By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

Teammates hoisted David Almanza up on their shoulders after the junior kicked the winning field to give the Longhorns the 20-17 win in a triple overtime thriller against the Gothenburg Swedes Friday.

Head Coach Dan Lenners said the win was a real confidence booster for his team, which now stands a 4-2.

Defensively, he said his team bent but never broke.

Going into the final overtime, he asked his players to dig down deep within themselves and get it done. That's exactly what they did.

From the outset, it looked like a game that would be played between the goal lines under a light mist that fell throughout the night.

The only touchdown in the first three quarters came at the 5:20 mark in the first quarter.

After forcing a punt on the Longhorns' second possession of the game, Gothenburg took over on their own 33.

Two plays later, Gothenburg's Preston Franzen popped through the left side of the Longhorn defense for 48 yards.

Trey Milner made a touchdown-saving tackle at the Longhorn 17 but two plays later, Gothenburg quarterback Blake Ristine hit tight end Logan Koehler for the score.

A successful kick gave Gothenburg at 7-0 lead.

The Longhorns tried to keep their next drive going, attempting a fake punt near midfield.

Kale Gockley took the short snap and had open territory but slipped and fell, turning the ball over.

Just inside the second quarter, Gothenburg got to the Longhorn 29 before stalling out.

They sent their kicker in to try a 36-yard field goal but a bad snap forced the holder to abort the kick. A incomplete pass downfield ended the threat.

The two teams traded possessions two more times to end the half.

A battle of field position

The third quarter turned into a battle of field position.

After being held on their first possession of the second half, Gothenburg put Longhorns back on their own 21 with the punt.

Milner cut back across the defense and nearly broke out before being hauled down at the Gothenburg 48.

Gockley hit Jeff Dickey for a Longhorn first down at the Swede 36.

However, two consecutive fumbles on pitch plays resulted in total loses of 17 yards.

Faced with 3-and-25 from their own 49, Lenners used one of Coach Fred Bessler's old tricks, calling the quick-kick on third down.

From his tailback position, Dan Sullivan kicked the ball inside the Gothenburg 10.

The defense held and forced a punt, giving the Longhorns great field position at their own 47.

A 15-yard run by fullback Justin German and runs of five and 16 yards by Sullivan got the ball inside the Swede 20.

Sullivan got another 7 yards to the Swede 11 and it looked liked the Longhorns were marching to tie the game. However, on the next play, Gockley lost the handle on the snap and Gothenburg recovered.

Two possessions later, the Longhorns got great field position at mid-field, partially blocking a Swede punt.

The Longhorns caught a big break on the next play when Kevin German got interfered with trying to snag a Gockley aerial.

That gave the Longhorns the ball at the Swede 25. Six plays later, German bolted through the middle of the Swede defense for a 14-yard touchdown. Almanza added the P.A.T. to tie the game 7-7 with 4:13 left in the game.

On the kickoff, the ball squirted loose from the Gothenburg runner and Justus Wallin picked it up and waltzed into the end zone. However, referees whistled the play dead, giving the ball back to the Swedes for a final drive.

Twice the Swedes converted big to keep the drive alive. The first came on a on fourth down conversion, and the second on a halfback pass back to the quarterback to the Longhorn 14 to set up an attempt at a 22-yard game-winning field goal.

But before they could make the kick, Lenners called consecutive timeouts right before the snap in an attempt to ice their kicker.

From the left hash mark, their kicker hooked the attempt left, setting up overtime.

OT field goal keeps CCS alive

In the first overtime, the Longhorns won the toss and went on defense first at the south 10-yard line.

They held Gothenburg out of the end zone, forcing them to kick a field goal for a 10-7 lead.

On the Longhorns' possession, Milner got dropped for two, followed by Gockley who lost 10 when he slipped while looking for an open receiver. His next pass was knocked down, leaving the game on Almanza's foot from 38 yards out.

Lenners said he had no doubt Almanza had enough leg for the kick because he had been hitting 40-yarders in pregame.

However, Almanza got under the ball just a little bit, not getting it all. Fortunately, it was just enough as his kicked hit the crossbar and bounced over to tie the score 10-10.

In the second overtime, the Longhorns were on defense first. Three plays in a row, German smashed the ball up the middle, scoring on third down. Almanza's kick gave the Longhorns a 17-10 lead.

It was short lived as Gothenburg answered with a touchdown pass on fourth down to tie the game 17-17 with the PAT.

In the third OT, Gothenburg got the ball first. After getting dropped for a five-yard loss, followed by an incomplete pass, the Swedes went to the air again.

They completed the pass at the 8 but Kelton Fisher stripped the ball and the Longhorns recovered to kill the possession.

On the Longhorns' final possession, German bulled the ball up the middle for five yards on a

pair of carries.

On third down, Lenners called for the kick. That gave him the cushion of another down if something went wrong on the attempt.

It wasn't needed as Almanza split the uprights to win the game, 20-17, in the Longhorns' first-ever triple overtime game.

Kearney Catholic Friday

Friday's win will give the Longhorns a big boost of confidence when they travel to Kearney to meet the undefeated Kearney Catholic Stars.

Kickoff is set for 6 p.m. MT in Kearney.

Stats at a glance

Gothenburg

Tackles (solos-assists)— Justus Wallin 2-14, Jeff Dickey 1-13, Brian Bell 2-11, Justin German 1-12, Callin Ledall 0-10, Kelton Fisher 3-4, Kale Gockley 2-3, Trey Milner 1-5, Dan Sullivan 1-4, David Almanza 1-4, Tyler Oxford 0-3, Spencer Hartman 0-1.

Rushing (attempts-yards-TD)—Justin German 16-76-2, Dan Sullivan 12-40-0, Trey Milner 9-34-0, Jeff Dickey 2-12-0, Brian Bell 1- -5-0, Kale Gockley 5- -11-0. TEAM: 45-146-2.

Passing (attempts-completions-yards-TD-INT)—Kale Gockley 11-4-57-0-0.

Receiving (completions-yards-TDs)—Dan Sullivan 1-30-0, David Almanza 1-11-0, Jeff Dickey 1-8-0, Kevin German 1-8-0.

Scoring

Gothenburg: 17 yd. TD pass from Blake Ristine to Logan Koehler, kick by Trenton Long good.

CCS: 11 yd. TD run by Justin German, kick by David Almanza good.

1st OT Gothenburg: 27 yd. field goal good by Long.

1st OT CCS: 38 yd. field goal good by Almanza.

2nd OT CCS: 3 yd. TD run by German, kick by Almanza good.

2nd OT Gothenburg: 3 yd. TD pass to Koehler, kick by Long good.

3rd OT Gothenburg: Fumble no score.

3rd OT CCS: 25 yd. field goal by Almanza good.

CCS	0	0	0	7	3	7	3	—20
Gothenburg	7	0	0	0	3	7	0	—17