after the Hawks lost to Muscatine, 31-10, last week and failed to accomplish much on offense. He turned to his father, Hall of Fame coach Ed Morrissey, for some advice and the result was the power rushing attack that featured three runners in the backfield at the same time.

"I spent about five minutes after the Muscatine game, kind of dwelling on that," said Morrissey. "And then my father and I started talking. He's the best football coach I've ever known for a reason."

The Morrisseys boiled it down to what they thought the Hawks could do best. The answer was power football, with little finesse.

"That helped," said Morrissey, who played for his father at Pleasant Valley High School. "We went back to the late 80's/early 90's at Pleasant Valley and our kids bought into it and got it done tonight.

"I thought they were awesome. They did a great job. There's more we can add to it and we'll see what they can grasp and go from there."

Pinter looked at the new offense on film last weekend and wondered what he was looking at.

"What is this?," he remembered thinking. "It worked, though. That's what I liked about it. I don't think any of us saw that coming (330 yards on the ground), but it really worked."

Simpson was like a kid with a new toy at Christmas in the backfield.

"Morrissey called us up and texted us all and said, 'We've got a new offense for you.' And I was like, 'All right, we'll see how it works.' He said, 'You're going to be getting the ball a lot, you better be ready both ways.'"

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Tyler Nunemaker, making his first start at quarterback for Prairie, did a good job of running the attack. The Hawks did not commit a turnover all night and looked sharp on offense.

Sam Drysdale kicked two field goals for Prairie, which will take a 4-5 record into the playoffs. Ottumwa will take a 5-4 mark into the postseason.

PRAIRIE 48, OTTUMWA 0

OTT      CRP

Rushes-yards      17-23    49-330

Passing yards      107      65

Comp-Att-Int 8-20-2    4-5-0

Fumbles-lost 2/1      0-0

Punts-avg. 4-37.3    1-19.0

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Penalties-yards    3-25    3-25

Ottumwa    0 0 0 0 - 0

Prairie    10 10 21 7 - 48

### Scoring plays

CRP - Ben Boldt 9 run (Sam Drysdale kick)

CRP - Drysdale 26 FG

CRP - JoJo Simpson 10 run (Drysdale kick)

CRP - Drysdale 36 FG

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CRP - Keagan pinter 3 run (Drysdale kick)

CRP - Pinter 5 run (Drysdale kick)

CRP - Pinter 12 run (Drysdale kick)

CRP - Coen Brown 68 block FG return (Drysdale kick)

### Individual Statistics

#### Rushing

Ottumwa - Frazier 1-18, Cox 3-8, Hutchinson 2-6, Wylie 1-2, Hopwood 10-minus 11.

Prairie - K.Pinter 15-126, JoJo Simpson 12-88, Johnson 6-53, Boldt 5-37, Nunemaker 4-16, J.Pinter 2-7, Meyer 2-5, Kalous 2-minus 1.

#### Passing

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Ottumwa - Hopwood 8-20-2, 107 yards.

Prairie - Nunemaker 3-4-0, 51 yards; Simonsen 1-1-0, 14 yards.

Receiving

Ottumwa - Altfillish 2-20, Kruah 2-19, Ridgway 1-30, Cox 1-15, Hutchinson 1-7, Strunk 1-6.

Prairie - Boldt 1-26, JoJo Simpson 1-24, Kalous 1-14, Meyer 1-1.