



Sports



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FOOTBALL

ANCHORS UP: HLWW snaps losing streak with upset win over No. 2 Concordia Academy

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Sports Editor

ST. PAUL – It had been 728 days since the Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted football team had won a game. It was time for that streak to end.

Despite losing their last 18 games, the Lakers came with some confidence into their matchup with Concordia Academy in the first round of the Section 4AA tournament. They left even more confident as the Lakers used a quick start to help them pull off the upset in a 26-7 victory over the second-seeded Beacons Tuesday night.

“The bus ride was great,” HLWW coach Ben Anderson said about the excitement of his team. “The boys were emotionally and physically drained. Our motto all year has been, ‘Anchors Up’. To our guys, that means to keep moving in the right direction. Ninety-nine percent of teams would have gone into that game expecting to lose. Our guys have hung together long enough to see each others’ improvement. That improvement is what gave us confidence the last few weeks. The first thing the coaches told the boys is how proud they are of them. What they have endured that last two seasons demonstrates the type of character these young men have. Rather than finding excuses, the players and coaches searched for answers.”

It’s not like the Lakers haven’t done this before. While it certainly has been a while since their last win, it actually came as the No. 7 seed in the Section 4AA tournament. It also happened to be against the same team, Concordia Academy.

HLWW received the opening kickoff, and they got the quick start they needed. Just three plays into their drive, AJ Gatz broke free for a 38-yard touchdown run to give HLWW a 6-0 lead less than two minutes into the game.

Gatz was only getting started.

After HLWW’s defense did their job, Anderson decided to keep going with what was working. The Lakers ran the same play, and it worked to perfection once again thanks to the blocking of Gabe Hausladen, Jake Fiecke, and Kyle Driver, as Gatz scored from 67 yards out, making it 12-0 HLWW midway through the first quarter.

The Lakers would add on even more in the first quar-



HLWW’s AJ Gatz picked a good time to have the best game of his career. Gatz ran for 144 yards and two touchdowns as the Lakers upset No. 2 Concordia Academy 26-7 Tuesday night.

PHOTO BY KIP KOVAR

ter. Noah Bush scored from four yards, and all of a sudden HLWW was in command with an 18-0 lead after one quarter.

Concordia Academy would get on the board early in the fourth quarter, but that’s all the HLWW defense would allow. A 1-yard touchdown run from Bennett Paulson with just over four minutes left to play in the game pushed HLWW’s lead to 26-7, and sealed a win that was a long time in the making for the Lakers.

“The rest of the game was followed by great defense,” Anderson said. “We gave Concordia

the wind in the third quarter, in which they went scoreless. This put them into the wind for the fourth quarter, which we knew would make a comeback extremely difficult.”

The Lakers had so many players step up and play well in the win against the Beacons. A team that has battled low numbers the past few seasons, believed in themselves and came together to pull off an upset as a team.

“It was a great team effort,” Anderson said. “So many players stepped up and did their job at a high level – play after

play.”

Just because the streak is over for HLWW doesn’t mean they’re satisfied. With how well they played on both ends of the field for a complete game, the Lakers will be looking to extend their season even more when they face No. 3 St. Agnes Saturday, Oct. 26 at Hamline University in the Section 4AA semifinals.

“We feel that if we find a way to get better in the next few days and play well Saturday, we will get to line up in victory formation again,” Anderson said.

While Anderson has confi-

dence in his players, there’s no doubt the players themselves are ready to keep this momentum rolling.

“As a team, that win meant everything to us,” Driver said. “After trying to put all the pieces together this regular season, it felt great to finally get the result we’ve been wanting so bad all season. It brought us closer together definitely, because now we know we can still make something out of this season. The guys and I are coming in super confident for Saturday’s game with that win.”

“We went without a win this season, and this win really boosted our confidence, because it showed that we can win and the losses didn’t define us,” Spencer Lade added. “We are going into this weekend with confidence, but still knowing we need to be humble and play a great game in order to win.”

