

Stars align for Swedes in 2 OT win

Written by Austin Benson

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Just one PAT kick was successful following four touchdowns scored in two overtimes of the Gothenburg-Kearney Catholic game last Thursday.

Fortunately for the Swedes, Trenton Long's kick made the difference in a 28-27 double overtime win over the No. 4-ranked Stars.

"We fought, we clawed, we hung on and made it happen," Gothenburg head coach Craig Haake said.

Gothenburg was tested early in the last game of the regular season as the Stars chipped ahead early. Two 11-yard runs and a 31-yard pass on the opening drive set the Stars up with first and 10 from Gothenburg's 20 yard line.

After a holding penalty on Kearney Catholic, the Stars passed for seven yards and ran for 10 more before kicking a 32-yard field goal to go up 3-0.

"We knew they'd come out firing and we needed to withstand their initial push," Haake said.

The two teams traded punts during much of the half before the Swedes found themselves at their own one yard line.

An option read by quarterback Dawson Graham went for a loss and he was tackled in the endzone. The Stars led 5-0 with 7:10 left in the first half.

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Gothenburg kicked to Kearney Catholic and dug in for a stop.

Skyler Kottwitz broke through the line and sacked the quarterback for a loss of nine yards setting up a long second down. The Stars gained 16 of those yards back on a run play but couldn't convert on third and short.



A big hit by Tanner Borchardt lodged the ball loose and the Swedes recovered on Kearney Catholic's 42 yard line.

The Swedes tried two pass attempts before Zach Wolf rumbled ahead on an 11-yard run to set up first and goal.

A seven-yard touchdown pass from Graham to Dalton Sylvan with 1:08 left in the half put the Swedes ahead 7-5.

"In the first half we didn't come off the ball well and we didn't execute," Haake said.

That trend continued in the second half as Gothenburg had consecutive three-play drives.

On Kearney's second drive, the Stars got something going using 14 plays to march down to Gothenburg's two yard line.

The Swedes defense didn't budge with their heels on the endzone. They forced a field goal that

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put the Stars ahead 8-7.

It went from bad to worse as two plays after the kickoff, Gothenburg fumbled on its 27 yard line and Stars recovered.

Kearney Catholic spread the defense out and capitalized scoring again, extending its lead to 15-7 at the end of the third.

“You can’t give a good team opportunities like that,” Haake said.

The game got a little more interesting at the start of the fourth after Gothenburg struggled on offense to get anything going until its fourth drive of the half.

Wolf took a handoff on the left edge and stormed 47 yards to the Stars’ 15 yard line.

He added two more runs on the drive including a five-yard run up the middle into the endzone.

With the ball lined up on the left hash, Graham used a play action fake to set up a run-pass option. He made one defender miss, tucked the ball and jumped into the endzone to convert the two-point conversion for a 15-15 tie.

Kearney Catholic’s next drive stalled but the Stars’ punt put the Swedes in a hole at their own five. Disaster struck when the Stars recovered a Swede fumble at the seven with 1:06 left in the game.

The Stars ran two plays and lined up for a 22-yard field goal.

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The kick was wide left and regulation ended in a 15-15 tie.

Kearney Catholic had the first possession in overtime.

On the Stars second play, a seven-yard quarterback option keeper put the Swedes down 21-15.



This time the Stars lined up and the PAT attempt was blocked.

With momentum on their side, the Swedes opened a hole for Wolf to reach paydirt from the two and the score was again tied.

After a timeout and penalty, Trenton Long lined up an extended PAT and pulled it left.

The game headed to double overtime.

Wolf carried the ball three times to get the ball near the goal line. On fourth down, Graham followed his lead sneaking behind the line to put the Swedes up 28-21 after a successful PAT by Long.

The Stars scored on a three-yard pass and brought on the kicker to try and force a third overtime. The kick, and the Stars' chances for victory, sailed wide left.

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“They were a ranked team,” Haake said. “That was a big win for us.”

Gothenburg finished the regular season 6-2 and enters the first round of playoffs as a No. 4 seed hosting district foe Chase County on Thursday at 7 p.m.

“Defensively they play well,” Haake said. “They use different, weird looks.”

The Swedes saw them just three weeks ago when they beat the Longhorns 24-7 and that recent experience will be a benefit with a short week to prepare.

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