

Warriors start season with special win

Written by Mike Koolbeck
Friday, 24 August 2012 23:39 -

With 10 graduated seniors playing college football, experts perhaps could have been forgiven for hedging their expectations for the Washington football team.

"There weren't very high expectations for us," Washington senior tailback Mitch Bredeson said Friday night, after the Warriors disposed of cross-town rival Kennedy, 17-6, in a season-opener at Kingston Stadium. "We proved we still could play in the MVC and be a top 10 team in the MVC. That's pretty special to us, yeah."

How special?

"This is a special win and I'm going to give you eight hours to celebrate," Warriors Coach Tony Lombardi told his squad after the game.

Such is life in the rough-and-tumble Mississippi Valley Conference. The game was barely over and Lombardi already was looking ahead to next Friday's game at high-powered Iowa City West (1-0). The Trojans trounced Linn-Mar, 49-14, Friday night.

"They can celebrate. I'll be watching film," Lombardi said.

Although the game matched MVC opponents, it did not count in the league standings. Only games against divisional foes count and Washington is in the Valley Division and Kenedy in the Mississippi Division.

While Washington's line was gutted by graduation, it was the Warriors who outplayed the more experienced Cougars. Bredeson ran for 120 yards and two touchdowns, including a 47-yard dash on a counter trap that gave Washington a 14-3 lead with 4:48 left in the first half.

"That was a huge hole," said Bredeson, who rushed for a team-high 896 yards a year ago. "It

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was a great boost of confidence for us going into the second half."

Washington scored the only points in the second half on a 30-yard field goal by Riyadh Ajram. It came after a sack forced a fumble by Kennedy quarterback Riley Fergus that Warriors junior defensive back Jake Bjornsen scooped up and returned to the Kennedy 7.

"I suppose that could have been a key play," Kennedy Coach Tim Lewis said. "But we just couldn't execute."

Kennedy pushed the ball into Washington territory on eight of its 10 possessions. The Cougars had the ball inside the Warriors' 10-yard line three times, but managed only one field goal. They muffed a snap on a field goal try late in the third quarter and got stoned at the 1-yard line on downs with 2:47 left in the game.

A pass interception and fumble gave Kennedy the ball back twice more in the final 2:40, but both possessions ended in interceptions.

"I talked to the defense at halftime and told them that their job is to stop people, no matter where they are on the field," Lombardi said. "Boy, they sure did that."

Washington also found a new field general in senior quarterback Mitch Blades, who completed 7-of-14 passes for 135 yards, and also carried the ball nine times for 40 yards. He marched the Warriors 80 yards in 12 plays for a touchdown after they received the game's opening kickoff.

Blades, a wide receiver a year ago, was making his first start at quarterback since he was a freshman, yet Lombardi said he felt no trepidation about having him at the controls.

"Honestly, no," Lombardi said. "I probably should have, in retrospect, but I never thought he'd have a hard time. I believe in that kid that much."

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"I think the biggest compliments you can pay to a kid is that he's tough-minded, willful, competitive, and that's what I think of Mitch."

Kennedy's quarterbacks, meanwhile, struggled. Riley Fergus and Joel Smetzer combined to complete 5 of 25 passes for 67 yards. All five completions were thrown by Smetzer in the fourth quarter.

Fergus, who started and was 0-for-9, also played linebacker and Lewis admitted that may have affected him.

"We knew it would be a challenge for Riley playing both ways, especially at linebacker," Lewis said. "Riley did a lot of good things and is a leader. I thought Joel did some good things, too. Coming out of tonight they're in the same position they were in the preseason, neck-and-neck."

Lewis said he was disappointed with his team's performance, especially in light of the emphasis placed on getting off to a quick start. The Cougars stumbled out of the gate each of the last two seasons before rallying to claim playoff spots.

"Apparently, we need to go back to the drawing board again," he said. "We had more guys playing both ways than we have had in the past -- big guys -- and they were dragging."

A bright spot for the Cougars was the running of senior Alex Hillyer, who toted the ball 20 times for 136 yards.

Kennedy hosts Prairie next Friday at Kingston Stadium.

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WASHINGTON 17, KENNEDY 6

CRK CRW

First downs -- CRK; 16. CRW; 14

Rushes-yards -- CRK; 39-157. CRW: 38-144

Passing yards -- CRK: 67. CRW: 135

Comp-att-int -- CRK: 5-26-2. CRW: 7-14-1

Punts-avg. -- CRK: 2-43.5. CRW: 2-21

Fumbles-Lost -- CRK: 4-1. CRW: 2-2

Penalties-yards -- CRK: 3-15. CRW: 9-59

Kennedy	3	3	0	0	--	6
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Washington	7	7	3	0	--	17
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CRW - Mitch Bredeson 2 run (Riyad Ajram kick)

CRK - FG Eric Bertroche 38

CRW - Bredeson 47 run (Ajram kick)

CRK - FG Bertroche 23

CRW - FG Ajram 30

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: CRK - Alex Hillyer 20-136, Seth Gilmore 2-12, Andrew Johnson 3-8, Miles Moa 5-4, Joel Smetzer 1-4, Riley Fergus 6-1, Alexander Pins 1-1, Brock Skow 1-(-9). CRW - Mitch Bredeson 23-120, Mitch Blades 9-40, Robert Miley 1-2, JoJo McBride 2-(-3), Riyad Ajram 1-(-13), Team 2-(-2).

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PASSING: CRK - Smetzer 5-16-2-67, Fergus 0-9-0-0, Team 0-1-0-0. CRW - Blades 7-14-1-135.

RECEIVING: CRK - Jacob Frazier-Flores 2-37, Donovan Kosman 2-19, Eric Bertroche 1-11 .
CRW - Jason Oney 4-37, Maliek Ketchens 1-48, Noah Dostal 1-34, Reagan Wilson 1-16.