



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Imperial's Chase County Longhorns improved their seed in the C1 playoffs with a 35-21 win over Minden to end the regular season last Thursday.

The Longhorns take a 3-5 record into this year's playoffs which begin today (Thursday).

Coach Dan Lenners said they went into the game with a must-win outlook to insure a playoff berth.

The Longhorns may have gotten into the playoffs even with a loss to Minden, based on their strength of schedule.

Of the five teams that the Longhorns lost to during the regular season, all five are in the playoffs.

The Longhorns put any question about qualifying for the playoffs to rest by winning the regular season finale.

The win also extended the Longhorns' streak for consecutive playoff appearances, now at 18 years straight. That achievement is tied for the fourth longest streak in Nebraska.

With the win, the Longhorns captured the No. 13 seed in the west division bracket of the C1. That sets up a rematch with the fourth-seeded 6-2 Gothenburg Swedes there tonight.

The Longhorns fell to the Swedes 24-7 in the second week of October.

Lenners feels really good about the draw against Gothenburg and is excited for a rematch.

Take away a kickoff return and an interception return for touchdowns by the Swedes and the Longhorns stood their ground.

Since then, the Longhorns have shown improvements on both sides of the ball.

Kickoff for tonight's game at Gothenburg is set for 6 p.m. MT.

Win cinches playoff berth

The Longhorns struck first on their opening possession of the game in their 35-21 win against the Minden Whippets last Thursday.

On third-and-10 from the Longhorn 28, quarterback Kelton Fisher rolled left. He hit Kevin German on a short slant, who slipped through the defense for a 72-yard touchdown.

Minden answered with their own drive that came to an end when Fisher intercepted a pass in the end zone.

The Longhorns drove down the field but fell a yard short of a touchdown after a goal line stand by Minden. Later in the game, the Longhorns would return the favor.

An interception by Dan Sullivan killed the Whippets' ensuing possession but the Longhorns couldn't take advantage, going three-and-out.

Minden's workhorse running back, Quin Rutt, chewed up the yards to set up Minden's first score.

The Whippets got a break with a pass interference call on the Longhorns, putting the ball at the 15. Two plays later, they got on the board with a pass completion in the end zone.

An interception by Minden on their 6 yard line killed the Longhorn's next drive.

The defense forced a three-and-out and Kevin German took the punt at the 50 and weaved his way down to the Minden 7.

After getting the ball to the 1, Justus Wallin took the ball over on fourth down to give Imperial a 14-7 lead after David Almanza's extra-point kick with two minutes left in the half.

Longhorns convert fumble

Minden tied the game 14-14 on the opening possession of the second half with a 72-yard drive.

The teams traded a pair of possessions with Minden coughing up the ball at their own 30 to kill their second possession.

Trey Milner took a pitch from Fisher on the option down to the three.

On third down, Wallin was moved into the backfield as a decoy. After a fake to him by Fisher, Minden collapsed on Wallin, allowing Fisher to go into the end zone untouched.

Almanza's kick gave Imperial a 21-14 lead to end the third quarter.

The defense came up with another three-and-out with the Longhorns starting on their own 47 after the punt.

Fisher found German along the sideline. German tight-roped the out-of-bound line and then evaded tackle after tackle for a 33-yard gain.

Milner took another option pitch to the Minden 4. Two plays later, Jeff Dickey blew through the Minden line to give Imperial a 28-14 lead.

Minden answered with nine-play, 66-yard drive to pull within a touchdown, 28-21 with 5:44 left in the game.

On their next possession, the Longhorns converted a third-and-seven from their own 22 with Fisher hitting Sullivan for a first down.

Two plays later, Dickey blew through the middle of the Whippet defense for a 65-yard TD and a 35-21 lead after the kick with four minutes left.

The Longhorns got the ball back with 1:55 but fumbled it away on their own 38.

Dickey sealed the win with an interception at the Longhorn 16.

Lenners said the Longhorns ran the ball as well as they have this season. They had 200 yards on the ground and 216 in the air.

They'll try to establish that running game tonight when they face Gothenburg in the first round of playoffs.

Stats at a glance

Minden

Tackles (solos-assists)—Justus Wallin 5-15, Jeff Dickey 4-7, Dan Sullivan 5-5, Isaac Sorensen 2-8, Khris Kuhlmann 4-3, Kelton Fisher 3-3, Tyler Oxford 1-3, Trey Milner 0-4, Zac Space 0-4, Sam Cahow 0-4, David Almanza 0-3, Jacob Lueth 1-1, Jacob Christensen 0-2, Shay Eidson 1-0, Luis Rodriguez 0-1, Kevin German 0-1.

Rushing (attempts-yards-TD)—Jeff Dickey 5-87-2, Trey Milner 7-50-0, Kelton Fisher 12-40-1, Dan Sullivan 5-17-0, Jacob Lueth 1-4-0, Justus Wallin 2-2-1.

Passing (attempts-completions-yards-TD-INT)—Kelton Fisher 19-11-201-1-1.

Receiving (completions-yards-TDs)—Kevin German 6-140-1, Isaac Sorensen 3-42-0, Dan Sullivan 2-23-0, Jeff Dickey 1-8-0, Khris Kuhlmann 1-0-0.

Scoring

CCS: 72 yd. TD pass from Kelton Fisher to Kevin German, kick by David Almanza good.

Minden: 13 yd. TD pass from Jonas Lovin to Nic Werner, kick by Alexis Ciprian good.

CCS: Justus Wallin 1 yd. TD run, kick by Almanza good.

Longhorns improve playoff seed with win over Minden

Minden: Quin Rutt 8 yd. TD run, kick by Ciprian good.

CCS: Fisher 1 yd. TD run, kick by Almanza good.

CCS: Jeff Dickey 2 yd. TD run, kick by Almanza good.

Minden: 3 yd. TD pass from Jonathan Miller to Rutt, kick by Ciprian good.

CCS: Dickey 65 yd. TD run, kick by Almanza good.

CCS 7 7 7 14—35

Minden 0 7 7 7—21