

**NOW
HIRING**

WE'RE SEEKING AN EXPERIENCED AUTO BODY
TECHNICIAN. APPLY ON OUR WEBSITE →

Jackson
COLLISION & CLASSICS

613 4th St. Jackson, MN

JacksonCollisionClassics.com

507-849-7999



2011-2018
SPORTS REPORTING
AWARD-WINNER

JCC FOOTBALL



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Above: Jack Brinkman (from left), Bradley Buhl, Rudy Voss and Nathaniel Post celebrate with the Section 3AAA championship trophy after beating Fairmont 36-12 in the section finals Saturday in Janesville. Below: Matthew Stubbe brings down Fairmont quarterback Zach Jorgensen during a dominant performance by the JCC defense.

'IT MEANS THE WORLD'

JCC football team qualifies for state after getting revenge against Fairmont in section championship game

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

Jackson County Central senior Bradley Buhl couldn't wipe the smile off his face as he carried the Section 3AAA championship trophy around after the Huskies beat Fairmont 36-12 Saturday in Janesville.

After all, that trophy meant a goal three years in the making had finally been achieved.

"It means the world," Buhl said of that trophy. "We've spent the last two, three years doing everything we could to get it.

Now that we have it, it means everything."

The Huskies won the section title after losing to Fairmont each of the two previous seasons. For a team with 21 seniors — many who played prominent roles as sophomores and juniors — getting the job done against the Cardinals this year was pretty satisfying.

"It makes it 100 times better," senior quarterback Rudy Voss said of getting the win over Fairmont after coming close to state two straight seasons. "Nobody wants to experience that feeling three times in a

row. It's really motivated us all year."

"It definitely gives you an edge to play harder and tougher," senior lineman Andrew Hesebeck said of facing a nemesis. "Not that we haven't the last two years, but you just have that feeling inside you that you've got to get it done one of these years. It means a lot to have 21 seniors put it together and win this game."

Senior linebacker Cole Kapplinger, who got hurt during the section finals as a sophomore and missed time earlier this season

See **FB** on **B4**



Hunters could have a heyday this weekend

Hunters in Jackson County should be happy this weekend as the firearms deer season opens and pheasant and duck seasons continue.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conservation officer Mike Gruhlke said he expects a busy weekend around the county, even if he's not sure what to expect in the way of success.

"I don't know what to expect," he said. "The crop should not be an issue. It seems like they're making great progress there. I look for it to be similar to last year."

Gruhlke said he has seen archery deer hunters, but hasn't heard from them much.

Pheasant hunters are still having success, even if they're not out in abundance like they were the

first few weeks of the season.

"That's slowed down since the first couple weeks, but folks are getting a few pheasants," Gruhlke said. "As the crop goes out, that will continue to improve."

Gruhlke said duck hunting has been good throughout the season, but ice could slow that, especially for those who prefer to hunt from a boat.

Safety is stressed

Gruhlke said the most important thing — like any other hunting season — is safety. That includes identifying the target and knowing what is beyond it before touching the trigger.

Also, during deer season, everything above the waist excluding sleeves and gloves should be blaze orange or pink.

Practice starts Monday for some sports teams

Practice starts Monday for Jackson County Central girls' basketball and gymnastics teams, as well as for the Windom Area boys' hockey team. Practice started last week for the Eagle girls' hockey team.

Practice begins Nov. 18 for JCC wrestling and boys' basketball.

The first game of the season is Nov. 16 when the girls' hockey team plays at Waconia. The Eagle boys

open Nov. 23 at Willmar.

The JCC girls' basketball team opens its season Nov. 26 at Granada-Huntley-East Chain and the boys open Dec. 3 at Martin County West.

The JCC gymnastics team opens Dec. 3 at Redwood Valley and the wrestling team debuts Dec. 7 with a tourney in St. James.

The JCC competition cheerleading team has its first meet Dec. 7 at DeLaSalle High School.

JCC VOLLEYBALL



PHOTO BY DAN CONDON

Alaina Wolff celebrates with teammates after the Jackson County Central volleyball team beat Windom in the sub-section semifinals last Tuesday.

Huskies put a scare in the Tigers

JCC wins the first set before falling to 'tough' Marshall Tigers

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

The Marshall volleyball team has lost just one set to a Class AA

team all season.

That came last Thursday when Jackson County Central took the first set in the South Section 3AA championship match in Worthington.

The Tigers won the final three sets to win the match, outscoring the Huskies 25-17, 25-21 and 25-20 after JCC won the first set 25-21. Marshall then swept

Minnewaska Area two nights later to win the section title.

The loss to the top-seeded Tigers brought an end to the season for the Huskies, who finished with a record of 20-11.

Prior to the loss to Marshall, second-seeded JCC swept third-seeded Windom in the sub-section semifinals last Tuesday.

Scores were 25-19, 25-23 and 25-19.

Huskies start strong against Tigers

JCC scored the first two points of the match against Marshall, but the Tigers led 11-7 before the Huskies scored four straight points to pull even.

