

Wildcats fall just short in playoff thriller against Chanute



The Louisburg football team saw its season come to an end on Oct. 31 as the Wildcats fell at Chanute in the first round of the 4A playoffs.

CHANUTE – The Louisburg Wildcats were just two yards away from extending their season.

Instead, their Class 4A playoff run ended in heartbreaking fashion on Halloween night, as a last-second two-point conversion attempt came up just short in a 29-28 loss to Chanute.

The No. 10-seeded Wildcats gave the seventh-seeded Blue Comets all they could handle in a game that swung wildly in the final

90 seconds. Despite the defeat, Louisburg left the field knowing it had given everything it had.

“It was definitely a tough loss,” Louisburg head coach Drew Harding said. “Any time your season comes to an end it is going to be difficult. When you throw in how the game ended, it makes it that much tougher.”

Louisburg’s night began with adversity, as senior captain and starting lineman Johnny Hendrickson went down with an injury on the first play of the game and never returned. The Wildcats could have folded early – instead, they fought.

Behind a balanced attack led by quarterback Max Amren, Louisburg built a 14-0 lead in the second quarter. Amren broke free for a 38-yard touchdown run to open the scoring, then Blaise Vohs broke free for a 57-yard touchdown run to double the lead. Vohs added both extra points to send Louisburg into halftime with all the momentum.

Chanute began to climb back in the second half behind its quarterback, Kris Harding, who scored on a 9-yard touchdown run late in the third quarter. The Blue Comets then tied the game early in the fourth when Asher Love scored from four yards out, followed by a successful two-point conversion.

Louisburg regained the lead midway through the quarter on one of its biggest plays of the season. Facing fourth-and-10, Amren found Rickey Giles for a 28-yard touchdown, then ran in the two-point conversion himself to make it 22-14.

But Chanute had answers. Love punched in another short touchdown run to tie the game at 22 with under three minutes left. The Blue Comets then forced a fumble near midfield, setting the stage for Harding’s heroics – a 37-yard touchdown run with just 32 seconds left to give Chanute its first lead of the night, 29-22.

Louisburg’s response came instantly.

On the ensuing kickoff, Cole Heinrich fielded the ball and raced 80 yards down the sideline for a stunning touchdown, bringing the Wildcats within one at 29-28.

"You know our kickoff return team has been a huge bright spot for us all year," Coach Harding said. "When they decided to kick it back to our returners, I knew we would have a chance. That was a big-time play by that unit and a great return by Cole to give us a chance there at the end."

Louisburg could have kicked the extra point to force overtime. Instead, the Wildcats went for the win. After timeouts by both teams, they lined up for the two-point conversion and handed the ball to Vohs. He fought toward the goal line but was ruled short by the officials, ending Louisburg's season in agonizing fashion.

"We thought that we had an opportunity to go win the game there with one play," Harding said. "That was kind of the deciding factor in going for two. Unfortunately, we didn't execute to the best of our ability, and that was the difference."

Amren completed 12 of 14 passes for 102 yards and a touchdown while also rushing for 58 yards. Vohs led the team with 72 rushing yards on 12 carries, and Giles finished with 45 receiving yards and the key fourth-down score.

Defensively, Bryce Thompson led the way with 10 tackles, followed by Devin Goeman with eight. John Guetterman, Will Norton, and Gaston Schleicher each added six stops.

Even though the Wildcats came up short on the scoreboard, Harding said the fight and growth he saw from his team made him proud.

"We lost Johnny first play of the game and that was a huge loss for us," he said. "I thought we showed a ton of fight. We converted a fourth-and-10 for a touchdown and then had the big

kickoff return when things weren't looking good. We are certainly proud of the fight this team displayed."

Louisburg finishes the season with its share of adversity, but also with optimism for the future.

"This was certainly a season that provided plenty of challenges for us," Harding said. "We had a lot of young kids playing on Friday nights and then we also had more injuries than we have had the past several seasons. We appreciate all the time and effort our senior class has put into the program, and we had a lot of kids get good experience this year. Hopefully that's beneficial for us down the road."

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SCORING SUMMARY

Second Quarter

L: Max Amren 38 run (Blaise Vohs kick)

L: Blaise Vohs 57 run (Vohs kick)

Third Quarter

C: Kris Harding 9 run (kick good) at 4:25

Fourth Quarter

C: Asher Love 4 run (Kasen Audiss pass from Harding) at 11:58

L: Rickey Giles 28 pass from Amren (Amren run) scored on a 4th and 10 at 6:57

C: Love 3 run (kick good) scored at 2:52

C: Harding 37 run (kick good) scored with :32 seconds left

L: Cole Heinrich 80 kickoff return (run failed) :20 seconds left

STATISTICS

RUSHING – Blaise Vohs 12-72; Max Amren 7-58; Gage Feldkamp 1-6; Cole Heinrich 2-2

PASSING – Max Amren 12-14-102

RECEIVING – Rickey Giles 2-45; John Guetterman 5-14; Blaise Vohs 1-14; Bryce Thompson 1-12; Eli Roth 1-9; Braxton Eastland 2-8

TACKLES – Bryce Thompson 10, Devin Goeman 8, John Guetterman 6, Will Norton 6, Gaston Schleicher 6, Max Amren 4, Cole Poindexter 4, Cole Heinrich 3, Coiln Schleicher 3, Gage Feldkamp 2, Ayden Spradling 1, Maddox Day 1, Gavin Manson 1.