

A look back at an outstanding grid season

Written by Scott Unash

Tuesday, 25 October 2011 23:15 - Last Updated Wednesday, 26 October 2011 00:04



The 2011 football playoffs begin Wednesday night, but first let's take a look back at some of the top performers and games of the past nine weeks.

I'm going to focus on a few players, but by no means is this an all inclusive list. There were many fine players who made this another terrific season on the Metro gridirons.

Let's start with the most significant games of the season in my mind. While a few of these were terrific battles, each holds some significance on the outcome of the 2011 football year.

Week 3 - Kennedy 41, Washington 28

Kennedy came in 0-2 and needed a shot in the arm and got it against the Warriors. The win put Kennedy back on the road to a successful year. It also marked the debut of the Cougars "stacked I" with both Trevor Heitland and Alex Hillyer sharing time in the backfield together.

Week 6 - Washington 27, Iowa City High 24

The Warriors were at a crossroads with a 3-2 record heading into this road game against the unbeaten Little Hawks. Washington dominated the time of possession and played a brilliant defensive game to get back on the winning track.

Week 7 - Linn-Mar 56, Washington 7

If the Lions have a great run in the postseason, this may be the game we look back on to see just how good this team could be. The Lions were 6-0, but people were questioning their

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strength of schedule up to this point. The Lions made a statement in a big way, making the rest of the state stand up and take notice.

Week 8 - Washington 66, Iowa City West 37

This was crossroads game No. 2 for the Warriors. Many wondered how the Warriors would bounce back at red-hot Iowa City West. The question was answered in a big way as the Warriors scored just about in every fashion, led by David Tann's inspirational performance just days after the passing of his grandfather.

Week 8 - Linn-Mar 17, Iowa City High 12

The validation game for the Lions. They held City High to a pair of field goals while jumping out to a 7-6 lead. The win paved the way for the Lions' unbeaten regular season, which they clinched the following week at Xavier.

Now let's look at the top performers on both sides of the ball, in alphabetical order.

Offense

Mark Atwater (Linn-Mar) - The Lions quarterback was amazing with both his arm and legs. He also could have been named on defense for his play at linebacker.

Flynn Heald (Washington) - The Warrior wideout was nearly unstoppable at times this season. Set numerous records when he had 21 catches in a game against Kennedy that may stand for a long time.

Trevor Heitland (Kennedy) - Many wondered how the senior running back's season would go

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when he moved to a flanker position and shared carries with Alex Hillyer. Not bad is the answer with more than 700 yards rushing and 500 yards receiving.

Andy Henry (Linn-Mar) - Maybe the most pleasant surprise of the season. Many knew that Henry had the skills to put together a big season, but to set the records that he did was amazing. Many records will stand for a long, long time if district football is implemented next year!

Mitch Wantock (Linn-Mar) - Much like Atwater, he could have been named on defense as well as offense. A part of the Lions "Big Three," he will be missed after breaking an ankle in the regular season finale at Xavier.

Defense

Tommy Feller (Linn-Mar) - A part of without a doubt the top linebacking corps in the state of Iowa. Was solid from sideline to sideline for Linn-Mar and will be counted on more after the loss of Wantock.

Josh Jahlas (Kennedy) - Perhaps the top hitter in the Metro and the conference. He showed his versatility by shifting from his safety position to linebacker for several games in the middle of the year.

Jake McDonald (Marion) - Although the Indians had a rare off season this fall, McDonald was terrific for the Indian defense. One of the top tacklers in Class 3A.

Dustin Smith (Linn-Mar) - Smith, a two-way player, was one of the unsung heroes for the Lions this fall as a force on both the offensive and defensive lines.

David Tann (Washington) - He wasn't the biggest player on the field, but he had a motor that wouldn't quit. Played all over the field on defense as well as was a big contributor to the

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Warriors' success this fall.

As I mentioned before, the lists could have gone 10 deep on both sides of the ball, but these were the best of the best.

Thanks to all the players and coaches for another terrific regular season of Metro football.

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