Sadie Voss and Alaina Wolff
See **VB** on **B3**

FB: State

Continued from B1

with an injury, said there are no words to describe how good it feels to make it to state as a senior.

"It's fueled our entire season," he said. "I can't even explain how it feels to finally do it. It feels really good to make it to state and finally do what we're capable of doing."

Head coach Tom Schuller said it's a bit of a relief to get to state for the first time since 2016.

"It's a monkey off the back of our coaching staff and these players," he said. "It's a very talented senior class and we haven't been able to get over the hump the last couple years."

Huskies respond quickly

In the early going of Saturday's section championship game, the JCC offense struggled.

But a touchdown by Fairmont served as a bit of a wake-up call.

JCC punted on its first drive and turned it over on downs its second drive, but its defense held Fairmont in check the first half of the first quarter.

That changed when the Cardinals hit on a couple big passing plays.

The first went for 38 yards on third-and-12 and the next was a 39-yard touchdown on third-and-24.

The touchdown came when Cardinal quarterback Zach Jorgensen eluded a couple Husky defenders and threw a perfect pass to Caden Baarts, who made a diving catch in the end zone despite nearly perfect coverage by Levi Lindley.

"With a sophomore quarterback, we wanted some pressure on him," Schuller said. "We didn't want him back there patting the ball all day, and he wasn't able to do that. Even on the touchdown, we missed him. We should've sacked him. He avoided the rush and made that play. He dropped that one right down the chimney. Lindley was right on that kid and he made a great catch. That was a great throw and great catch. You can't defend that any better."

The Huskies stopped Fairmont's two-point attempt and then went to work on offense.

Lindley returned the ensuing kickoff near midfield and Voss threw a 44-yard completion to Keaton Storm two plays later.

Buhl was in the end zone for a 2-yard touchdown two plays later to tie the game.



Elijah Meium-Bratrud eludes five Fairmont defenders on the way to a second-quarter touchdown during Saturday's section championship game.

The Huskies took the lead for good when Storm added the 121st extra point of his career.

Schuller said he thinks his team's experience paid off when it fell behind after giving up first-quarter points for the first time all season.

"We talked about perseverance and learning lessons," he said. "This is the third time we've done this and we thought our experience would really help us."

Turnovers lead to touchdowns for JCC

Outside of the two long pass plays that led to a Fairmont touchdown, the JCC defense dominated Fairmont.

That showed in the Cardinals rushing for just 8 yards in the game and the Huskies recovering three fumbles.

The first came on the Cardinals' first offensive play after JCC took the lead. Kapplinger recovered a loose ball and it didn't take the Huskies long to capitalize.

Jack Brinkman took an option pitch for 8 yards before Elijah Meium-Bratrud found paydirt.

The speedy running back took the handoff and went to the right before crossing back the field to the left to elude defenders. Meium-Bratrud drug a defender as he crossed the goal line for a 26-yard touchdown on the first play of the second quarter.

Voss ran in the two-point conversion for a 15-6 lead.

The quick response to Fairmont's opening score was something Voss said might not have been possible two years ago.

"That's the thing that this team has gotten the best at over the last two years is mental toughness," he said. "We knew that we were going to have to overcome some adversity at some point in this game. For them to make a play like that and score first, then for us to score like we

did, it just shows the heart and character of these guys and how much we really did want it."

"The main speech pre-game was to not let any big plays get you down," Hesebeck said. "Tough plays are going to happen. Stuff like that is going to happen and we just have to bounce back from it quickly and we did."

After the teams traded punts, Colby Ringeisen pounced on the ball after a hit by Kapplinger and Buhl forced Jorgensen to lose control deep in Fairmont territory.

Facing fourth-and-1, Voss ran for an 11-yard touchdown to give the Huskies a 21-6 lead they took into the half.

A pair of defenders got a hand on Voss near the line of scrimmage, but he left them and another defender on the ground before lowering his shoulder to get into the end zone.

Quick statement

The Huskies opened the second half with a six-play, 85-yard touchdown drive that ended with a 16-yard touchdown run by Buhl just three plays after Meium-Bratrud scampered for 43 yards.

Voss said he told his teammates that's exactly what the Huskies would do before the drive ever started.

"I told the guys, 'We're going to get the ball and we're going to score. We're going to send a message this first drive,'" he said.

The Huskies looked to have the game in control with a 29-6 lead, but Baarts returned the ensuing kickoff for a touchdown to trim the JCC lead to 29-12 and then a personal-foul penalty forced the Huskies to punt on their next drive.

But the defense again rose to the challenge, forcing a three-and-out. The Cardinals faked a punt, which failed, and the Huskies sealed the win when Lindley capped a six-play,



Rudy Voss leaves a trio of Fairmont defenders in his wake on the way to an 11-yard touchdown run in the second quarter of Saturday's section championship game.

34-yard drive with a 1-yard touchdown run. Storm added the extra point for a 36-12 score that proved to be the final score.

Defense dominates

The Huskies allowed just 8 yards rushing on 23 attempts. Fairmont lost yards on nine of its 23 rushes and gained more than 3 yards on just three of its carries.

