

## Alumni football games rekindle good old days

Written by Mark Dukes

Sunday, 10 July 2011 20:51 - Last Updated Sunday, 10 July 2011 21:57

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"Boys of Summer," a description normally reserved for baseball players, took on a whole different meaning Saturday night at Kingston Stadium.

Hundreds of fans turned out on a warm and muggy July night to see alumni of Marion, Linn-Mar, Kennedy and Jefferson play two football games. Linn-Mar defeated Marion in the first game, 28-18, and Kennedy outlasted Jefferson, 17-13, in the nightcap.

But the results were hardly the headline. There was so much more to this night of men, most of whom have families and regular jobs, getting one more chance to suit up and play a football game, for fans to mingle and remember the good old days of a weekend night at the stadium.

I arrived at the stadium for the second game between Jefferson and Kennedy about 20 minutes before the 8 p.m. scheduled kickoff, parking several blocks west of the stadium in a residential neighborhood. It was apparent then the start time would be pushed back.

A line perhaps 100 yards long stretched from the southwest corner ticket booth back into the parking lot. Fans tailgated in the west parking lot, some with beverages perhaps prohibited. People in line were patient and showed their allegiance with an occasional school cheer.

Alumni Football USA, a national organization, made this all happen. The group was making its first foray into Iowa. The Kingston doubleheader actually was the third and fourth alumni game in eastern Iowa, as surrounding towns held games a week and a day prior.

Curiosity sent me to Kingston Stadium, a place where I had covered dozens of high school football games. And I think that's what moved hundreds of others to attend.

The game between Linn-Mar and Marion had sparse attendance, but the Jefferson-Kennedy

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game drew 2,000 to 3,000 people, the majority on the Jefferson side. Certainly the turnout for the opener would have been better had it been played at Linn-Mar or Marion.

The quality of play actually was quite good, surprisingly enough. That is a testimony to the preparation the two teams put in the past several weeks. Running games were virtually non-existent, but there were the occasional short pass plays and misdirection plays that moved the down markers.

Timmy Johnson of Kennedy and Blake Tiedtke of Jefferson clearly were the two players to stop. Johnson returned the opening kickoff 98 yards for a touchdown. Tiedtke threw a touchdown pass and was a huge threat as an option quarterback.

There was a certain measure of atmosphere or ambiance that was missing, though. Alumni Football USA played recorded music between quarters, but an alumni band would have added a whole lot more with occasional playing of the fight song of either school.

Organization was a little lacking. Jefferson's program included names, uniform numbers and graduation years. Kennedy's rosters included only names of participants.

In a touch of irony, fireworks went off behind the east stands in the third quarter of the Jefferson-Kennedy game. They were coming from the Kernels' game, where the "Boys of Summer" practice their wares. But for one interesting night, the "Boys" had some competition.

There were working men who never thought they'd have one more chance to put on pads, one more chance to hit someone in another colored jersey, performing on a sultry night before hundreds of people.

It was a nice diversion, time well spent on a July night normally reserved for the "Boys of Summer."