

Falcons trample Cathedral in home opener

Wirth rushes for 170 yards as offense finds success

BY EVAN MICHEALSON
STAFF WRITER

Through the first two contests of the season, the Foley Falcons football team had been smothered by opposing defenses and completely outpaced by high-powered offenses.

The Falcons found their rewarding redemption, however, in their first home game of the season against the St. Cloud Cathedral Crusaders.

Foley snapped a two-game scoreless streak, and running back Brady Wirth tallied 170 yards on the ground as the Falcons powered passed the Crusaders 20-13 Sept. 13 at DeRocher Field in Foley.

The Falcons quickly asserted themselves against the Crusaders' defense and established early control in the trenches on their opening drive. Wirth bruised his way down the field before plunging into the end zone for a 2 yard score.

"We came out and set the tone right away," said Dave Dahlstrom, Falcons football head coach. "The line of scrimmage blocked really well. That's a formula for success."

The touchdown, eight minutes into the game, marked the first points of the season for the 2019 Foley Falcons.

"We were just pumped up and we needed to score a touchdown," Wirth said. "Coach (Dahlstrom) riled us up before the game."

The Falcon defense, not to be outdone, came out strong against quarterback Mason Wolf and the Cathedral offense. They quickly forced a three-and-out, allowing Foley's offense to quickly retake possession after a momentous first drive.

Their second drive went as well as the first, as the Falcons' run game gashed their way through gaping running lanes to quickly enter the red zone. Captain Connor Thorsten punctuated an impressive first quarter with a 1 yard TD slash to give the Falcons a 12-0 lead.

"The guys knew they had to get better," Dahlstrom said. "They bought into that and during the week we did what we needed to do. The backs ran really hard and we got good push up front."

The Falcons entered halftime with that double-



PHOTOS BY EVAN MICHEALSON

Foley running back Brady Wirth plows through a Cathedral defender Sept. 13 at DeRocher Field in Foley. Wirth was a nightmare for Cathedral all night, tallying 170 rushing yards.

digit lead as the defense continued to stifle the Cathedral run game while limiting big chunk passing plays.

The second half, however, illuminated Foley's inconsistencies. They committed 12 penalties on the night for an egregious 100 yards, including several holding calls in the third quarter that eliminated momentum and forced punts.

"We had penalties at crucial times," Dahlstrom said. "We say to them all the time that penalties are drive killers. If we're clean, we're fine."

Eventually, the Falcons' inability to stay flag-free allowed Cathedral to crawl back into the game. Six minutes into the third quarter,

Wolf sped passed the Falcon front seven for a 10 yard touchdown run, slicing Foley's lead to 12-7.

Foley, not happy with a one-score lead, lit up the scoreboard for the third time on the night with a Peyton Puhl 1 yard touchdown, re-extending their lead to two scores.

The Crusaders quickly returned the favor. Wolf connected with junior receiver Caleb Leintz over the middle for a 61 yard strike to put pressure on the Falcons.

The Crusaders, however, also caught the penalty bug. In a desperate attempt to claw back into the game, a second-and-17 conversion was called back because of a holding call. At one point, the Cru-

saders found themselves in a third-and-50 due to untimely infractions. From there, Foley's stingy defensive unit stood their ground as the Falcons held on to win their first game of the season.

"You know, it was a good game since we had a lot of different scenarios," Dahlstrom said. "They dug their heels in. Defensively, you're always thinking bend but don't break. The defense was putting themselves in a position to do that."

The Falcons' victory comes as an especially uplifting result given the untimely injury of starting quarterback Jamison Gothman, who attempted just one pass before leaving the game in the first quarter with a suspected knee injury. Junior quarterback Brent Janson filled in nicely, completely five of nine passes.

"I thought Brent did a really good job of coming in and running the offense," Dahlstrom said. "He came in and did a great job."

The severity of Gothman's injury is unknown.

The Falcons improved to 1-2 on the season with the bounce-back effort. They face the Albany Wolves at 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 20 at DeRocher Field in Foley. The Wolves, who recently defeated Zimmerman 22-0, will provide intense competition for Foley, who seeks to get better and better as the season progresses.

