

SPORTS

Arcola tangles with old Okaw Valley Conference foe, Sullivan

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA – Sullivan and Arcola met for the first time on the football field in 1902 with Arcola winning 23-0 at Arcola, but then losing 17-5 at Sullivan. The two teams were in the old Okaw Valley Conference and played every year from 1938-1975. The last time the two teams played was on the final regular season game on a Thursday in 1989 with the Purple Riders winning 48-26 at Sullivan.

The Redskins went through some rough years, but John Bertetto gave Sullivan a hope as last year's team, then a member of the Central Illinois Conference, finished 4-5 after dropping the last four games in 2016 and all of the games until last year's season opener when Sullivan beat Newton 33-27, a streak of 42 straight losses.

Both teams are 1-0 with Arcola winning 34-16 over Nokomis and Sullivan downing Villa Grove 39-25.

"Obviously we did a lot of good things defensively," said Arcola coach Steve Snider of the game that finished Saturday due to a severe thunderstorm. "We played better defense Saturday (second half) than we did on Friday. Offensively, we just have a lot of little things to clean up. It is not like 'hey we don't know the offense,' but it's a lot of little things. If we have to take a downstep with our left foot we have got to step with that left foot first otherwise we are not getting our blocks on time. If we are not getting to one block on time that screws it up for the next guy and that screws it up for the next guy, kind of like a snowball effect. Offensively, it is a lot of little

things. I say that and we scored 34 points. If we clean those things up then hopefully we will be pretty darn good. We have a lot of talent, they just need to make sure that they are doing the little things right that way when we play someone as good if not better than us we can hang with them."

Sullivan outscored Villa Grove in the second half 32-12 to win. The Redskins quarterback Cooper Christiansen was 9-of-12 for 148 yards and a touchdown with Aiden Ballinger catching three passes for 57 yards. Aian Fryman led the ground attack with 17 carries for 138 yards and two touchdowns, while Christiansen had 16 carries for 88 yards and two touchdowns.

Snider's main concern about Sullivan is that they are very athletic.

"When they are on offense they are going to try and turn it into a grass basketball game (five on five) and that is their strength. That is exactly what I would do if I had a quarterback like that. He is a big physical specimen. He can make every throw, every down if he wants to. He has touch. He can zip it in there. He can do everything, which is something nice to have. I think we are going to have to do is put our best athletes on the field to counter that. I think we match up a little bit better than Villa Grove because of our size on the defensive line. Hopefully that neutralized a little bit of his ability to pick us apart because he is going to have a rush in his face all of the time I hope. They are going to play grass basketball and try and put athletes in space and get

nice open catches and move around just like that."

Sullivan had 410 total yards of offense and Villa Grove 403 and the Redskins scored the final 14 points of the game in a span of 40 seconds with just over five minutes left.

"I usually like to say that we improved the most from week one to week two," said Snider. "I hope that is the case again this year."

The Redskins held Villa Grove quarterback Layne Rund to 10-of-19 for 154 yards and a touchdown. Rund averaged 181.1 yards and two touchdowns per game last season.

Defensively, the Redskins play nearly the same as Nokomis did.

"It looked a lot like a 4-2-5, which is not all that different from what we run and it is not

all that different from what we saw in Nokomis," said Snider. "Especially on the front four. It is nice to have the same selection to go from that and just adjust a few small things off of that to make sure we are ready to go."

Overall, Snider said the keys to victory are defensively, we just have to slow down their offense. If we can slow it down we will be fine. If they are first down, first down or eight yards, eight yards if they want to turn it into a track meet and we can't do that defensively. What can help us defensively accomplish that goal is stay on offense as long as we possibly can. That means running the ball effectively; getting the ball to Braden in space effectively, which worked out great last week. Fixing the little mistakes that we had will help us be on the field much longer."

Arcola junior varsity falls in final seconds

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA – The Arcola junior varsity football team opened its season Monday at Thomas-Bradford Field against Nokomis and the contest came down to the final seconds. Arcola led 14-6 at the half and after three quarters, but the Redskins tied the game with 2:47 left on a four-yard run. Nokomis ran in for the two-points.

After Arcola had a 58-yard touchdown pass negated due to an illegal man downfield, Nokomis took over on the Purple Rider 46 with 1:02 left. The Redskins drove to the three where they had 7.3 seconds left. Nokomis scored and made the two-point conversion for the fina points of the game with 1:9 left for a 22-14 Redskin victory.

Nokomis led 6-0 after the opening quarter, but Arcola's Oliver Diaz scored on a nine-yard run and Remi Roberts-McGeheon caught the two-point conversion pass from Brody Phillips to take an 8-6 advantage. Arcola tacked on six more in the second quarter on a 15 yard run by quarterback Brody Phillips with 3:28 left in the half. However, the two-point conversion failed leaving the Purple Riders with the eight-point advantage.

Arcola's defense had four turnovers as Brody Drake had an interception and fumble recoveries by Logan Messer, Tony De La Garza and Dawson McMillan helped the Purple Riders stay in the lead or close.

Arcola goes for its first win Monday at Sullivan at 6 p.m.



THE PURPLE RIDER CAPTAINS met on the 50-yard line of Arcola's Thomas-Bradford Field for the coin toss prior to the start of the season opener with Nokomis. Arcola won the Lincoln Prairie Conference match 34-16. Pictured are captains, (l-r) Tyson Lewis (9), Jayden Henson-Stice (1), Raul Guerra (52), Anthony Garza (54) and new head coach Steve Snider. Photo by Nancy Rairden.

Arcola JFL dominates Cerro Gordo/Bement

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA – The Arcola Heavyweight Junior Football League team improved to 2-0 with a 32-0 triumph over Cerro Gordo/Bement Sunday at Thomas-Bradford Field.

Arcola's Johnny Andriey Carmisa scored the only touchdown of the opening quarter with 2:49 left on a 19 yard run. Trevin Plank kicked the first of four extra points (a kick is worth two in the JFL and a run or pass is worth one).

The Purple Riders scored early in the second quarter on a 28 yard run by Laison Barron. Plank's points made it 16-0. The final scoring of the first half was on a 15 yard-run by Ronnie Vega. It was 24-0 after Plank's points midway through the quarter.

The only scoring of the second half, which started the running clock, was on a 47 yard pass from Sawyer Maxwell to Vega with 2:06 left in the third. Plank's points accounted for the final points.

Clayton Otto had a fumble recovery in the first half for the Purple Riders, who are to play at Sullivan Sunday at 3 p.m.

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