

Spring Hill hands Louisburg its first loss



Louisburg senior Mason Koechner (53) and Nick Hull bring down a Spring Hill player during Friday's contest in Spring Hill. Koechner led Louisburg with 11 tackles in the Wildcats' 28-27 loss.

SPRING HILL – As the clock hit zero, and the Spring Hill players ran onto the field to celebrate, the feeling of disgust and disappointment started to invade members of the Louisburg High School football team.

The Wildcats entered Friday's contest in Spring Hill with a perfect record and a No. 4 ranking in the state. Both of those things are gone now.

Louisburg fell in a heartbreaking 28-27 defeat to the Broncos despite a dramatic ending that had everyone in the stadium on their feet.

"It was definitely a tough loss," Louisburg co-head coach Jeff Lohse said. "We knew coming in that Spring Hill was a good team and they were going to be ready for the challenge. The guys took this one very hard. There are a lot of things we need to get better at going into district play."

The Wildcats (5-1) trailed by seven points with three minutes left in the contest after Spring Hill broke the tie with a

touchdown. Louisburg drove down the field, made a couple big plays and quarterback Grant Harding hit Korbin Hankinson on a screen pass and Hankinson dove for the pylon for the score with one second remaining.



Korbin Hankinson dives for the pylon for a touchdown Friday in Spring Hill. Hankinson scored on the play to cut the Spring Hill lead to one.

Instead of trying to send the game to overtime with an extra point, the Wildcats decided to go for two points and the win. Harding hit Hankinson on a quick pass, but he was unable to get past the line of scrimmage as the Spring Hill defense made the stop.

“The decision to go for two at the end was a no-brainer at that point,” Lohse said. “We had the momentum and the guys all wanted to go for the win on the road.”

Mistakes haunted Louisburg through much of the game as penalties and a turnover took away some big plays. Some of those plays included a punt return for a touchdown and a fake punt for a first down that were called back due to penalties in the first half.

Louisburg also fumbled in the redzone in the fourth quarter, in which Spring Hill recovered and went on to score the go-ahead touchdown.

"We just couldn't seem to get out of our own way at times," Lohse said. "There were definitely some very big penalties that halted drives or touchdowns. Those little things come back to haunt you at the end of close ballgames."

Still, despite those mistakes, the Wildcats came up with big plays when they needed them. Hankinson took a punt return to the Spring Hill 13-yard line and the Wildcats were able to score on an Austin Moore 3-yard touchdown run early in the second quarter. The 2-point conversion failed and Louisburg still trailed by a point.

It didn't stay that way for long as two possessions later, Harding hit Hankinson in stride for a 50-yard touchdown pass. Thomas San Agustin ran in the 2-point conversion to give Louisburg a 14-7 lead with a minute to go in the first half.

Instead of going into the locker room with a lead, Louisburg allowed two big pass plays from Spring Hill, including a 37-yard screen pass with 24 seconds left in the first half to tie the game.



Dustyn Rizzo brings down Spring Hill running back Ty Straw on Friday in Spring Hill.

Spring Hill quarterback Jacob Letellier, who had three touchdowns in the game, broke open a tie game with a 20-yard touchdown run late in the third quarter to put Spring Hill up 21-14.

Louisburg answered right back when Harding found San Agustin for one of his three touchdown passes on the night. Harding hit San Agustin for a 36-yard score and a Nick Hull extra point tied the game.

Still, the Wildcats had a hard time holding the Spring Hill offense. After Louisburg turned the ball over in the redzone late in the fourth quarter, Spring Hill responded with a touchdown drive that ended on a 1-yard score with 3:08 left in the game.

Spring Hill amassed 355 yards of total offense and did damage on the ground and through the air.

"Spring Hill did a good job of converting on third down," Lohse said. "We just couldn't seem to get them off the field and get the ball back to our offense."

Despite being down seven points, the Wildcat offense got in gear and drove 65 yards for a score themselves. San Agustin recorded a 16-yard run on the drive and Harding connected with Desmond Doles and Christian Tosterud on two big passes.

With six seconds remaining, Harding hit Hankinson for the 7-yard score to cut the Spring Hill lead to one.

"I thought we showed a ton of character driving down and scoring with under two seconds to play," Lohse said. "Our guys are hurting and are ready to get back on the field as soon as possible. We have some great leadership on this team and I believe those seniors will push everyone a little bit harder this week knowing that there is a lot at stake these next three games."

The next three games will determine whether the Wildcats make the playoffs as they enter what is a difficult district play. Louisburg will host Fort Scott (3-3) this Friday and will also face off with Ottawa (4-2) and rival Paola (3-3).

"We are in a very tough district," Lohse said. "We have got to take things game by game and be more prepared and more focused than we have been up to this point. This loss will help bring things back into perspective for us. There are many uncharacteristic things that we keep doing, on both sides of the ball, that we will get fixed this week."

LOU	0	14	7	6 – 27
SH	7	7	7	7 – 28

First quarter

S: Jacob Letellier 2 run (kick good)

Second quarter

L: Austin Moore 3 run (run failed)

L: Korbin Hankinson 50 pass from Grant Harding (Thomas San Agustin run)

S: Ty Straw 37 pass from Letellier (kick good)

Third quarter

S: Letellier 20 run (kick good)

L: San Agustin 36 pass from Harding (Nick Hull kick)

Fourth quarter

S: Straw 1 run (kick good)

L: Hankinson 7 pass from Harding (pass failed)

STATISTICS

OFFENSE

RUSHING – Grant Harding 11-63; Thomas San Agustin 8-46; Austin Moore 4-18; Jake Hill 4-13; Korbin Hankinson 12-minus 2

PASSING – Grant Harding 9-16-153

RECEIVING – Korbin Hankinson 4-79; Thomas San Agustin 2-46; Christian Tosterud 1-14; Desmond Doles 1-12, Jake Hill 1-2.

DEFENSE

TACKLES – Mason Koechner 11, Austin Moore 7, Dustyn Rizzo 7, T.J. Dover 7, Lyndon Smith 6, Connor Green 5, Grant Harding 4, Korbin Hankinson 3, Nick Hull 3, Thomas San Agustin 2, Dalton Ribordy 2, Christian Tosterud 1, Jake Hill 1, Will Ridley 1, Garrett Lowry 1.