

More than pride injured in alumni games

Written by Tom Fruehling
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That was no powder puff, paddy-cake old coots' football being played Saturday night at Kingston Stadium.

Big and burly Jordan Forkner, an all-state lineman for Marion High in 2003, was knocked out of the evening's opener against the alumni team from Linn-Mar with a dislocated shoulder.

Former fellow Indian Chad Turner had hobbled off earlier with a severely twisted ankle.

And play barely started in the nightcap between Kennedy and Jefferson when Nelson Evans, expected to be a force in the middle of the line for the J-Hawks at the age of 36, was sent to the hospital on a hard hit that blew out his knee.

Otherwise, the only apparent injuries were bruised egos for the Marion guys who lost to the Lions, 28-18, and the Boys of Blue who dropped a nail-biter to the Cougars, 17-13.

Big mist-spraying fans and giant jugs of water kept the rest of the players upright and hydrated on a muggy night.

But it was clearly not playtime for the faint-of-heart or the out-of-shape.

The only one of 125-or-so alums from the four participating high schools not drenched in sweat afterwards was the oldest one.

Gary Albaugh, 55, was used only on kickoffs for his Marion team and didn't come close to contact.

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That suited him.

“All I wanted was to be able to put the pads on one more time,” said the 1974 graduate, who remembers beating Linn-Mar only once in his prep career when he quarterbacked an 8-0 victory in the seventh grade.

Since the two high schools last met on the gridiron in 1987, Albaugh (with son Troy and nephew Brent as teammates) alone saw the game as a grudge match.

The others played for pride.

“Unfortunately, it went pretty much as I expected,” said Marion captain and quarterback Pat Stalkfleet from the class of 2001. “We just didn’t have enough guys (24 total), and we got tired in the second half.”

He had his team ahead 12-7 at half on a 10-yard touchdown run and a short scoring pass to Trent Fish set up by a 49-yard bomb to Riley O’Dean.

Young Linn-Mar signal Matt Greer, a 2005 graduate who will start teaching at Johnson grade school in Cedar Rapids this fall, recovered from two first half interceptions and engineered three quick third quarter scores.

While barely 300 fans showed up for the opening tilt, an estimated loud crowd of 2,000 came for the Jefferson and Kennedy matchup.

Prime Time Timmy Johnson stole the show for the winning Cougars.

A senior-to-be at the University of Northern Iowa and a sprinter on the Panther track team,

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Johnson ran back the opening kickoff 98 yards for a touchdown.

To cap off the night, he intercepted a Blake Tiedtke pass in the closing minute of the game as the J-Hawks were marching.

In between was some hard-hitting and finely-executed football with few penalties and hardly an offensive miscue on either side.

“It was a lot better played than I thought it would be and a lot faster,” said former Kennedy and Iowa State star Kyle Knock. “After the first hit, it was just good ‘ol football like it was in our glory days. Except I was groping for air and thought I was gonna pass out a couple of times.”

For Jefferson’s Zac Hornung of the 2009 class, meanwhile, it was a bitter pill losing once again to the crosstown rival. The speedy wide receiver hauled in a nifty 54-yard TD pass from Tiedtke in the third quarter to pull the J-Hawks to within four points, only to have the final drive snuffed.

“We were playing catch-up the whole game,” Hornung said. “Our defense kept us in it, and we were right there at the end. We were one play from winning this thing.”

At the age of 41, however, teammate Rich Hart was just happy to finish in one piece.

“I got my bell rung a couple of times,” said the defensive tackle and special teams player. “But I loved it. It was a lot of fun being out there again and being around these kids.”