

SPORTS



Three Lakes-Phelps quarterback Jared Kaufman (No. 13) gets tackled by a group of Rebel defenders during Friday's Northern

Border Conference loss in Wabeno as a pair of Bluejays teammates trail the play. —Photo By William Zuelke

Bluejays football makes the cut, will play at Gilman in playoffs

BY WILLIAM ZUELKE
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Despite falling 56-34 on the road to Laona-Wabeno last Friday, the Three Lakes-Phelps football team will be part of the 16-team postseason picture in the 8-man State football playoffs for a record third consecutive year.

Completing their first year in the Northern Border Conference at 3-2, the Bluejays finished 5-3 overall which was just good enough to sneak them into the field as a No. 3 seed in their four-team regional.

The team will travel to Gilman to face the Pirates this Friday at 7 p.m., with the winner of that game moving onto the second round Oct. 28 to face the winner of top-seed and defending State champion Newman Catholic or No. 4-seeded McDonnell Catholic. A full playoff bracket is available online at wiaawi.org.

Excited about the opportunity, coach Tyler Maney said first his team must regroup from its most recent loss and focus on the core fundamentals going into Friday's matchup.

"We're a strong, talented team," said Maney. "But when it comes to playoff football, we will really need to step it up and play at our best level to have success against a very competitive field."

Gilman, like the Bluejays, were 3-2 in conference play finishing third overall in the Central Wisconsin Conference-East standings. They ended the season with a 54-16 win over Athens. Their only losses of the season came in a 30-14 game at Owen-Withee, who won the CWC-East. They also fell to Thorp, 31-30 in week seven.

"We will be practicing hard for a tough game with Gilman, and while they are a really good team, they are also a pretty good match for the way we like to play," said Maney. "We are both very physical and they like to run the ball which fits our defensive style. We just need to limit their chances for big plays and execute our core strategy of ball control and hard-hitting defense."

The duo of senior quarterback Grady Kroepin and junior running back Troy

Duellman headline the rushing attack having gained 665 and 720 yards on the season, respectively.

Kroepin has rushed for 15 scores, while also throwing for another eight. Gilman's top pass catcher is No. 2 Branden Ustianowski who's grabbed 22 catches on the season including seven touchdowns.

Gilman reached the State semifinals a year ago, losing to Newman Catholic, 28-29.

Friday Recap

The game against Wabeno-Laona was competitive through the first half with both teams able to advance the ball early, primarily on the ground, as the first quarter ended 6-6.

Late in the second there was a flurry of activity as the Rebels, up six and driving, turned it over deep in Bluejays territory when Rebels quarterback Carter Janesch was intercepted by Josh Cogar who returned the ball 33 yards and put the Bluejays back in business.

Shortly after Jays quarterback Jared Kaufman found McCain Graff to tie the score at 12. The two worked the same connection on the next play to convert the two-point try to make it 14-12 Bluejays with just a minute left in the half.

The Bluejays defensive next forced the Rebels into a fourth down and six on the Bluejays 35-yard line, but a Janesch run for a first down moved the chains to the 16-yard line with only seconds left on the clock. The Rebels took advantage and finished the half with an 18-14 lead after Janesch found the end zone on another run.

Fans coming back to their seats from warming up at the half missed the first score of the third quarter as Adam Seeber took the second half kick and scored to make it 24-14. The Rebels were never seriously challenged for the remainder of the game as they put 26 points on the board in the third and 12 more in the fourth to run away with the win.

"Our team is definitely resilient and we put in a good effort, even while trailing in the second half," said Maney. "Which is why I am proud to be in a playoff game with this group of kids. They never give

up. If we can eliminate some mistakes that hurt us this week, this team has the talent to compete at a very high level."

Kaufman had another bright night throwing the ball as he completed 13-of-28 passes for 318 yard and three scores. His 1,541 for the season places him atop the list for all 8-man quarterbacks in the state. Along with his stellar night throwing, he rushed for 53 yards and a score, while accounting for nine tackles and a forced fumble on defense.

Cogar rushed 10 times for 25 yards to go with two catches for 95 yards and a touchdown. His interception late in the first half also highlighted his defensive efforts.

He was followed offensively by Brandon Baumann with

five carries for 17 yards and a score. He also caught one pass for 11 yards and had five tackles defensively.

L.J. Terlizzi grabbed one pass for 39 yards and was a menace on defense again with a team-high 13 tackles and a sack. He also averaged 30 yards on his six punts on a difficult night kicking the ball.

Graff had a very strong offensive night with nine pass receptions for 174 yards, and two touchdown catches and a two-point conversion catch. Defensively he also contributed with five tackles.

Hunter Barnekow made five tackles on the night and Carter Flannery and Cody Stolar each had four tackles with Flannery also forcing a Rebels fumble.

Pines upsets Medford, face Three Lakes Thursday in playoffs

BY DOUG ETEN
SPORTS EDITOR

While Pines head coach Rodney Sternhagen was quick to squash the "upset of the century" theories, it was an upset none-the-less as the Eagles went to Medford and knocked off the Great Northern Conference (GNC) champs in the final regular soccer season matchup of the year, 1-0.

