

Smith beat bigger names for Linn-Mar award

Written by Jim Ecker

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Linn-Mar football coach Bob Forsyth announces the Players of the Week when the Lions get together on Mondays.

Everybody is eligible for the awards, but you might assume it would be tilted in favor of the "skill position" players like quarterbacks, tailbacks and receivers.

That being said, the winner of the first Offensive Player of the Week award at Linn-Mar was ...

Not quarterback Mark Atwater, who passed for three TDs and ran for another in a 35-10 victory over Jefferson on Aug. 29 ... And not receiver Andy Henry, who caught all three of those TD passes.

No, the winner of the Offensive Player of the Week award for the opening game was Dustin Smith, a soft-spoken offensive lineman who had a half-dozen pancakes against the J-Hawks. In football terminology, a pancake happens when a blocker flattens an opponent, like a pancake.

"Our guys take a lot of pride in that," Forsyth said. "He did a great job."

Smith has the skull-and-crossbones insignias on his helmet to show for the pancakes and his other good hits. He has 12 crossbones for the season already, so he's off to a good start.

He also has a special Player of the Week T-shirt, given to each of the winners. "It's just something to wear around to show who you are," he said.

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Smith was caught off-guard when Forsyth called his name as the Offensive Player of the Week for the opener.

"I was pretty excited," he said. "I wasn't expecting it, but I was pretty pumped about it."

Smith, a 6-foot, 220-pound senior, is proud that an offensive lineman was the first Offensive Player of the Week this season. "We've been working pretty hard and we're getting pretty aggressive," he said.

"We compete with each other to see who can get the most crossbones," he said. "It's just kind of a little game between us. It gets us pumped up and gets us going."

Henry and Atwater played very well against Jefferson, but so did the offensive line. That's why the award went to one of the unsung blockers.

"Andy and Mark, they expected one of us to get it," Smith said. "I don't think it was too big of a shock."

Jacob Hutchins, a tight end, and Jack Halupnik, a center, shared the Offensive Player of the Week award after the eighth-ranked Lions drubbed Kennedy last Friday in Game 2, 42-14.

Atwater and Henry got shut out again on offense.

"They'll get them," Smith said, smiling. "I have no doubt that they'll get them. It will come."

Linn-Mar visits Dubuque Wahlert Friday night for Game 3. And the Player of the Week will be ...

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They'll find out Monday.