"Our defense was absolutely outstanding today," Schuller said. "We talked about all the levels playing well. Our front four got some pressure. We sent more blitzes than we have in a while and we got home a couple times."

"It was impressive," He-

beck said of his team's performance. "Our linebackers read their keys today, we held our gaps on the defensive line and our secondary played amazing."

Kapplinger, who recovered a fumble and forced one, said he loved being able to help his teammates in the biggest game of the year.

"It feels really good," he said. "I like the feeling of being able to do stuff for the team and make plays when it matters."

But it wasn't just him stepping up.

"The defensive line is really powerful," Kapplinger said. "Our linebackers are insane. Our corners and safeties are just remarkable at covering people and they can make tackles around the field. Our defense is just really good."

The Cardinals threw for 171 yards to finish with 179 yards on offense.

Huskies dominate on the ground

The Huskies were confident they could run the ball against the Cardinals and they proved to be spot on.

"I thought we had a decided advantage with our rushing offense against their rushing defense and that kind of played out," Schuller said.

Meium-Bratrud ran for 138 yards and a touchdown on 15 carries and Buhl punished defenders for 113 yards and two touchdowns on 22 carries.

Buhl said the Cardinals didn't care too much for his

style of running.

"Their linebackers, you could see it, they would shimmy away from contact and we could take advantage of it," he said. "They've got a lot of good athletes, but we knew them to not be the most physical team."

Hesebeck said his teammates along the offensive line — Keldon Bennett, Lee Drahota, Trace Michelson, Sam Dunker and Kobe Foster — were also more physical than their counterparts.

"It all starts with being physical," Hesebeck said. "I think we won that part today and were able to move the ball pretty well."

The Huskies ran for 326 yards on 61 carries as a team. They ran for 127 yards on 20 carries while going into the wind in the third quarter.

Voss completed two passes in the game for 64 yards.

But the record-breaking signal caller said that didn't matter one bit.

"This has been a long time coming," he said. "The last two years have been building up to this. I can't tell you how many late-night workouts we've had, running hills, just the motivation to get back to this game and have a good feeling leaving that field."

Up next

The Huskies play Waseca in the Class AAA state quarterfinals Saturday at noon at Lakeville South High School (see preview below).

JCC vs. Fairmont

FAIR 6 0 6 0 12
JCC 7 14 15 0 36

Scoring

FAIR - Baarts 39 from Jorgensen (two-point failed)

JCC - Buhl 2 run (Storm PAT)

JCC - Meium-Bratrud 26 run (Voss two-point)

JCC - Voss 11 run (two-point failed)

JCC - Buhl 16 run (Buhl two-point)

FAIR - Baarts 79 kick return (PAT blocked)

JCC - Lindley 1 run (Storm PAT)

JCC leaders

Rushing - Meium-Bratrud 15-138; Buhl 22-113

Receiving - Storm 1-44

Passing - Voss 2-6 for 64 yards

Fumble recovery - Kapplinger, Ringeisen, Lindley



Jackson County Central football players celebrate Elijah Meium-Bratrud's touchdown run against Fairmont.

Huskies open state tournament Saturday against speedy Waseca Bluejays

Jackson County Central football coach Tom Schuller said the Huskies' oppo-

nent in the quarterfinals of the Class AAA state tournament is "really, really,

really fast."

Or maybe there were four "reallys."

Either way, he knows his Huskies will have their hands full with Waseca when the two teams face off Saturday at noon at Lakeville South High School.

"I can't name the speed guys because there's so many I'd be short-selling someone," Schuller said.

The Bluejays lost to Fairmont 20-14 in Week 3, but have turned things around since.

"They have a lot of juniors, so they were just starting out," Schuller said. "Now they know who can

play."

The Bluejays use their speed on offense by spreading the field. They'll primarily run the ball, but aren't afraid to use their tall receivers when defenses crowd the line of scrimmage.

"They run really well and the guys that run, run really fast," Schuller said.

The Huskies will have to tackle well and will have to get used to Waseca's team speed in a hurry.

"We have to adjust to their speed," Schuller said. "That's going to be especially tough early because we can't simulate their

speed in practice."

The Bluejays will use a 4-3 defense, highlighted by junior defensive end Marcus Hansen (No. 66).

"They've got some good players and 66 is elite," Schuller said.

Schuller said he'd like the Huskies to be able to overpower the Bluejays like they did against Fairmont in the section finals, but knows that isn't going to happen.

"It would be great to push them around, but we're going to have to be balanced if we want to have any chance," he said. "We're going to have to

get some yardage with the passing game."

Whether it's Waseca or any of the other state tournament teams lined up on the other side of the ball, Schuller said it'll take a strong effort for the Huskies to keep their season going from here on out.

"They know by now the teams that are left are really, really good football teams," Schuller said. "You need to be at your very best to beat these teams."

Tickets for the game can be purchased at the high school from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. now through Friday or at the game.

Class AAA state football tournament

