

'Gutsy' Cougars march into 4A finals

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 13 November 2015 22:24 - Last Updated Monday, 16 November 2015 11:23



CEDAR FALLS - Dalles Jacobus left some of his guts on the UNI-Dome floor Friday night after a Bettendorf player allegedly slugged him in the stomach, but it turned out to be for a good cause.

The play helped spur Kennedy to a 31-14 victory over Bettendorf in the semifinals of the Class 4A playoffs and propel the Cougars one step closer to the first title in school history.

The Cougars (13-0) will face Dowling in the championship game at 7:05 p.m. next Friday in the UNI-Dome.

Kennedy was locked in a 7-7 slugfest with Bettendorf in the third quarter when Jacobus said he was slugged by a Bettendorf player during a 21-yard run by Tyler Dralle after he threw a block. Jacobus yanked his helmet off just in time before depositing part of his lunch on the turf, requiring a stoppage in play and a cleanup in Aisle 6.

Dralle scored two plays later on a 13-yard burst for a 13-7 lead and the Cougars took it home from there, although not without some anxious moments.

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Jacobus, one of Kennedy's captains, is a fire-and-brimstone player under normal circumstances. The play got the 260-pound lineman even more riled up.

"They ignited a fire under Dalles," Kennedy coach Brian White said. "Watch the film and see what happened, but you don't want to motivate him. He got a fire lit under him.

"He got everybody else motivated," White said. "It was good for us. I was asking for a little penalty on that, but we didn't get it. Dalles was hot. That was as good as a penalty for me. That just made the bull mad."

Jacobus missed only one play and was in good spirits after the game.

"Emotions get to you and sometimes you do stuff that you regret," he said, referring to the Bulldog who punched him. "Thankfully it was nothing that was too big."

Alex Stone kicked a 37-yard field goal to give Kennedy a 17-7 lead late in the third quarter, but Bettendorf quickly retaliated on an 18-yard touchdown run by Dax Emerson to make it 17-14 with 10 seconds left in the third stanza and it looked like a fight to the finish.



The Cougars had other ideas, however.

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Brandon Niemeier intercepted a pass by Bettendorf quarterback Jacob Wehr and raced 55 yards for a touchdown to give Kennedy a 24-14 lead with 8:30 left in the game. Five minutes later, tight end Austin Bailey caught a 10-yard touchdown pass from Nick Duehr to make it 31-14 with 3:04 remaining.

Ironically, Niemeier and Bailey are reserves for the Cougars and both of them are listed on the depth chart behind Kennedy star Shaun Beyer, with Niemeier on defense and Bailey on offense.

"That just shows we have great depth," said Beyer, who excelled with his own running, receiving, punting and an 8-yard touchdown scamper to begin the scoring.

Niemeier made two big interceptions last week in a 21-7 victory over Washington in the quarterfinals and topped that Friday night with the biggest play of his career.

"I saw the quarterback roll out and saw the receiver and kind of jumped in front of him," Niemeier said. "I caught it, saw a little angle to the right and just took off for it.

"Yeah, decent blocking," he said, understating the case. "I saw the end zone and I turned it on. I wanted to get there really bad."

Kennedy caught a break Friday night with Owen Ridenour, Bettendorf's dangerous quarterback, was sidelined with a broken collarbone suffered last week against Iowa City High. Niemeier had his big interception against Wehr to give the Cougars some breathing room, and later Jacobs stripped the ball from Wehr and Mason Jacobs recovered the fumble at the Bettendorf 28-yard line.

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Bailey caught his first touchdown pass for Kennedy shortly later to seal the deal. The pass play was originally called with Beyer as the main target, but Beyer had to leave the game with blood on his right elbow and Bailey took his place.

"It was kind of a spur of the moment thing," Bailey said. "It feels great. It feels awesome. I feel so good about it. I'm so happy."

Dralle carried the ball 30 times for 163 yards and one touchdown. That raised his unofficial totals to 2,114 yards for the season and 3,009 yards in his career. He became only the second player in Metro history with 2,000 yards rushing in a single season and put him within reach of the Metro record of 2,212 set by Andre Dawson of Washington in 2009.

Beyer carried the ball 10 times for 78 yards as a wildcat quarterback and caught three passes for 72 yards, giving him 150 yards of total offense.

White was not happy with his team's blocking in the first half, but the Cougars perked up in the third quarter with Beyer running on power sweeps and Jacobus igniting the offensive line after getting punched.

"The old Green Bay Packers sweep," White said about Beyer's powerful runs. "And it's kind of funny. Stuff that worked in the 1960's, some people don't know how to stop anymore because of all the spread stuff."

The best season in school history got even better for Kennedy Friday as the Cougars reached the state finals for the first time ever. If it gets any better next week, the Cougars will be undefeated state champs a year after finishing 3-8.

"I can't wait," Beyer said. "I'm so excited to play. I've been waiting for this my whole life."

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Penalties 7-65 2-26

Bettendorf 0 7 7 0 - 14

Kennedy 7 7 0 10 14 - 31

Scoring plays

K - Shaun Beyer 8 run (Alex Stone kick)

B - Dax Emerson 3 run (Matt Perk kick)

K - Tyler Dralle 13 run (Stone kick)

K - Stone 37 FG

B - Emerson 18 run (Perk kick)

K - Brandon Niemeier 55 interception return (Stone kick)

K - Austin Bailey 10 pass from Nick Duehr (Stone kick)

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Individual statistics

Rushing

Bettendorf - Emerson 27-125, Wehr 5-24, Jackson 1-14.

Kennedy - Dralle 30-163, Beyer 10-78, T.Jacobs 3-9, DeMaris 1-minus 1, Duehr 3-minus 14.

Passing

Bettendorf- Wehr 8-23-2, 61.

Kennedy - Duehr 5-16-1, 78; Beyer 1-1-0, 0.

Receiving

Bettendorf - Cain 2-25, Donovan 2-17, Emerson 2-3, Lane 1-10, Beck 1-6.

Kennedy - Beyer 3-72, Bailey 2-10, Baker 1-minus 4.