"The first time we played this season, their coach said we gave them a scare," said Sternhagen. "We had a plan and talked to the boys about playing for one another versus playing for themselves. We knew if we did a better job covering their midfielders would make it a game."

Getting in front early helped Pines, as just two minutes into the game the Eagles got the ball down inside the box and got back-to-back corner kicks because of the early pressure.

On the second, Cody Vojta served a ball in front of Medford goalie Jake Dasso who watched it bounce around off defenders before it found the foot of Ryan Muench who struck it into the back of the net, to give Pines the 1-0 lead.

"Ryan seems to get on the end of the ball in almost every one of our corners this year and that was the difference in the game," said Sternhagen. "He just seems to find a way to get it done."

Medford immediately flexed their muscles and pushed back, putting together attack after attack according to Sternhagen.

"At times we would lose our marks and become disorganized, and Medford would take advantage of this overloading one side of the field," he said. "They had some good looks and Eric Nagel made some key saves that kept us in the game and ultimately kept the lead until the end of the first half."

Pines clamped down on

the speedy wing players for Medford, shutting down their attack in the second half with a couple of key saves from Nagel.

"It was really his performance in the first half that allowed us to weather the storm," Sternhagen said of his goalie. "This was his best game of the year. He was focused and engaged the whole game."

Medford had 15 shots compared to just four for Pines. Eleven of Medford's found Nagel who stopped each of them. Medford had 14 corner kick opportunities compared to just two for Pines.

"Throughout the season we have had some great games by a number of boys, but never a strong team performance (like this)," said Sternhagen. "They played for one another and as a team. As a coach, these are proud moments, and we still have a lot of work, but hope this will carry into the playoffs."

Waiting in the playoffs will be another team Pines knows plenty about as they'll take the short trip to Three Lakes to face the Bluejays who won the only battle this season, defeating the Eagles 7-2 early in the year.

The win for Pines did boost them overtop Mosinee in the conference standings. Medford won the league with 25 points followed by Rhinelander and Lakeland with 21 points each. Pines has 12 followed by Mosinee (11) and Antigo (0).

Game time Thursday is set for 4 p.m. with the winner advancing to Saturday's Regional final against either Barron or Newman Catholic. Game time for Saturday's match will be announced following Thursday's game. Information for that and a full rundown of the Division 4 bracket is online at wiaawi.org.

Windigo split home series with Jets, start eight-game road trip in Alaska

The Wisconsin Windigo hosted in-state rival Janesville Jets at the Dome this past weekend, splitting the series a game apiece.

After a closely contested scoreless first period in which the Jets outshot the Windigo 11-9, the home Windigo broke into the scoring column six minutes into the second period Friday on a goal by newcomer Logan Nickolaus. Tyler Grahme assisted.

"(Connor) Mahony and Grahme did a great job cycling along the end boards to set up Nickolaus," said Windigo head coach Blake Hietala. "Logan made a great move to get their goalie to bite and finish the play off his backhand."

The lead was short-lived as the Jets tied the game less than two minutes later on a Connor Browne goal to make it 1-1.

The Windigo then regained the lead 16:50 into the second when Ben Anderson buried a loose puck from the top of the crease for his first goal of the season. Anderson's goal came off a centering pass from Cam Boche. Drew Fisher had the second assist on the goal.

Keeping the momentum in the third it took just 20 seconds as defenseman Cashen

Naeve put the Windigo up 3-1 on his second goal of the season. Again, the Windigo applying pressure below the Jet's goal line resulted in the scoring opportunity as Sam Jacobs found his defenseman dropping into the low slot. The second assist went to Chris Kernan.

Windigo goalie Max Beckford saved 28 of the 29 shots he faced to pickup a much-needed win for the Wisconsin team.

"Max played the type of game we expect from him," said Hietala. "After a nagging injury, he's starting to find his game now."

In game two Saturday the Windigo offense found it tough against Jets goalie Selby Warren who shutout the home team in route to a 2-0 Jets win.

"After Friday's game, I thought we were about to break out and start scoring in bunches, but tonight we took a step backward in that regard," said Hietala. "This was the sixth game of the season in which we out-played and out-chanced our opponents, but had difficulty scoring. We have a talented team, and I am confident our guys will start finding the back of the net."

Warren turned back all 33



Cashen Naeve, left, celebrates his second goal of the season with Sam Jacobs during Friday's 3-1 win over the Janesville Jets at the Dome. — Contributed Photo

shots he faced to record the shut out. Beckford saved 16 of the 18 shots he faced in the contest.

The Windigo start their first long road trip of the season as they head to Soldotna, Alaska to face the Kenai River Brown

Bears. After facing Anchorage the team returns to Wisconsin and play at the Chippewa Steel, Nov 4-5, before going to Janesville, Nov. 11-12.

For information, player stats, standings and more go to wisconsinjuniorhockey.com.