

Gothenburg controls ball, clock

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Swedes power past Whippets

MINDEN—The Whippets couldn't get their defense off the field as the Swedes chewed up yardage and controlled the clock throughout Friday's game to power past Minden 19-7.

Gothenburg racked up 406 total yards, including 192 from senior running back Logan Sheets, compared with Minden's 150 total.

"Everybody on the team is finding their role and doing their job," said Gothenburg coach Craig Haake. "The kids really played well all the way around."

Although Gothenburg put together a nice drive in the first quarter, the Swedes came up empty after fumbling inside Minden's 2 yard line.

Junior defensive back Blake Ristine was able to pick off Minden's quarterback in the first period as well but the Swedes couldn't capitalize on the turnover.

At the beginning of the second quarter, Minden found the endzone on a 42-yard running play.

"We over-pursued," Haake said. "We were playing kind of soft and they were able to open a hole. We felt like we were winning but suddenly we were behind on the scoreboard."

It didn't take long for the Swedes to answer, though.

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After a nice kickoff return by Ross Ostergard, Sheets broke open a standard iso play for 64 yards before being dragged down at the 1 yard line.

Sheets carried the ball in on the next play for the score.

A bad snap meant Trenton Long couldn't get off the PAT kick and Gothenburg trailed 7-6.

Minden didn't get anywhere on the next possession, allowing the Swedes to once again march the length of the field when they took the ball back.

On fourth-and-goal from the 3 yard line with 30 seconds left until halftime, Long kicked a field goal.

"We'd done all the work and I didn't want to risk walking away with nothing," Haake said of his decision to kick. "I wanted to be ahead at the half."

Long's kick was good and the Swedes went to the locker room leading 9-7.

Minden started the third period with the ball but Gothenburg shut the Whippets down quickly.

Then the Swedes took their sweet time driving the length of the field again.

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“We ate up a lot of clock,” Haake said. “We went from our 8 yard line to their 15.”

In the process, Gothenburg converted on first-and-23 after a holding penalty with a 24-yard pass from Ristine to Logan Koehler.

Zach Wolf capped off the series with a 17-yard scoring reception from Ristine. Long’s PAT put the Swedes up 16-7.

“We took a good eight minutes off the clock with that one drive,” Haake said. “Our offensive line was taking care of business and we just kept pounding the ball.”

Long managed one more field goal in the fourth period to push Gothenburg ahead 19-7.

“I thought we would be the more physical team,” Haake said. “That’s how we want to play every week. These kids might be small and a little inexperienced but they’re going to hit you hard and they’re going to keep hitting you.”

Senior running back Preston Franzen added 91 yards on 19 carries to Sheets’ 192 yards.

Ristine was 5-of-9 passing for 62 yards.

“We had a running back go for over 190 yards. We had an offensive line that helped us get over 400 yards of offense and a defensive group that only gave up 150 yards to a pretty decent offense,” Haake said. “Those are pretty good numbers.”

Minden had 89 yards rushing in the first half and finished with 109 total, along with 41 yards passing.

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With a C1-9 district win under their belts and a 3-1 overall record, the Swedes now turn their attention to Cozad, which is also 3-1.

Haake said the Gothenburg team doesn't change much, no matter who the opponent is.

"When our offense is on the field we want to stay on the field," he said. "We've just got to do a better job of scoring. I don't think I've had a team that averaged more yards than this team. We just need to have more points to show for it."

The matchup with Cozad, he said, should be classic.

"I expect it to be a physical, physical game," he said.

Kickoff for the home game is set for 7 p.m. Friday.