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Homestead's quick-strike scores take toll on Grafton football team that shows fight but can't keep pace

Scoring points wasn't a big problem for the Grafton football team when it tangled with the Homestead juggernaut last Friday night.

Maintaining control of the ball wasn't either.

Giving up big plays was another matter.

Although the host Black Hawks enjoyed their most productive offensive show of the season, they had no answer for a quick-strike Homestead attack led by quarterback Jake Laihinen.

Laihinen completed 11 of 13 passes for 211 yards and five touchdowns as the Highlanders rolled to a 58-20 win in a North Shore Conference game.

"We knew Homestead has a very good team. Every time we made a mistake, they made us pay for it big time," Grafton coach Ben Chossek said.

"We had some defensive breakdowns, and it seemed like Homestead turned every one into a touchdown."

Laihinen wasted little time helping Homestead take command. The senior tossed three touchdown passes in the first quarter, when the Highlanders cashed in on short-field drives to build a 22-0 lead.

Two of the scoring strikes went to running back Jay Schneider, who added another touchdown reception in the third period.

When Laihinen threw a 61-yard touchdown pass to Darius Cross early in the second quarter, Homestead's lead grew to 29-0.

Grafton made things interesting by getting its own offense on track in the middle two quarters.

Quarterback Matt Weisflog directed three scoring drives for the Hawks, including two that took 14 plays.

With less than four minutes left in the first half, Weisflog capped a 14-play, 61-yard march with a 1-yard touchdown keeper.

In the third period, Weisflog found Alex Teich open for a 77-yard touchdown pass and threw a 6-yard touchdown strike to tight end Beau Benzschawel.

The latter score pulled Grafton within 43-20 with 2:29 left in the quarter. However, Bryce Juedes returned the ensuing kickoff 78 yards for a touchdown that reasserted Homestead's control of the outcome.

Weisflog ended the night 5-for-9 passing for 101 yards with one interception. The junior also rushed for a team-best 69 yards on 23 carries for the Hawks, who collected 273 yards in total offense.

Teich, a junior, caught three passes for 84 yards.

Remarkably, Grafton finished with more than twice as much time of possession, 33:24 to the Highlanders' 14:36.

"We played well offensively," Chossek said. "We had close to 300 yards and 20 points, but we need to be more consistent."

Chossek noted that his team moved the ball well against the Highlanders' starting defense but had no answer for their high-powered offense.

"We struggled again giving up big plays and had some special-teams problems," he said. "You can't afford to do that, especially against a quality opponent."

Homestead, the defending NSC co-champion, improved to 4-0 overall and is alone atop the league standings at 3-0.

Grafton fell to 0-4 overall and 0-3 in the conference.

The Hawks will resume North Shore play this Friday when they play a 7 p.m. road game against Nicolet (1-2).

GRAFTON QUARTERBACK Matt Weisflog tried to escape the grasp of a Homestead tackler during a North Shore Conference game last Friday. Weisflog rushed for 69 yards and passed for 101 yards, but Homestead rolled to a 58-20 win.
Photo by Sam Arendt