

Knights Football Opens 2023 Season With a Win

By **SALLY McCARTHY**
Staff Writer

The 2023 Arthur Lovington Atwood Hammond Knights football season got off to an interesting start. The week of the game saw hot, humid conditions that forced practices to be held at different times and the kickoff of the game with the Argenta-Oreana Bombers was moved to 7:30 p.m. because of the heat. As if the week wasn't crazy enough the game was suspended with 9:41 left in the second quarter because of lightning and impending bad weather.

The game began with the Knights forcing the Bombers to punt and their snap to the punter sailed over the kicker's head which the Knights recovered and took into the end zone for an apparent touchdown. But in keeping with the craziness, there was an inadvertent whistle, so no score and the Bombers got another chance to punt.

ALAH quickly picked up three first downs and then senior running back Landon Waldrop broke off a 43-yard run but unfortunately fumbled the ball at the one yard line.

After another A-O punt, Knights' senior quarterback Jayce Parsons, who had two carries for 37 yards on the series, finished the drive with a 1-yard touchdown run with 47.5 left in the first quarter. The extra point kick was no good and the visitors led 6-0.

The Bombers took to the air on their next possession and were first and goal at the Knights' 5-yard line. That's when the officials saw lightning and the game was suspended for thirty minutes. During that time, it was decided that storms were headed to Argenta so the Knights would have to travel back to finish the game the next day, Saturday, August 26 at 11:00 a.m.

As the game resumed the next morning at the 9:41 mark of the second, with A-O having a first and goal at the 5, the Knights defense needed a big stand and they got just that.

On first and second down, ALAH stopped two Bomber runners for no gain and then on third down, defensive back Jayce Parsons picked off a pass in the end zone to stop the drive.

Unfortunately, the Knights gave it right back to the Bombers with a fumble and this time A-O scored on a 5-yard run. The extra point failed and with 8:22 remaining in the second quarter the game was tied at 6 all.

On the next ALAH series once again a Knight fumble led to a Bomber TD. This time on an 18-yard pass play and the home team took a 12-6 lead with 2:20 to go in the first half.

A nice drive that started on the 50 saw Landon Waldrop grab a pass for 24 yards and some runs by Landon and Jayce Parsons was capped off when senior wide receiver Connor Nettles was wide open in the end zone and Jayce hit him with a 7-yard TD pass with 10.7 seconds left in the half. Jayce ran in the two-point conversion to make the score 14-12 at halftime.

ALAH received the second half kickoff and would quickly put two more scores on the board in the third quarter. Landon Waldrop would score first on a 37-yard run and with Parsons running in the extra point the visitors were up 22-12 at the 6:55 mark of the third.

A perfectly placed kick by ALAH sophomore Kaden Herschberger landed between the Bombers receiving lines was recovered by the Knights who went on another drive that ended with QB Parsons going in from the 4-yard line and converting again on the EP run to put the Knights up 30-12 with 3:13 to go in the third.

A-O managed to put together a scoring drive in the fourth quarter to make the score 30-18 with just 1:47 left in the game.

After the game, Coach Ryan Jefferson said, "the win feels good but should feel better. Good teams improve each

week, and we have several things-not putting ourselves in a hole, ball security, bad snaps, and pass protection that we need to work on and get better." He was "very proud of the group who overcame a lot this week/weekend."

The Knights will have their season home opener on Friday, September 1 against the Villa Grove Blue Devils. Game time is 7:00 p.m.

Knights Fest will be held before the game from 4-7 p.m. with food trucks, inflatables, and a zipline. Wristbands for unlimited access to the inflatables, zipline and game admission are \$10.

Game Stats for Week 1 vs. Argenta-Oreana:

OFFENSIVE STATS

Rushing - Landon Waldrop, 10 for 150 & 1 TD; Jayce Parsons, 19 for 51 & 2 TDs; Maddix Stirrett, 9 for 32; Alex Rexroad, 2 for 41; Easton Frederick, 3 for 32

Passing - Jayce Parsons, 4 of 6 for 36 yards & 1 TD

Receiving - Landon Waldrop, 1 for 24; Connor Nettles, 2 for 7 & 1 TD; Mitiku Appleby, 1 for 5

DEFENSIVE STATS

Tackles - Colin Smith, 9; Maddix Stirrett, 7; Mitiku Appleby, 6; Alex Rexroad, 5; Jeffrey Arwine, 5; Easton Frederick, 4; Chris Kuhns, 3; Garrett Casteel, 3; Kaden Herschberger, 3; Jacob Tighe, 3; Brayden Leech, 2; Landon Waldrop, 2; Payton Warrior, 2; Adam Morgan, 1; Jayce Parsons, 1; Connor Nettles, 1; Mackenley Bowles, 1; Brayden Martinez, 1; Carson Augustine, 1; Mason Thomas, 1; Nate Hale, 1; August Burton, 1

Tackles for Loss - Jeffrey Arwine, 2; Mitiku Appleby, 1

Sacks - Chris Kuhns, 1; Jeffrey Arwine, 1

Pass Break-Ups - Connor Nettles, 1; Jayce Parsons, 1; Kaden Herschberger, 1; Payton Warrior, 1; Landon Waldrop, 1

