

Prairie lights up Linn-Mar on coach's birthday

Written by Tom Fruehling

Saturday, 06 October 2012 00:36 -

The Prairie Hawks gave Coach Mike Morrissey a nice birthday present Friday night with a misleading 49-27 shellacking of arch rival Linn-Mar on Homecoming for the Lions.

And the win came with a ribbon on top since it likely assures the resurgent Hawks (4-3, 2-2 MVC) a spot in the Class 4A football playoffs for the first time since 2008.

"That's about as good of a birthday gift as I've had in a long time," said Morrissey, who turned 30. "The guys were kidding me all week about getting old. This is as good as it gets."

To celebrate the milestone, the players drenched their coach with a post-game bucket of water on a chilly evening.

The game was nowhere near as close as the score indicated, since Prairie rolled up a 42-3 lead at halftime on four Jace Hanna TD passes.

The savvy senior quarterback came into the contest with 1,234 yards passing and 15 touchdowns, while completing 70 percent of his passes. He was 12 for 18 for 224 yards Friday night.

For Linn-Mar (2-5, 2-3), which had won two of its last three after a miserable start, the loss dims their chance of a playoff berth with two games left.

"It sure doesn't help," said Coach Bob Forsyth. "The last three weeks I think we're playing a little above our heads."

"We came out flat-footed tonight, especially on defense, and I'll have to take the blame for that as a coach. But I know these guys will be at their best the next two weeks. They'll work hard."

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While Prairie has been relying on Hanna's strong and accurate arm all season, for the first time the Hawks showed some firepower on the ground against a porous Linn-Mar defense.

Junior running back Mitch Christensen powered through the middle for 141 yards on the ground and scored two short touchdowns. He hadn't gained more than 30 yards in a game all season.

"It was by far my best game," Christensen said. "The line opened up big holes, and I just did my job by running through the holes."

Morrissey said that getting a ground game going early gave his team confidence.

"The key was that we started off fast," he said. "The offensive line was tremendous, and we got our first 100-yard rusher of the year."

The defense was equally stout.

Prairie forced a punt on Linn-Mar's first possession and then held the Lions to a 24-yard field after stopping them at the 6-yard line.

Morrissey said that set the tone for the rest of the half.

"That was huge for us," he noted. "We've been stressing our tackling in practice. So that gave us some momentum."

Hawk senior linebacker Cam Rathje, who entered the game fourth the state in tackles with 70,

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said the defense wanted to make a statement right off the bat.

“We were just flying to the ball and making a lot of team tackles,” he said. “And once we showed we could stop the run, they didn’t have anything else.”

In addition, said Rathje, “We wanted to capitalize on their mistakes.”

And the Hawks certainly did that.

Hanna got the ball rolling on Prairie’s second possession when he hit star receiver Demetrius Harper on a short pass through the middle. The senior speedster juke a couple of defenders, then simply out-sprinted the rest untouched into the end zone.

Following the field goal, Hanna hit lanky Jarred Edmonds from 9 yards to end the quarter. The Hawks scored four touchdowns in the second quarter to put the game out of reach and set the clock in continuous motion for much of the second half.

Two Linn-Mar fumbles and a shanked 10-yard punt led directly to three scores, and the Lions were further dogged by costly penalties.

With the clock moving, Prairie scored its last touchdown with 3 minutes to go in the third quarter on a 39-yard interception return by Jesse Vizzini.

Trailing 49-3, the Lions made the score respectable with three touchdowns against Prairie’s subs. One of the scores came after a successful onside kick, and two other onside kicks also came close to being recovered.

“The kids never gave up,” said Forsyth. “But give Prairie credit. They came ready to play. They

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played a good game and deserved to win.”

PRAIRIE 49, LINN-MAR 27

CRP LM

First downs 15 14

Rushing 30-108 35-207

Passing 12-18-0 10-25-1

Passing yards 224 89

Fumbles/lost 2/2 1/1

Penalties 1-15 9-80

Punts 2-44 5-24

Prairie 14 28 7 0 – 49

Linn-Mar 3 0 8 16 – 27

CRP – Demetrius Harper 80 pass from Jace Hanna (Sam Drysdale kick)

LM – FG Austin Wolter 24

CRP – Jarred Edmonds 9 pass from Hanna (Drysdale kick)

CRP – Mitch Christensen 1 run (Drysdale kick)

CRP – Christensen 1 run (Drysdale kick)

CRP – Edmonds 5 pass from Hanna (Drysdale kick)

CRP – Mitch Dellamuth 17 pass from Hanna (Drysdale kick)

CRP – Jesse Vizzini 39 pass interception (Drysdale kick)

LM – Ross Lembeck 18 pass from Rhys Davis (Lembeck run)

LM – Lembeck 19 run (Lembeck run)

LM – Davis 1 run (Lembeck run)