

Vizzini helps Prairie pick off Rams

Written by Jim Ecker
Thursday, 25 October 2012 00:32 -

DUBUQUE - Jesse Vizzini did not grab any headlines for the Cedar Rapids Prairie football team during the regular season, but he began the playoffs with a bang Wednesday night.

Vizzini returned two interceptions for touchdowns and also grabbed a touchdown pass as Prairie slipped by Dubuque Senior, 30-28, in the opening round of the Class 4A tournament at Chalmers Field at the University of Dubuque.

Jarred Edmonds also scored on a long interception return as the Hawks tallied three times on defense on a warm night in the Key City.

"Our defense was outstanding tonight," Coach Mike Morrissey exclaimed. "They made big plays when we needed them.

"Three touchdowns on defense. That's incredible."

Prairie (7-3) will face No. 2 Iowa City West (10-0) in the second round Monday night in Iowa City.

Vizzini, a 5-foot-9, 155-pound junior, scored two touchdowns during the regular season, one on offense and one on defense. He surpassed that total in one memorable night.

All three of his touchdowns were huge.

Dubuque Senior grabbed an early 7-0 lead, but Vizzini caught a 10-yard touchdown pass from Jace Hanna and the Hawks made it 7-7 with Sam Drysdale's extra point.

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Vizzini struck again, this time on defense. He intercepted a pass by Dubuque Senior quarterback Austin Clemens and raced 52 yards for a touchdown and a 13-7 edge.

His third touchdown came late in the game with Prairie nursing a 24-21 lead. He swiped another pass and rambled 44 yards to paydirt, making it 30-21 with 1:07 remaining.

Edmonds gave Prairie a 20-14 lead in the second quarter with a 94-yard return with his interception, racing from one end of the field to the other.

"We've got some playmakers on defense," Vizzini said. "When we get the ball, we try to get into the end zone. It feels good."

Vizzini showed his speed on both interception returns.

"I just read the quarterback and dropped in my zone," he said. "Once I had the ball, the defense made great blocks. I wouldn't have been able to get into the end zone without them."

Edmonds also got key blocks on his touchdown. The Dubuque receiver slipped on the play and Edmonds was there for an easy catch.

"I saw the guy coming across the middle and I saw him fall," he said. "Once I saw him fall I knew I had to go get the ball. When I first picked it, I didn't think I had green."

Edmonds also starred on offense, catching nine passes for 92 yards. He even took a few snaps at quarterback after Hanna (ankle) and No. 2 quarterback Trey Beckman (high hit) were knocked out of the game.

Hanna got hurt when he scrambled for nine yards with 7:56 left in the third quarter. He lost the

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ball and rolled his ankle. Beckman got hurt about five minutes later when he scrambled for eight yards and got belted.

Edmonds switched from receiver to QB and finished the series after Beckman left the game, but Hanna limped back onto the field on Prairie's next possession and played the rest of the way.

"It felt good to be back out there," Hanna said. "A little pain. I had to fight it off."

Hanna couldn't run with the ball after getting hurt, but he completed some important passes to help the Hawks kill some clock and get the big victory.

"He's the toughest kid, mentally and physically, I've ever been around," Morrissey remarked. "That kid is something else."

"He pretty much told me, 'There's no way you're keeping me off the field.'"

Hanna completed 21 of 35 passes for 173 yards, with one touchdown and two interceptions.

It looked like Prairie was in good shape when Vizzini gave the Hawks a 30-21 lead with just 67 seconds left, but Dubuque Senior (7-3) raced 72 yards and scored on a 4-yard touchdown pass with 29 seconds remaining to make it 30-28 with the PAT.

Caleb Davison recovered the onside kick by the Rams and Hanna twice took a knee to end the game.

Prairie had trouble stopping Dubuque Senior in the first half and the game was tied, 21-21, at intermission. Prairie's defense pitched a shutout in the second half until the Rams scored their

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late touchdown.

"We just needed to get our stuff together," said Prairie linebacker Cam Rathje, who helped lead the defense. "The DBs played outstanding. We flew to the ball and made team tackles."

Prairie finished with a 2-7 record in 2011, but now the Hawks are headed into the Round of 16 of the Class 4A playoffs.

"It's the greatest feeling in the world," Edmonds said. "(But) it's only the first round. We have to come back tomorrow and get ready for Iowa City West."

Sam Drysdale kicked a 26-yard field goal in the third quarter to break a 21-21 tie and give Prairie a 24-21 lead.

PRAIRIE 30, DUBUQUE SENIOR 28

CRP DS

First Downs	16	20
Rushing	30-123	44-127
Passing	22-38-2	19-37-3
Passing Yards	185	238
Punts	3-33.7	7-34.6
Fumbles/Lost	4/2	2/0
Penalties	8-65	3-29

PRAIRIE	14	7	3	6	- 30
DUBUQUE SENIOR	7	14	0	7	- 28

SCORING PLAYS

DS - Alex Duster 2 run (Ben Martin kick)
CRP - Jesse Vizzini 10 pass from Jace Hanna (Sam Drysdale kick)
CRP - Vizzini 52 interception return (Drysdale kick)
DS - Duster 15 pass from Austin Clemens (Martin kick)
CRP - Jarred Edmonds 94 interception return (Drysdale kick)

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DS - Brandon Richey 23 pass from Clemens (Martin kick)

CRP - Drysdale 26 FG

CRP - Vizzini 44 interception return (kick failed)

DS - Richey 4 pass from Clemens (Martin kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING

PRAIRIE: Mitch Christensen 16-74, Jace Hanna 7-41, Trey Beckman 1-8, Jarred Edmonds 2-5, Demetrius Harper 1-1, Jesse Vizzini 1-minus 1, Team 2-minus 5.

DUBUQUE SENIOR: Alex Duster 32-116, Austin Clemens 8-8, Parker Hammel 4-3.

PASSING

PRAIRIE: Jace Hanna 21-36-2, 173 yards; Jarred Edmons 1-2-0, 12 yards; Trey Beckman 0-1-0, 0 yards.

DUBUQUE SENIOR: Austin Clemens 19-34-3, 238 yards; Team 0-3-0, 0 yards.

RECEIVING

PRAIRIE: Jarred Edmonds 9-92, Jesse Vizzini 4-35, Demetrius Harper 3-22, Kentrel Smith 3-22, Austin Dellamuth 3-14.

DUBUQUE SENIOR: Cole Wilbricht 7-93, Brandon Richey 5-62, Keegan Gallery 4-40, Alex Duster 3-39, Ethan Lembke 1-12.