Interceptions - Jayce Parsons, 1

Forced Fumbles - Trey Strode, 1

SPECIAL TEAMS STATS

Kick-Offs - Kaden Herschberger, 4 for 128 & had a perfectly placed ball for our on-side recovery; Garrett Casteel, 1 for 51

PATs - Kaden Herschberger, 0 for 1

Punts - Landon Waldrop, 1 for 25

Kick Returns - Easton Fred-

erick, 1 for 33; Landon Waldrop, 1 for 15; Alex Rexroad, 1 for 7

Punt Returns - Jayce Parsons, 1 for 0



The ALAH football Knights opened their 2023 season on Friday, August 25 against the Argenta-Oreana Bombers. Captains for the game #23 senior Landon Waldrop, junior #70 Jacob Tighe, and #1 senior Jayce Parsons along with Head Coach Ryan Jefferson go out for the coin toss prior to the kickoff.



Knights quarterback #1 Jayce Parsons goes through the large hole made by his offensive line for the first touchdown of the 2023 season. ALAH would take the lead 6-0 in the first quarter over Argenta-Oreana.



The Knights defense put forth a great effort in the first game vs. the Argenta-Oreana Bombers. Twenty-two different players recorded at least one tackle in the game. Here #71 Chris Kuhns, #3 Maddix Stirrett, between Chris and #7 Colin Smith take down a Bomber runner. Colin led the team in tackles with 9, while Maddix had 7 and Chris 3. Also in the picture is #8 Easton Frederick. The Knights will open their 2023 home season on Friday, September 1 against the Villa Grove Blue Devils.



ALAH senior running back Landon Waldrop holds the ball out over the goal line for a score in the third quarter of the first game of the season at Argenta. The touchdown plus a two point conversion run by Jayce Parsons gave the Knights a 22-12 lead in the game. Landon led the offense in rushing with 10 carries for 150 yards.

ALAH Volleyball ready to grow and compete

By **BLAKE FAITH**
Staff Writer

The Arthur Lovington Atwood Hammond Volleyball team lost five starting seniors, but are easy to come back and compete and are focused on growth and development this year.

"We are feeling prepared and ready to compete," Head coach Emily Crossman said. We are ready to showcase what we've been working so hard on the past couple of weeks. Our pre-season has looked a little different than past years. We are basically re-building the whole varsity team. We've got some dynamic, athletic players that I can plug in in a couple of different positions, so we've been trying out several different line ups. We are still learning

who is filling what role this year. It's exciting as a coach to see players step up and fill voids and become leaders."

Coach Crossman said that this team will almost be a brand new varsity team, but expects contributions from Alayna Plank, Summer Melton and Karaline Vanausdoll.

"Alayna Plank was a right side for us last year, but is stepping into the setting role this year, and also a team captain," Coach Crossman said. "I expect her to take charge and lead the court. I know that physically she will always put it all out there and give 100%. I'm looking forward to her being a vocal leader this year, also. Summer Melton is a sophomore outside hitter who is going to play all 6 rotations.

She was a sub for the varsity team last year but I expect her to become a consistent, go-to hitter this season. Karaline Vanausdoll is our returning libero. She is coming in with much more confidence and has started to become more and more vocal this pre-season. I expect her to be a consistent leader this season, and also set the bar for how to be a teammate."

Hannah Carter is the lone senior on this team and being a leader means "to step up in a way others don't and to know when to say something."

"This season has just started but I have used this to make new high school volleyball players feel more comfortable and less confused," Carter said. For her individual play, Cart-

er wants to be a better middle each and everyday whether that's at practice or at a game. For her team goal, she wants them to grow incredibly close with each other and to be able to play well together. Carters wants her last mark to be, to give it her all day in and day out, and that she will have hard days but the game of volleyball is well worth it.

Coach Crossman's leadership expectations are the same as always and her season expectations are to continue to focus on growth.

"My expectations are the same year after year," Coach Crossman said. While I would love to win 30 games every season, I want these girls to be good people, good students,

good leaders, good teammates, good community members. I expect them to physically work hard, to mentally be strong, and to emotionally be invested in the team and one another. I want my captains to lead by example, but also hold her teammates to a high level. My captain's expectations should mirror those of the coaching staff."

Coach Crossman continued, "I don't have a set number of games I want to win or a tournament to take or a post-season run goal. With a brand new team this year I'm focusing on growth and improvement throughout the duration of the season. I'm looking for leaders to emerge."

Coach Crossman's overall

message to readers and the community is that this is a great group of hard-working girls who have the desire to prove themselves and grow.

"We've got a great group of hard-working girls this season," Coach Crossman said. "They've put in a ton of extra time over the summer and this pre-season. They have the desire to prove themselves, to grow, and to enjoy the process. I encourage community members to come to the game and feel the energy around it. We genuinely have a good time together and I think it shows in the gym. I'm excited for our fans to see how far we come this season and how we evolve into a dynamic and athletic team this year."