"We have faith in each other, and we believe all of us can work together," Wirth said. "We're going to have to keep the run game going and hitting the holes as much as we can and work as a team."



Foley football head coach Dave Dahlstrom gets excited after his Falcons squad defeated the Cathedral Crusaders Sept. 13 at DeRocher Field in Foley. Dahlstrom stressed the importance of improving game-by-game, and the Falcons took that mentality and turned it into their first victory of the season.

tennis

State ranked teams tarnish tennis season

Foley girls are 14-2

BY ERIC INGLIS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Falcons girls tennis week started off with a jaunt to the north to face Granite Ridge Conference opponent Little Falls Sept. 10.

The Falcons wasted little time building a lead as senior Captain Jayden Kloss won 6-0, 6-0 at third singles. Kloss has been overpowering her opponents and her victory against the Flyers marked the eighth straight set Kloss had played without losing a single game.

The first doubles duo of Bailey Gapinski and Jami Novak also earned a straight set win. The doubles tandem executed cross court returns to near perfection on their way to a 6-0, 6-2 victory.

Peyton Kopel ended the Falcons' evening by utilizing hard to return first serves, a variety of shot selection from the baseline, and a refuse-to-lose attitude on her way to a 6-4, 6-2 first singles win.

The Falcons defeated the Flyers 7-0. This was the Falcons' third straight 7-0 victory, which improved their record to 13-0 and 2-0 in the Granite Ridge Conference on the season. Next up was a challenging quadrangular at Litchfield Sept. 14. The Falcons, now in AA, were matched up against two of the Class A top teams.

First up was Minniewaska, the No. 9 ranked team in Class A. Again, it was Kloss starting things off for the Falcons with a 6-0, 6-2 win at third singles.

However, wins were hard to come by after that point for the Falcons. Throughout the entire season, the Falcons have showed incredible mental toughness in the decisive super tiebreakers that are often used instead of a third set. Foley had won its last seven matches that were decided via the super breaker. Despite their successes, the team struggled Saturday to get the bounces necessary to withstand momentum shifts that coincide with these tiebreakers.

Alaina Hageman dropped her fourth singles match 1-6, 6-4, 11-9. This

was Hageman's first singles loss of the season.

Kopel also lost her match in a super tiebreaker by the score of 6-7 (5), 6-3, 10-5. This was Kopel's second loss of the season at first singles.

The third doubles duo of Sydney Gapinski and Kristen O'Brien won their match 6-3, 6-4, but the Falcons fell short of victory 5-2 to the Lakers.

The next match was no easier for the Falcons as No. 5 ranked Litchfield was waiting for them minutes later. The Falcons again lost two matches via the super breaker — Kloss at third singles and Olivia Falk and Savannah Gapinski at second doubles. The Falcons did not win at any of the positions in the lineup and were defeated 7-0.

Even after two losses, the Falcons showed they are a force to be reckoned with. The last team of the day was Jordan, who had defeated Minniewaska earlier in the day.

It was sophomore Brooke Beier who turned the tide for the Falcons. After losing the first set 7-5, Beier

kept the ball in play, shot after shot, point after point, and wore her opponent down earning a 5-7, 6-3, 12-10 victory at second singles.

The swing in tiebreaker momentum cascaded to the rest of the team. After Kopel took care of business 6-1, 6-3 at first singles, it was the third doubles duo of Sydney Gapinski and Natalie Hanks that evened team score at 3-3. The duo did not need the super tiebreaker to win, but did show great composure in their 7-6 (4) first set tiebreaker. They won 7-6 (5), 7-5.

With the match tied 3-3, Falk and Savannah Gapinski found themselves in a super tiebreaker that decided the team match. After a 7-2 lead dissipated, the girls dug in their heels and put away a few floaters to secure the Falcon victory 5-7, 6-4, 11-9. Foley defeated Jordan 4-3.

The Falcons are now 14-2 on the season and faced Princeton at home Sept 16. Foley travels to Mora Thursday, Sept. 19 for a match at 4:30 p.m.

Falcons remain undefeated in conference play

Foley wins in three sets over Zimmerman, Mora

BY EVAN MICHEALSON
STAFF WRITER

Not even the arduous challenges of the Granite Ridge Conference can slow down the Foley Falcons volleyball team.

