

Rima hurt as Prairie falls to City High

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 02 October 2015 23:02 - Last Updated Friday, 02 October 2015 23:08



Jalen Rima leaned on his crutches and shook hands with all of his teammates Friday night after the Prairie Hawks gave Iowa City High a good battle in a 28-21 setback at John Wall Field.

Rima suffered a knee injury in the second quarter after catching a short pass and the Hawks never got over the hump in the Class 4A district game with their star player out of action.

Rima was diagnosed with a strained ligament on the outside of his left knee -- a strained LCL -- but there's a chance he could play again this season after missing two or three weeks.

"It sucks," Rima said. "It's my senior year. I'd rather not sit out for two or three weeks, but it's nothing I can really control."

Rima, the state track champion in the 200- and 400-meter dashes last May, has scored nine touchdowns this season as a receiver, runner and kick returner. The injury happened with 7:41 left in the first half after he caught a pass from Tyler Nunemaker, spun away from a defender and tried to make a cut.

Rima fell to the ground and slammed his helmet to the turf in frustration.

"I thought my whole knee exploded, because I could not feel it after I cut," he said. "I just went to cut and it gave out."

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The initial fear was a torn ACL, which would have required surgery and a long rehab process. The strained ligament was bad enough, but it could have been a lot worse.

"It turned out to be all right, so I got pretty lucky," he remarked.

Neither team scored in the first half, but Iowa City High quarterback Jared Taylor got hot in the second half and threw for three touchdown passes as the Little Hawks built a 21-7 lead.

Prairie kept plugging away and stayed in the game, thanks to a big performance by Hunter Johnson. With Rima watching from the sideline, Johnson scored three touchdowns on a 16-yard run, a 4-yard and a 31-yard pass from Nunemaker when City High left him wide open.

Johnson's final touchdown came with just 49 seconds left in the game. The Little Hawks recovered the on-side kick and ran out the clock.

Johnson caught five passes for 117 yards, carried the ball seven times for 45 yards and made some big plays on defense.

"He's a warrior and has been since the first day I've been on campus," said first-year Prairie coach Mark Bliss. "I just love that kid. He's sort of the glue that keeps our kids going."

Bliss used Rima as a decoy in the first quarter, hoping to confuse City High and save Rima for later. It worked initially as Prairie drove 69 yards on its first possession to the 6-yard line, but the Hawks missed a field goal.

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Bliss was just starting to make use of Rima in the second quarter when the speedster got hurt.

"The thing about us, a big percentage of our game-plan revolves around Jalen," Bliss said. "So when he went down, it threw out probably a third of our playbook, so we limited ourselves.

"We had some special plays just for him tonight that we were going to unveil right after halftime, and then he got hurt. It throws half your playbook out pretty quick."

Rima carried the ball once for six yards and caught two passes for five yards. He never had a chance to return any kickoffs or punts.

Johnson stepped into the void, but the Hawks missed their main man.

"It's a big loss, for sure," Johnson said. "But he's a team leader and he was leading from the sidelines. Even though he wasn't on the field, he was still with us in the game.

"It's a big loss, but he's a tough kid and I know he'll be back soon."

The doctor who came to the game with Iowa City High examined Rima and made the initial diagnosis of a strained LCL. Rima plans to get another evaluation Saturday and will see a doctor Monday.

Taylor hit Jason Jones with a 7-yard touchdown pass to begin the scoring for the Little Hawks in the third quarter. Prairie responded on the 16-yard run by Johnson and it was tied, 7-7.

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City High grabbed a 21-7 lead on a 68-yard touchdown pass from Taylor to Will Noack and an 11-yard TD strike from Taylor to Jones. Johnson pulled Prairie within 21-14 with his 4-yard run, but Bryce Frantz broke loose for a 31-yard touchdown to make it 28-14.

Johnson scored his final touchdown in the last minute as the Hawks fought to the end.

They were resilient," Bliss said. "We sort of ran out of time."

Prairie fell to 2-4 overall and 1-1 in its district. The Hawks meet the sixth-ranked Washington Warriors at Kingston Stadium Thursday night.

Iowa City High raised its records to 4-2 overall and 2-0 in the district.

IOWA CITY 28, PRAIRIE 21

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First downs	15	17
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Rushes-yards	29-172	44-210
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Passing yards	187	163
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ICH - Bryce Frantz 31 run (Rukakiza kick)

CRP - Johnson 31 pass from Tyler Nunemaker (Collett kick)

Individual statistics

Rushing

Iowa City High - Frantz 17-123, Rodney 4-47, Moore 1-7, Taylor 3-6, Swenning 1-minus 5, Team 3-minus 6.

Prairie - Northrup 14-85, Nunemaker 20-76, Johnson 7-45, Rima 1-6, Pinter 2-minus 2.

Passing

Iowa City High - Taylor 13-20-0, 187.

Prairie - Nunemaker 11-17-0, 163.

Receiving

Iowa City High - Jones 5-67, Frantz 3-6, Smith 2-16, Fellows 2-30, Noack 1-68.

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Prairie - Johnson 5-117, Ealy 2-19, Rima 2-5, LaGrange 1-17, Pinter 1-5.