

Lions 'finish', upset No. 9 Tigers

Written by Mike Condon

Friday, 09 October 2015 23:08 - Last Updated Saturday, 10 October 2015 00:33



CEDAR FALLS - Linn-Mar Coach Bob Forsyth and his staff had a simple message for the Lions as they prepared for No. 9 Cedar Falls.

"Finish. We heard that a lot this week," said senior linebacker Logan Hagmeier.

The Lions did just that Friday night in the UNI-Dome.

Brennan McGaffe scored the tiebreaking touchdown with 1:40 remaining and junior free safety Josh Strauss picked off a Tiger pass with 39 seconds left as Linn-Mar rallied for a 31-24 victory.

The victory pushes the Lions to 3-4 overall, 2-1 in Class 4A, District 5 play. Cedar Falls drops to 5-2, 2-1.

"This week, we all came together," said Hagmeier, who had 16 tackles, including seven for loss. "It was all about (this game), going until we got that last stop."

Things didn't look good early for the Lions. Cedar Falls scored two touchdowns within the first five minutes to grab a 14-0 lead.

"I don't know when I have been prouder of a team than I am with this one tonight," Forsyth said.

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"Football life can be tough, but these kids kept working and didn't give up when we fell behind."

Junior quarterback Reese Phillips got the Lion offense going. He capped off an 82-yard drive near the end of the first quarter with a 1-yard scoring run. Then in the second period, he connected with Daniel Gorsich and Josh Gassmann on strikes of 32 and 18 yards and the Lions led 21-14.

"I just had to trust my line and my receivers," Phillips said. "They were doing a great job of blocking and getting open."

Phillips was driving the Lions for another score late in the half, but overshot a receiver near the goal line and the Tigers picked off the pass to halt the drive.

"That's the thing about our team," Forsyth said. "I think we can still get even better. We did a lot of good things tonight, but we made some mistakes."

He went on to praise Phillips, who finished 19-of-30 for 264 yards and two touchdowns.

"Reese is a gamer," Forsyth said. "He doesn't play afraid out there. He made some big plays when we really needed them."

Linn-Mar stretched its lead to 24-14 on a 28-yard field goal from Alexy Boehm in the third quarter. Cedar Falls sacked Phillips in the end zone for a safety near the end of the quarter to make it 24-16.

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The Tigers tied the game with 5:38 left when tailback Hayden Clausen, who had been held in check most of the night by a blitzing Lion defense, broke loose on a 30-yard scoring run. Quarterback Taylen Alexander hit Denison Harrington with a 2-point pass to tie the game at 24-24.

Linn-Mar took over on its own 22. After a McGaffe run netted six yards, Phillips found junior receiver Kirby Kerr with a beautiful 28-yard pass up the seam to take the ball into Cedar Falls territory.

"That was a big play," Phillips said. "That got us down the field and we just really executed well after that."

A 12-yard pass to Daniel Gorsich on third-and-10 kept the drive going.

Phillips made a nifty 16-yard run to the Tiger 6 and McGaffe bulled his way in two plays later.

The Tigers drove to the Lion 37 in the final 40 seconds, but a heave down the middle from Alexander intended for Harrington was picked off by Strauss at the Lion 10 to seal the victory.

"This win feels really good, especially with all the things we've had to deal with this season," Hagemeyer said. "I knew our record didn't reflect how good of a team we were."

Forsyth said the Lions will enjoy the win on the bus ride home.

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"Tonight, it's all about these kids," he remarked. "Every one of them contributed to this. We had a little faster tempo this week, which can be risky, but I think it paid off."

Linn-Mar closes its home season next Friday night against Waterloo West. The Tigers visit unbeaten Kennedy at Kingston Stadium next week.

"Tomorrow, we start getting ready for Waterloo West," Forsyth said. "They will be a great challenge for us."

LINN-MAR 31, CEDAR FALLS 24

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First downs	22	19
Rushes-yards	33-96	29-60
Passing yards	264	234
Comp-Att-Int	19-30-1	18-39-1
Fumbles-lost	0-0	0-0
Punts-avg.	4-26.2	5-27.5
Penalties-yards	10-73	7-69

Linn-Mar □ □ □ □ **7** □ **14** □ **3** □ **7** - **31**

Cedar Falls □ **14** □ □ **0** □ **2** □ **8** - **24**

Scoring plays

CF - Denison Harrington 26 pass from Taylen Alexander (David Cook kick)

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CF - Javon Middleton 5 pass from Alexander (Cook kick)
LM - Reese Phillips 1 run (Alexy Boehm kick)
LM - Daniel Gorsich 32 pass from Phillips (Boehm kick)
LM - Josh Gassmann 18 pass from Phillips (Boehm kick)
LM - FG Boehm 33
CF - Safety, Phillips tackled in end zone
CF - Hayden Clausen 30 run (Middleton pass from Alexander)
LM - Brennan McGaffe 6 run (Boehm kick)

Individual statistics

Rushing

Linn-Mar - Brennan McGaffe 15-44, Reese Phillips 10-13, Josh Gassmann 1-0, Neme Siaway 7-31.
Cedar Falls - Hayden Clausen 21-76, Taylen Alexander 6-minus 13, Tra'Von Fagan 1-minus 2, Michael Abbas 1-minus 5.

Passing

Linn-Mar - Reese Phillips 19-30-1-264
Cedar Falls - Taylen Alexander 18-39-1-234.

Receiving

Linn-Mar - Daniel Gorsich 5-77, Josh Gassmann 5-74, Brennan McGaffe 5-41, Mark Troutman 2-31, Kirby Kerr 2-42.
Cedar Falls - Denison Harrington 3-47, Tra'Von Fagan 4-57, Javon Middleton 8-83, Michael Abbas 3-57.