



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Last week's second round playoff game with Boone Central/Newman Grove (BC) had all the looks of a classic playoff battle.

Both teams held each other to a three-and-out on their first possessions. The Longhorns were moving the ball on their second possession but were forced to punt.

But when punter Brian Bell couldn't handle a bad snap and got tackled at his own 26, the floor seemed to drop out from below for the Longhorns.

Boone Central struck quickly, connecting on a 26-yard touchdown pass and quickly went up 7-0.

Then the Longhorns mishandled the kickoff and had to start their next drive from their 15.

They drove the ball to near midfield but couldn't sustain the drive, forcing another punt.

Two plays later, BC got outside the Longhorn defense for a 65-yard touchdown run. At the end of the first quarter, the scoreboard read 14-0.

After trading possessions, the Longhorns suffered another setback when BC intercepted a Kale Gockley pass to Shay Eidson at the 1 yard line.

Boone Central got out of the hole and in seven plays went 99 yards for another touchdown to lead 20-0 after a failed two-point conversion.

The Longhorns went three-and-out and BC got into the end zone four plays later with less than a minute left in the half for a 27-0 lead.

They pooched the kickoff and recovered it on the Longhorn 32. Two plays later, they struck again on a 32-yard pass over the Longhorn defense to go up 34-0 with 46 seconds left in the half. But the Longhorns gained some momentum before half, going 63 yards in five plays to score right before half.

Dan Sullivan broke loose on runs of 37 yards and 7 yards off the option.

Gockley then found Kelton Fisher at the 5 and hit Kevin German in the end zone on the next play to get on the board. David Almanza's extra point kick made the score 34-7 at the break.



Still looking for a break

The Longhorns tried to make their own breaks, opening the second half with an on-side kick.

Boone Central recovered and went up 41-7 six plays later.

The Longhorns went three-and-out and BC lined up nine players for the punt block. One player got through and blocked Bell's punt, which went out-of-bounds at the Longhorn 5.

One play later, it was 48-7 with 6:30 left in the third quarter.

Despite the deficit, Coach Dan Lenners credited his kids with never giving up.

After trading fumbles, the Longhorns got back on the board, aided by Gockley to Fisher passes of 17 yards and 27 yards.

Trey Milner added the touchdown on a five-yard sweep to make the score 48-14 after an Almanza kick.

The Longhorns scored on their next possession on a 3-yard pass from Gockley to Jeff Dickey to make the final score 48-20.

Looking back at the ifs

Looking back on the game, Lenners said “if” the Longhorns hadn’t made so many mistakes, he feels they would have played Boone Central much closer.

“We knew going in that we had to play flawless football,” he said.

The Longhorns struggled all game with outside containment. They gave up three runs of 60 yards or more.

Lenners noted Boone Central fields a talented team but still feels the Longhorns didn’t play up to their abilities last week.

“It’s one of those games that you’d like to play again,” Lenners said.

After the season-ending loss, Lenners praised his team for working hard during the summer. He said that hard work resulted in doing something the Longhorns hadn’t done in five years—win a first-round playoff game.

“You have nothing to hang your heads about,” he told them.

He also praised his seniors for their strong leadership. He said they’ve built the most cohesive team he’s seen over the past several years.

The Longhorns finished the season at 6-4 in their first year of returning to competition in Class C1 as one of the smallest schools in the class.

One loss Boone Central/Newman Grove defeated Gothenburg 38-20 Tuesday and will face undefeated Adams Central next Tuesday for a trip to the C1 championship game.

Norfolk Catholic and Pierce will face off in the east bracket for the other championship game slot.

Stats at a glance

Boone Co./Newman Grove

Tackles (solos-assists)— Justus Wallin 4-6, Jeff Dickey 2-8, Kelton Fisher 0-9, Brian Bell 1-6, Michael May 2-4, Callin Ledall 1-5, Kale Gockley 3-2, Justin German 1-3, Jacob Lueth 0-4, Dan Sullivan 0-1, Trey Milner 0-1, Charles Holman 0-1, Tyler Oxford 0-1, David Almanza 0-1.

Rushing (attempts-yards-TD)—Dan Sullivan 13-101-0, Khris Kuhlmann 7-50-0, Trey Milner 9-47-1, Michael May 2-18-0, Justin German 7-12-0, Kale Gockley 4-7-0, Justus Wallin 1-7-0.

TEAM: 43-242-1.

Passing (attempts-completions-yards-TD-INT)—Kale Gockley 19-7-77-2-1, Travis Luhrs 2-0-0-0.

Receiving (completions-yards-TDs)—Kelton Fisher 3-61-0, Michael May 1-5-0, Trey Milner 1-4-0, Kevin German 1-4-1, Jeff Dickey 1-3-1.

Scoring

BC/NG: 26 yd. TD pass from Tanner Mazour to Derek Gentrup, kick by Fabian Hohnert good.

BC/NG: 65 yd. run by Blake Slizoski, kick by Hohnert good.

BC/NG: 10 yd. pass from Mazour to Hunter Henry, 2 pt. conversion pass from Mazour to Slizoski no good.

BC/NG: 2 yd. TD run by Mazour, kick by Hohnert good

BC/NG: 32 yd. TD pass by Mazour to Henry, kick by Hohnert good.

Longhorns fall to Boone Central in playoffs

CCS: 4 yd. TD pass from Kale Gockley to Kevin German, kick by David Almanza good.

BC/NG: 15 yd. TD pass by Mazour to Slizoski, kick by Hohnert good.

BC/NG: 5 yd. TD run by Joseph Brugger, kick by Hohnert good.

CCS: 7 yd. TD run by Trey Milner, kick by Almanza good.

CCS: 3 yd. TD pass from Gockley to Jeff Dickey, kick by Almanza no good.

CCS 0 7 0 13—20

Boone Co./

Newman Grove 14 20 14 0—48