

Cougars made it too easy for Dowling

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 23 November 2015 23:26 - Last Updated Monday, 23 November 2015 23:40



CEDAR FALLS - Maybe the real Cedar Rapids Kennedy football team got lost in that snowstorm last Friday night.

Maybe they got kidnapped. Or locked in their gym. Or grounded by their parents for not doing their chores.

Surely those were imposters in the Kennedy green and gold Monday night against Dowling Catholic in the championship game of the Class 4A playoffs.

The third-ranked Cougars (13-1) gave top-ranked Dowling (13-0) two gift touchdowns when they botched simple handoffs and two of Dowling's behemoths raced the other way for easy scores.

The Cougars had trouble blocking. They had trouble tackling. They had trouble tying their shoelaces.

It wasn't pretty.

Dowling posted the first three-peat in Class 4A history with an easy 41-10 victory in the UNI-Dome for their third straight romp over a Metro club in the 4A finals

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Two years ago, the Maroons dumped Xavier 44-13 in the 4A finals. Last year, they ripped Washington 49-14 in the championship game. And this year, Kennedy was the unwitting accomplice.

That makes it Dowling 134, Metro teams 37.

Dowling is a better football team than Kennedy and probably would have won anyway even if the Cougars had played a near-perfect game, but Kennedy made it way too easy.



"We made mistakes and they didn't," Kennedy star Shaun Beyer said. "They capitalized on our mistakes and that's what a good football team does. There's not much else to say."

There were a few bright spots for the Cougars which may have gotten lost in the mishap.

Kennedy had a whopping advantage in fan support, Beyer showed why he's worth a Division I scholarship for his punting alone with a 53.8-yard average on five boots, and Tyler Dralle came home from the Dome with a Metro single-season record of 2,241 yards on the ground, snapping the old mark of 2,212 set by Andre Dawson of Washington in 2009.

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The Kennedy coaches knew how many yards Dralle needed in the latter stages of the game and fed him the ball until he had the record as a reward for a terrific season.

"The guys were behind it," Kennedy coach Brian White remarked. "And Dralle said, 'That's not MY record, that's OUR record.' That's the kind of kid he is."

Dralle popped loose for a couple of nice runs in the second half, but it was tough sledding for most of the game against Dowling's stingy and strong defense.

"They're pretty big up front," said Dralle, who ran for 127 yards on 30 carries. "They did a good job of setting the line of scrimmage."

"I think turnovers killed us," he said. "We could move the ball pretty well, but turnovers really killed us."

The best season in school history ended with a 13-1 record and the first trip to the state finals, but it also ended with frustration and disappointment.

Dowling struck quickly for a 7-0 lead on its first possession. That was bad enough in a championship game, but then Kennedy handed Dowling its first big gift of the night.

Kennedy put 260-pound lineman Dalles Jacobus in the backfield on 3rd-and-1 at its own 43-yard line, just as it has many times this season, but this time the ploy failed miserably. Jacobus bobbled the handoff from Nick Duehr and Dowling defensive tackle Ryan Mells plucked the ball out of mid-air and

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rambled 40 yards for an easy touchdown to make it 13-0.

"That was 100 percent me," Jacobus said. "I cut too early. I tried to cut before I had the ball. That was 100 percent me. It wasn't on Nick at all. Nick did his job. I missed mine."

The Cougars recovered and scored on an alley-oop pass from Duehr to Beyer, who out-jumped a defender in the end zone for a 20-yard touchdown as Kennedy pulled within 13-7 with 4:41 left in the half.

Then disaster struck when Dowling scored twice in 11 seconds for a commanding 27-7 advantage at halftime.

First came the trick, then the treat.

Dowling lined up for a field goal, but shifted into an unusual formation that had players lined up all over the place. The confused Cougars neglected to cover Stevie Sarcone and he caught an easy 28-yard touchdown pass from Kurt Walding to make it 20-7 with the PAT.

Then came an absolute killer.

On Kennedy's first play from scrimmage after the kickoff, Dralle dropped a simple handoff from Duehr and Dowling defensive end Atlas Bell collected the ball and went 32 yards for a touchdown.

It was 27-7 at halftime and Kennedy never recovered.

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"I think it kind of slipped out of Nick's hand at first," Dralle said. "It was right here (in his stomach), I should have had it, but there was a little bobble. There was a little toss in there."

Kennedy lost only five fumbles in its first 13 games, then committed two killers in the championship game to give Dowling two easy scores.

The Cougars left the UNI-Dome with the runner-up trophy and a few tears, but White reminded them of what they accomplished this season after going 3-8 last year.

"I want everyone to know how proud I am of this group," White said. "They play the game the right way.

"They play with character, they play with dignity, they are a fantastic group to coach and I couldn't ask for anything more out of this group of seniors.

"They're just a joy to coach. And I'm going to miss them."

It was the greatest run in school history.

"Right now it sucks," Beyer said, "but when we look back on this run when we're all adults, we're going to be so proud of everyone.

"We're going to come back to reunions and what-not and be, 'Remember that run we made?,' and there will be all smiles. It sucks right now, but we're going to go down in the storybooks."

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DOWLING 41, KENNEDY 10

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First Downs	14	21
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Rushing	46-156	45-271
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Passing Yards	54	113
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Comp-Att-Int	4-14-0	8-12-0
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Fumbles-Lost	3-2	2-2
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Punts	5-53.8	2-34.0
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Penalties	5-17	8-74
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Kennedy 0 0 7 3 0 - 10

Dowling 13 14 7 7 - 41

Scoring plays

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D - Jacob Zachary 19 run (Alec Hemann kick)

D - Ryan Mells 40 fumble recovery (run failed)

K - Shaun Beyer 20 pass from Nick Duehr (Alex Stone kick)

D - Stevie Sarcone 28 pass from Kurt Walding (Hemann kick)

D - Atlas Bell 32 fumble recovery (Hemann kick)

D - Jacob Zachary 19 run (Hemann kick)

D - Cole Deskin 10 run (Hemann kick)

Individual statistics

Rushing

Kennedy - Dralle 30-127, Beyer 10-63.

Dowling - Deskin 15-103, Zachary 10-71, Walding 12-46, Boduo 1-26.

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Passing

Kennedy - Duehr 4-13-0, 54; Beyer 0-1-0, 0.

Dowling - Walding 8-12-0, 113.

Receiving

Kennedy - Beyer 2-37, Jenkins 1-13, Dralle 1-4.

Dowling - Wanek 4-49, Sarcone 1-28, Billings 1-25, Sciezinski 1-13.