

HSU Beats Dixie State To End Conference Loss Streak

ARCATA — On "Senior Day" a freshman, sophomore and junior were among the key players helping Humboldt State claim a 33-23 win over Dixie State in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference football season finale Saturday.

The victory allowed the Lumberjacks to finish their second year under head coach Rob Smith with an even record at 5-5. It also kept the Jacks from going winless in the GNAC, finishing instead with a 1-5 record that featured four games lost by a combined 15 points.

"Coming into this season, we felt this team had potential to do well, but we let some close ones get away," Smith said. "But the players developed character by working through adversity, and today we can smile about that."

Sophomore quarterback Mike Proulx and junior tight end Matt Devlin were among the offensive stars Saturday, connecting for a pair of first quarter touchdowns that saw the Jacks build a 14-0 lead. On the day, Proulx completed 26 of 42 passes for 299 yards and a pair of touchdowns while Devlin caught 10 passes for a 123 yards and two scores.

Forced into action when starting tailback Bobby Thomas re-injured an ankle, redshirt freshman Daniel Wyatt also stepped up, rushing for 73 yards on 26 carries.

Defensively, HSU's seniors helped the Jacks take control in the second half, holding DSC scoreless following a 21-21 tie at the half. The Red Storm's only points after the break came on a safety when Proulx was whistled for intentional grounding while backed up in his own end zone.

Among the defensive standouts was senior strong safety Guy Ricciardulli, who led the team with six tackles, including assisting on a quarterback sack. Ricciardulli also intercepted a pass by one of three Dixie quarterbacks, Nick Marinko, ending the Red Storm's final drive attempt at the HSU 17-yard line with 1 minute, 7 seconds remaining.

"I wasn't even sure who made that last interception because I was getting doused with cold water," Smith said, following HSU's sidelines celebration.

Humboldt State started quickly, moving the ball 70 yards in 12 plays on the game's opening drive to take a 7-0 lead on Proulx's 10-yard pass to Devlin. The HSU defense forced Dixie to punt, and the formula worked again when the Jacks moved the ball 75 yards in seven plays to go up 14-0 on a 12-yard connection to Devlin.

Dixie State bounced back with consecutive touchdowns of its own in the second quarter, first scoring on a 10-yard pass from Judd Thompson to Nash Fowler, then tying the game at 14-14 when Thompson hit Skyler Ence with a 27-yard touchdown pass.

Thompson, who didn't return after leaving the game early in the third quarter, finished 15-of-24 passing, for 224 yards and three touchdowns. Ence was the Red Storm's top receiver with nine catches for 147 yards and two touchdowns.

The half ended in spectacular fashion, both teams scoring quick touchdowns. Proulx finished a drive that took only 36 seconds with a 15-yard scoring pass to Dirk Dallas, but Dixie State answered in rapid fashion with a 44-second drive, scoring on a 52-yard connection from Thompson to Ence as the half expired.

Dixie State's second quarter offensive surge woke up the HSU defense, however, and the Jacks responded by holding the Red Storm to only 48 yards of total offense in the second half. For the game, DSC finished with 308 yard while the Lumberjacks totaled 403.

"There was a lot of frustration expressed during our halftime talk about how the defense was playing as 11 individuals," Smith said. "In the second half, they came together and played like a team."

Meanwhile, the Jacks offense got back on track offensively on their first drive of the third quarter, moving the ball 53 yards in 10 plays. Wyatt contributed carries of eight and 12 yards before Proulx found Edwin Henry in the end zone for a 5-yard touchdown completion. Kyle Schierholt's extra point kick was blocked, however, leaving HSU with a 27-21 lead.

After the safety cut HSU's lead to four, Humboldt State took the ball back when Elzie Gatson picked off Marinko's pass on the HSU 10-yard line. Schierholt opened the fourth quarter with a 33-yard field goal that provided a 30-23 lead, and he finished HSU's next possession with a 19-yarder that completed a 13-play drive that took up 7:21.

Dixie State	0	21	2	0	--	23
Humboldt State	14	7	6	6	--	33

HSU – Devlin 10 pass from Proulx (Schierholt kick)

HSU – Devlin 12 pass from Proulx (Schierholt kick)

DSC – Fowler 10 pass from Thompson (Langston kick)

DSC – S. Ence 27 pass from Thompson (Langston kick)

HSU – Dallas 15 pass from Proulx (Schierholt kick)

DSC – Ence 52 pass from Thompson (Langston kick)

HSU – Henry 5 pass from Proulx (kick blocked)

DSC – Safety, Proulx flagged for intentionally grounding in end zone

HSU - Schierholt 33 Field Goal

HSU – Schierholt 19 Field Goal