

Red Storm comes back to drop Jacks, 24-20

HSU Sports Information

ST. GEORGE, Utah (Sept. 26) — Turnovers proved costly for Humboldt State, which let a 10-point fourth quarter slip away in a 24-20 loss to Dixie State on Saturday.

Wesley Beavers came up with two big interceptions for the Red Storm, helping them improve to 2-3 overall and 1-1 in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference. Humboldt State dropped to 2-2 in all games, and 0-2 in league.

Seven turnovers marred an otherwise even battle between the league rivals, who were nearly equal in most offensive categories. Dixie State finished with 346 yards of total offense while the Jacks compiled 291, neither team mustering much of a ground game.

HSU quarterback Mike Proulx was 15-of-27 for 239 yards, throwing for two touchdowns but victimized for three interceptions. Dixie State QB Judd Thompson was 19-of-39 for 264 yards, also passing for two scores while being picked off three times.

"It's hard to remember a more disappointing defeat," HSU head coach Rob Smith said. "We were very confident coming into the game, but we haven't found a way to close the door yet. We have to learn to win those games in the fourth quarter that we have the chance to win."

Humboldt State scored on its opening drive after the defense forced Dixie to punt on its own first possession. Proulx's 44-yard pass to Corey Stollmeyer moved the ball into the redzone, and the Jacks advanced it to the DSC 7-yard line before settling for Kyle Schierholt's 23-yard field goal.

Dixie State moved the ball 90 yards in 10 plays for its answering score, taking a 10-3 lead after Thompson hit Adam Wells with 13-yard scoring pass. Key to the drive was Thompson's 52-yard completion to Alex Nelson.

Moving crisply down the field again, the Red Storm had its momentum stopped at the 24-yard-line when Guy Ricciardulli tipped a pass and Wes Montgomery pulled it down for an interception. Dixie State quickly returned the favor with a similar interception grabbed by Richard May.

Another possession for Dixie State resulted in yet another interception, this one by Elzie Gatson. Proulx connected with Smith for 28 yards, then found Dirk Dallas in the endzone for a 15-yard touchdown completion that put the Jacks back on top, 10-7.

After trading possessions early in the third quarter, Humboldt State was first to put points on the second-half scoreboard. Nick Ricciardulli's running kept the drive going, and Proulx finished it by throwing into the endzone to Matt Smith, who hauled the ball in for the score and a 17-7 lead.

Big plays continued to hurt the Jacks' otherwise sturdy defense, which was burned on a 50-yard completion from Thompson to Wells on the ensuing possession. Three plays later, the Red Storm remained in the same spot, but a 5-yard penalty helped set up Mike Langston's 39-yard field goal that cut the lead to 17-10.

This time it was the Dixie defense that held, stuffing HSU on three downs to force a Lumberjack punt. However, a dropped snap on the punt attempt turned the ball over at the HSU 25, offering the Red Storm an opportunity to cut the lead further or tie the game.

Gatson's second interception quickly ended those aspirations, giving the ball back to the Jack as the fourth quarter began. A 25-yard pass completion to Dallas set up Shierholt's 46-yard field goal, reestablishing the advantage at 10 points.

After the kickoff, three straight completions by Thompson moved the Red Storm down to the Jacks' 30-yard-line, and another established first-and-goal at the 8-yard line. Wells, the recipient of two big passes during the march, finished it with a 5-yard touchdown catch that trimmed the lead to 20-17 with 9:19 remaining.

Dixie State's defense held HSU through its first two plays after the kickoff, and a penalty forced the Jacks into a third-and-20 situation. Beavers came up with the big play, intercepting Proulx's pass and returning 34 yards to the HSU 7, setting up Wells' 6-yard touchdown run for a 24-20 lead.

"We've been holding them most of the game, and we give up a drive," Smith said. "We tend to show we're still a very inexperienced football team."

Driving to seal the win, the Red Storm was interrupted when Guy Ricciardulli knocked the ball out of Nelson's hands and Montgomery picked it up. Proulx worked the Jacks down to the DSC 25-yard-line, but a sack and Beavers' interception ended the Jacks' victory hopes.