

Kohawks looking for faster starts

Written by Jim Ecker
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The Coe College football team has outscored its first two opponents, 64-19, in the second half of games this season.

That's the good news.

Unfortunately, the Kohawks have been outscored 38-14 in the first half, primarily because they trailed Wheaton 31-0 at intermission in the opener two weeks ago.

That's the bad news.

Coe rallied and nearly caught Wheaton before falling, 36-28. This past Saturday, the Kohawks led Cornell 14-7 at intermission before rolling in the second half for a 50-21 triumph.

Needless to say, the Kohawks will be looking for a faster start this Saturday when they host Wisconsin-Stevens Point in the home opener at Clark Field at 1 p.m.

That first half against Wheaton was a nightmare.

"We started off very tentative," Coe Coach Steve Staker said Wednesday at practice. "I told them before the game, we can't be tip-toeing around and seeing what happens. We've got to go make it happen."

The Kohawks got the message in the second half against Wheaton and rallied behind quarterback Josh Rekers, who finished 31 of 45 for 317 yards and three TDs that day.

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"I think it was a good learning experience," said Rekers, a 6-foot-6 junior from Dike-New Hartford. "It showed us we have to get off to better starts. We can't put ourselves in that hole."

The Kohawks outscored Wheaton, 28-5, in the second half to pull within 36-28 before running out of time.

"If we had six more minutes in that game, I think we probably would have won that game," said Rekers, who was named the Iowa Conference Player of the Week for his performance.

Coe outscored Cornell, 36-14, in the second half last week to beat the Rams for the 15th straight time in a night game in Mount Vernon. Rekers hit 18 of 30 passes for 343 yards and two touchdowns against Cornell for his second straight 300-yard game.

Rekers has completed 65.3 percent of his passes (49 of 75) for 660 yards and five TDs with only two interceptions.

"He does very well," said Staker. "He understands our offense, he throws a nice ball. It's always nice to have a tall quarterback that can see what's going on."

"He plays with a lot of confidence. I think he's playing with a lot more confidence this year than last year. I feel very good about him."

Rekers became the full-time quarterback last season after Mark Atwater got hurt. Atwater has since moved to linebacker.

"Last year I was kind of thrown into the fire," said Rekers. "Personally, it's knowing the offense better, preparing for the defense better."

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Sam Lahr has carried the ball 39 times for 210 yards and four touchdowns, giving the Kohawks a credible running game, although Staker would like to see that aspect of the team continue to improve.

"I think Sam Lahr has really established himself," said Staker. "He's got great vision, and in our offense you have to have great vision. He's a hard runner."

Staker said the rebuilt offensive line, a question mark heading into the season, has performed well so far. "That question mark hopefully has been answered," he said.

Staker said linebacker Mitchell Berendes has emerged as a leader on defense.

Rekers likes where the team is headed.

"I think we have really good chemistry," he said. "We're trying to get the ball in people's hands. We have a lot of guys who have made catches for us in the first two games."

"We have a lot of guys, once they get the ball in their hands it could be six points every time they touch the ball."

Thirteen different players have caught passes this season. Trevor Heitland, a Kennedy grad, leads the team with 12 catches for 234 yards and two touchdowns. Lahr has caught nine passes for 118 yards.