

Resurgent Cougars blast Hempstead, 48-7

Written by Mike Koolbeck

Saturday, 13 October 2012 00:10 -

After struggling through losses in its first five games, Kennedy's football team pushed the reset button.

And now they've pushed to three straight wins.

Senior Alex Hillyer ran for 227 yards and four touchdowns and Kennedy blasted Dubuque Hempstead, 48-7, Friday night in a Mississippi Valley Conference Mississippi Division game at Kingston Stadium.

Senior Alex Boomershine also ran for two touchdowns for Kennedy (3-5, 3-2). The Cougars piled up 291 yards of rushing offense and the defense held Hempstead (0-8, 0-5) to 179 total yards.

Kennedy was 0-5 after its first five games, but has run off wins against Jefferson (44-0), Waterloo East (38-30) and Hempstead to keep alive its hopes of a playoff berth. The Cougars close out the regular season next Friday at Iowa City High, likely needing a win to qualify.

"I don't like doing it this way. I'd rather start out winning games," Kennedy Coach Tim Lewis said.

The Cougars are following a script similar to the last two years when they struggled early in the season and rebounded to make the playoffs.

"I think the reasons why these kids can continue to (compete) is just because they have seen it happen," Lewis said. "The last couple of years we've been average, below average, subpar at the middle of the season and then we've started playing better. I don't know the answer to that, I really don't."

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Maybe it's as simple as believing.

"It's like we have a whole new team," said senior Donovan Kosman, who returned the opening kickoff for a touchdown. "We have been getting more intense in practice and have more enthusiasm. I think we have a chance against anybody."

Kennedy set the tone for the game on the opening kickoff. Kosman gathered the ball in at the Cougar 11, faked a reverse handoff to Hillyer, and scampered 89 yards for a touchdown when Hempstead's defenders took the bait.

"We had been setting up that nice reverse fake all week, we were pretty excited to start the game on that," said Kosman. "I saw everybody going with Hillyer. It was a wide-open field. All I had to do was break one tackle.

"He got my feet and for a second I thought I was out of bounds, but no, and I kept going. Prince Kollie had a great block after that to finish it off."

That run started Kennedy on its way. The Cougars led 21-0 after one quarter and 41-0 at halftime.

"Momentum is such a key part of this game, I think anytime you can take the opening kickoff you definitely have momentum on your side," Lewis said. "We were just really clicking tonight. We've progressed, going toward a game like this, (and) we finally got one.

"I know we made mistakes, and I know as we look at video we'll find some stuff, but just looking back at it -- we did a lot of things right."

The biggest thing the Cougars did right was give the ball to Hillyer, who scored on runs of 4, 10, 6 and 5 yards in the first half as Kennedy built a 41-0 lead.

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"The line did a great job. I owe it all to them," said Hillyer, who had 193 yards at halftime on 17 carries. He was at his most dominant self early in the second quarter when he ripped off runs of 26, 34 and 6 yards in a three-play 66-yard drive that gave the Cougars a 27-0 lead.

Kennedy's ground game was so dominant the Cougars threw only one pass. That was a completion from Joel Smetzer to Patrick Martin for 12 yards that set up Hillyer's 4-yard touchdown that gave the Cougars a 14-0 lead with 8:37 still to play in the first quarter.

"We got our running game going and we didn't need to throw the ball at all," Lewis said.

Kennedy put together a 51-yard drive that Hillyer capped with a 10-yard run for a 21-0 lead with 4:21 still left in the first quarter. The big play of the drive was a defensive pass interference call against Hempstead on fourth-and-8 at the Mustangs' 31.

Hillyer's fourth touchdown came on the final play of the first half. It set in motion a running clock in the second half.

And, if Hempstead had any thoughts of getting back into the game, they ended with the first play from scrimmage in the second half. Mustangs quarterback Drew Wagner coughed up the ball and Kennedy senior Tommy Kaiser pounced on it at the Hempstead 28. Five plays later, Boomershine crashed in from 3 yards out for a 48-0 lead.

"I saw the linebacker wrap up and knock the ball out and I thought, 'This is a great opportunity,' " Kaiser said.

And now Kennedy has a great opportunity to again reach the playoffs.

"We were struggling to get things together, to get a team unit on defense, for the first five

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games," Kaiser said. "We have a lot of emotional players on defense, and hopefully that carries over to the offense. For the last three games it has. Hopefully it continues into the playoffs."

KENNEDY 48, HEMPSTEAD 7

First downs -- DH 11; CRK 13

Rushes-yards -- DH 35-100; CRK 37-291

Passing yards -- DH 79; CRK 12

Comp-att-int -- DH 8-18-2; CRK 1-1-0

Punts-avg. -- DH 3-37; CRK 2-38.5

Fumbles-Lost -- DH 1-1; CRK 0-0

Penalties-yards -- DH 3-35; CRK 4-40

Hempstead	0	0	0	7	--	7
Kennedy	21	20	7	0	--	48

CRK - Donovan Kosman 89 kickoff return (Eric Bertroche kick)

CRK - Alex Hillyer 4 run (Bertroche kick)

CRK - Hillyer 10 run (Bertroche kick)

CRK - Hillyer 6 run (pass failed)

CRK - Alex Boomershine 4 run (Bertroche kick)

CRK - Hillyer 5 run (Bertroche kick)

CRK - Boomershine 3 run (Bertroche kick)

DH - Drew Wagner 1 run (Fred Kalb kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing

DH - Drew Wagner 20-71, Carter Daack 4-17, Zach Sabers 5-13, Matt Zenner 5-2, Lucas Hodge 1-(-3)

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CRK - Alex Hillyer 20-227, Miles Moa 5-31, Alex Boomershine 4-13, Trevor Walker 3-11, Riley Fergus 4-7, Terrance Hall 1-2

Passing

DH - Wagner 8-18-2-79

CRK - Joel Smetzer 1-1-0-12

Receiving

DH - Zenner 5-46, Matt Flynn 1-16, Jake Oberbroeckling 1-11, Brady Breitbach 1-6

CRK - Patrick Martin 1-12

Sophs -- Hempstead 12, Kennedy 9