

FOOTBALL

Cloquet hangs tough with East

Kerry Rodd
sports@pineknotnews.com

The Cloquet football team couldn't quite overcome a rough start last Wednesday night as they fell on the road to Duluth East 27-22.

"They are pretty big up front and we were caught out of position a number of times in the first half. In some cases it was a scheme thing, where they caught us in a bad defense for what they were doing," said Cloquet coach Tom Lenarz. "The combination of all those things produced some big numbers for them in the first half. We were able to tighten things up a little after halftime."

After giving up three touchdowns and a safety through the early part of the third quarter and trail-



Cloquet's Alex Petersen carries the ball in the Hibbing game earlier this fall. He had a 92-yard kickoff return for a touchdown against Duluth East last week.

Pine Knot News photo

ing 20-0, the Lumberjacks fought back and tried to pull the momentum away from the Greyhounds and onto their side of the field.

"It's tougher mentally than physically," said Lenarz about trying to come back from a large deficit. "High school sports are all

about momentum. When you have a young team, that gets magnified. I was very proud of this group and the way they played in the second half."

Cloquet's attempted comeback started when quarterback Alec Turnbull hooked up with junior fullback Marshall Hayes for a 7-yard touchdown pass and catch, but the conversion pass fell incomplete, leaving the Lumberjacks trailing 20-6. East answered with a score of its own and the extra point kick pushed its lead to 27-6 early in the fourth quarter.

"This was an area of focus for us after the Grand Rapids game," Lenarz said. "Dwight Lundeen is the long-time coach at Becker. I heard a quote of his over the week and shared it with our kids. He was talking to

his team about a 21-7 loss to Hutchinson this year. He said, 'That was a great game. You guys got better tonight. Our team got better tonight.' That's a lesson we all need to hang onto at times. There are powerful lessons to be learned about continuing to compete in a game where the score isn't going in your favor. Against Grand Rapids, we didn't do that. Against East, we did."

Following the East score, the Lumberjacks reacted in kind when Alex Petersen returned the ensuing kickoff 92 yards for a touchdown, cutting the East lead to 27-14 after a two-point conversion run by Jack Sorenson. Cloquet narrowed the gap further when Hayes smashed into the end zone from the 7-yard line and Sorenson added the conversion run to make it

27-22, but it proved to be just a little too late.

"Jack Sorenson has played well for us for sure this year," Lenarz said. "He has played linebacker for us and has moved around a lot. I just love his attitude on the field and he is a smart kid. You don't always get a middle linebacker that is also an honor student in school. He does some really good things for us on game night and in practice."

Hayes led Cloquet in rushing with 77 yards on 20 carries and Will Turnbull led the Cloquet defense with six solo tackles and five assisted tackles.

The Lumberjacks were scheduled to open the playoffs at 6 p.m. Thursday night in Proctor against North Branch, a team they defeated in the first game of the season.



Esko's Kevin Gregory III hangs on to make the tackle on Greenway/Nashwauk-Keewatin's Dacoda Thoennes during Tuesday's playoff football game at Esko Schools Stadium. *Photos by Dave Harwig / Pine Knot News*

Esko drops playoff opener

Kerry Rodd
sports@pineknotnews.com

Usually when a high school football team heads into the playoffs there is renewed hope of the possibility of winning a section championship. Regardless of a team's record, there is always a chance to pull off

an upset or two and perhaps make a magical run.

For Esko that chance was diminished greatly after they realized that much of their team would be quarantined by Covid-19 precautions as they entered the first round of the playoffs against Greenway/Nashwauk-Keewatin Tuesday afternoon.

"We found out Friday," said Esko coach Scott Arntson of the loss of players. "We were down about 45 players, mostly in grades 9-10."

The Titans came into the game with a 1-5 record and left with a 12-7 win and their second win of the season.

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The ticker

A quick look
at area teams in action

Covid-19 affects playoff picture

Local playoff football teams have had their seasons sliced by Covid-19 and the playoffs have turned into an extension of those problems.

Carlton-Wrenshall was scheduled to play at Hinckley-Finlayson on Tuesday night, but the Raptors had to forfeit due to Covid exposure of their team.

South Ridge was scheduled to open the playoffs against McGregor on Friday night, but that game was also a forfeit as the Mercs are unable to field a team. That means the Panthers will move on to the second round of the Section 5 nine-man tournament.

The Cromwell-Wright Cardinals had their game against Hill City moved up to Wednesday afternoon in an effort to get the game in prior to any announcement from the state Wednesday night regarding the status of high school sports.

FOOTBALL

**Carlton-Wrenshall 26
Northeast Range 0**

Quarterback Sam Ojibway threw for more than 200 yards and passed for a pair of touchdowns in leading the Raptors to the shutout win. "I thought, considering the conditions, we played fairly well," said Raptors coach Jeremy

Zywicki. "Northeast Range packed the box with eight players, forcing us to throw the ball a lot."

The Raptors scored two touchdowns in the first half and a pair of touchdowns in the second half to secure the win.

The Carlton/Wrenshall football season ended abruptly this week when players had to go into quarantine after a fellow athlete, a volleyball player from Wrenshall, tested positive for Covid-19. "The volleyball team, football team, coaching staff and bus drivers are in quarantine for 14 days," Wrenshall superintendent Kim Belcastro said Wednesday.

The Raptors had to forfeit a playoff game scheduled for Tuesday with Hinckley-Finlayson. Had the team won, any advancement would have been thwarted as the state suspended high school sports on Wednesday.

Esko 21 Crosby-Ironton 0

The Eskomos moved to 3-3 on the season with an impressive 21-0 win on the road in Brainerd over the Crosby-Ironton Rangers. After a scoreless first quarter the Eskomos scored twice in the second quarter to go ahead 14-0 at halftime. Esko's first score was on a 19-yard touchdown run. After the extra point kick, they led it 7-0.

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