HLWW 26, CONCORDIA ACADEMY 7

Tuesday, October 22

at Concordia Academy

	1	2	3	4	F
LAKERS	18	0	0	8	- 26
BEACONS	0	0	0	7	- 7

Scoring

First Quarter

HLWW – AJ Gatz 38-yard run (2pt conversion failed), 6-0

HLWW – AJ Gatz 67-yard run (2pt conversion failed), 12-0

HLWW – Noah Bush 4-yard run (2pt conversion failed), 18-0

Second Quarter

No Scoring

Third Quarter

No Scoring

Fourth Quarter

CA – A Kingsbury 3-yard run (kick good), 18-7

HLWW – Bennett Paulson 1-yard run (2pt conversion failed), 26-7

HLWW Offensive Statistics

Passing	Comp	Att	YDS	TD	INT
Bennett Paulson	1	5	28	0	0

Rushing	Att	YDS	TD
Noah Bush	17	64	1
Bennett Paulson	4	5	1
Isaac Cain	1	0	0
AJ Gatz	9	144	2

Receiving	Rec	YDS	TD
Jacob Rheault	1	28	0



HLWW senior Cody Dickhausen was big part of the success the Lakers had in their upset win Tuesday night.

PHOTO BY KIP KOVAR

Good things happen to those who work hard

It’s been a long time coming for the Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted football team. At long last, the losing streak is over.

Coming into their first-round matchup of the Section 4AA tournament, the Lakers had lost 18-straight games. That didn’t bother them one bit, and they came in confident.

HLWW came in without a win in 728 days. They left with a win and a memory of a lifetime as they pulled off the upset



More Than A Game
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with a 26-7 win over Concordia Academy.

It’s no secret the Lakers have had their struggles the past few seasons. Low numbers, and playing in one of the toughest

districts in the entire state isn’t a good combination to pick up wins.

Even with that, the Lakers didn’t care. They didn’t care they haven’t won a game in a long time. They love playing football, and that’s what they did.

There’s no doubt that head coach Ben Anderson has been doing a great job with these kids. It’s not easy to play in the Mid State Sub 1 district, and it’s

not easy to manage a team with low numbers.

As impressive as the upset win for HLWW was Tuesday night, I could argue that what Anderson has done all season long is more impressive. Despite going 0-8 in the regular season, oftentimes getting blown out, the Lakers always showed up and played hard.

That’s hard to do. When you are consistently losing games, wanting to get back out there isn’t always easy to do. For Anderson to have his team ready to play each and every week, no matter what happened the week before, that’s simply impressive to me.

Throughout the season, you could see the progress being made by the Lakers. It didn’t always lead to wins, or even close games for that matter, but there was progress being made.

After every game, Anderson would remind his team that they were getting better. While the scoreboard might not show that, there’s no doubt Anderson

believed it.

The progress led HLWW to a chance to pull off an upset in the first round of the Section 4AA tournament. A quick start only fueled more confidence on the sidelines for the Lakers, and before you know it, that losing streak was over and there was pure jubilation for the Lakers and their fans.

Hats off to Anderson, the rest of the coaching staff, and most importantly, the players. Nothing comes easy in life. Nothing came easy for those boys either, yet they continued to show up, work hard, and now – look at what they are.

After not winning a single game for almost two seasons, HLWW is one win away from playing for a section championship. That’s amazing. It’s a testament to those kids, those coaches, and that community.

The HLWW football team has given us all a reminder that good things happen to those who work hard. No matter what you are going through, keep

working, keep your head up, and you never know what might happen.

Good things happen to those who work hard. The HLWW football team knows that, and now they are no longer the team that has a huge losing streak. They’re the team that’s one win away from playing for a section title.

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BYE

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St. Paul Humboldt 0

(5) St. Paul Humboldt

(3) St. Agnes

St. Agnes 27
Rush City 0

(6) Rush City

(2) Concordia Academy

HLWW 26
Concordia Academy 7

(7) HLWW

(1) Mpls. North

(Section 4AA Semifinals)
Saturday, Oct. 26
at Mpls. North, 2 p.m.

(4) Maple Lake

(Section 4AA Championship)
Friday, Nov. 1
at Monticello HS, 5 p.m.

(3) St. Agnes

(Section 4AA Semifinals)
Saturday, Oct. 26
at Hamline, 6 p.m.

(7) HLWW



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