Entering the week, the Falcons were 2-0 against Granite Ridge opponents, having previously upstaged Pierz and Little Falls. At the conclusion of the week, the team was 4-0 against conference foes after a dominating win over Zimmerman and a marvelous victory over Mora.

Foley 3, Mora 0
The Falcons volleyball team can be a difficult team to stop when they execute a balanced game plan. With game-breaking talent across the court, Foley brings a unique challenge to their opponents, especially when they are locked in.

The Mora Mustangs figured this out all too well. Four Falcons passed the five-kill mark as Foley closed out the Mustangs 3-0 (25-17 25-15 25-18) Sept. 12 at the Foley High School gymnasium in Foley.

"Right now, the girls are confident in what they can do," said Sheila Wheeler, Falcons volleyball head coach. Outside hitter Ellie Murphy proved to be lethally balanced, smacking nine kills while also recording six defensive digs.

"I think Ellie's always going to get her lead," Wheeler said. "She's exciting to set because she pounds the ball and jumps fairly well." McKenna Gross was not far behind; she knocked home seven kills while leading the Falcons in digs. Jayden Hermanson and Calie Teff amplified the offensive output with five kills of their own.

"I always keep reminding them to spread it out and work on that fast offense," Wheeler said. "If a team is scouting us, they'll say, 'Oh, it's not just Ellie, it's McKenna, it's Jayden. They have guns coming from everywhere.' It keeps their blockers honest." The Falcons' blockers used the offense kill potential to cheat over and lock down Mora's outside game. With the Mustangs struggling to find their groove, the Falcons made their blocking attempts count, recording seven solo blocks.

While Foley's imposing victory extends their winning streak to five, the team continues to struggle on serves. The Falcons committed 13 service errors to just 10 service aces despite an emphasis to improve during practices.

"We definitely have to improve our serving," Wheeler said. "Thirteen missed serves again, that's a lot of points given to a team." However, the team has outweighed their inconsistencies by performing exquisitely in their passes, setting up more opportunities for kills and increasing their odds of victory.

"They have been passing the ball to our setter and the setter has at least two to three options when they have the ball, which helps tremendously," Wheeler said.

The Falcons have won four straight conference matchups as they begin the toughest stretch of their season — on the road against Milaca, St. Cloud Cathedral and Albany. The road trip will determine how well this team holds up among the Granite Ridge Conference's top contenders.

"Against Milaca coming up, that will be a good test," Wheeler said. "They have some good hitters and blockers, too. We'll see where we're at with that."

The Falcons-Milaca showdown will begin at 7:15 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 19 at Milaca High School in Milaca. The Wolves are coming off of a second-place finish in the Crosby Tournament.

Foley 3, Zimmerman 0
As the Foley Falcons volleyball team continues to soar among the Granite Ridge Conference's most capable contenders, they have received substantial versatility and balanced performances from several members of their team, front court to back court.

Tuesday's test against the Zimmerman Thunder was not a match that saw balance; the entire offense ran through Murphy.

The acclaimed outside hitter saw 14 of her 18 attacks converted into a kill and a Falcon point, as the Falcons peppered Zimmerman with their offensive ability in a 3-0 (25-14, 25-14, 25-13) conference victory Sept. 10 at the Foley High School gymnasium in Foley.

Murphy's astronomical success rate on kill attempts translates to a .667 hitting percentage, which led all players.

Teff and Hermanson tallied five kills each as Foley won every set by double digits. After several close calls against Kimball and Little Falls the previous week, this was a performance the Falcons were looking for.

Wheeler has cited the need for the Falcons to improve their inconsistency on serves, and the Falcons did not take a step in the right direction. The team drew 13 service errors as they continued with occasional struggles off the serve.

However, imperfections did not come back to haunt them on this night as the team rallied behind efficient showings in other aspects of play. The team as whole combined for a .347 hitting percentage and committed just one reception error.

Freshman Claire Chmielewski received extensive playing time with junior setter Kayla Brenny missing time with a head injury and led the team with four service aces on 20 serves. She committed only two service errors despite the high number of attempts.

The win continues a season-high four-match winning streak for the Falcons.

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