IRON RIVER—The ranks are thinning for West Iron's football team again.

It's happened before for Coach Mike Berutti's team, and it happened again Sept. 28: Only 16 players were able to suit up for their game at Calumet Sept. 28, and only 13 were available for a while during the second half --the 11 on the field and two substitutes.

Calumet earned a 38-8 win, scoring three times in the second quarter. The Wykons' record falls to 3-3 overall and 2-2 in West Pac Conference play.

"That's not to make an excuse," Berutti noted. "We had enough bodies and enough people."

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Still, it's been musical chairs for the coaches, as they scramble to keep 11 players on the field—and some players do their best at unfamiliar positions.

Berutti said he won't bring up players from the JV team. When the team bus heads to Northland Pines Oct. 6, "I think it will be 16 again."

First half: Calumet opened scoring with a 67-yard drive in the first quarter, as Tyler Roland scored on a 13-yard run up the middle

In the second quarter, a Wykon punt pushed the Copper Kings back to their own 5. But Calumet's offense ground upfield, covering 95 yards in 13 plays, as Bryce Johnson scored from the 2. The two-pointer put the home side up 16-0.

Their third TD came on an option pass from Owen Kareniemi to Brandan Jacques, covering 55 yards and catching the Wykons out of position.

"It had nothing to do with anything except us not playing our positions," said the coach. "That's what's frustrating."

One more Calumet score before halftime: QB James Sturos passed to Paul Frantti for 13 yards and six points. Cauimet led 32-0.

Inoffensive: The Wykons didn't earn a first down until late in the half. West Iron's problems getting out of its end of the field were complicated by a number of dropped passes. "Not making plays when we need to make plays has pretty much been the story of the year," Berutti noted.

In the third quarter, Calumet got another TD from Jacques on a three-yard run to go ahead 38-0 and start the running clock.

West Iron denied the Copper Kings a shutout, though. The Wykons got their lone score in the fourth quarter when QB Andrew Peterson passed 10 yards to Joe Pisoni. Alec Schmelebeck ran in the two-pointer, making the final score 38-8.

Grind it out: Berutti said Calumet didn't burn the Wykons on long running plays--their longest run was only 14 yards. But short gains kept moving the chains. "A lot of 4-, 5-, 6-yard gains. We couldn't get a stop. We had them in third and fourth down situations numerous times.

"I'm going to say it nicely: We just have to do things to be a winning football team, giving effort during the week and at the games. That's the only way things are going to change."

There also was a scary moment when Brandon Clifford suffered a neck injury. Clifford was transported to Marquette for tests and was released the next day, but his season is over. That was WIC's the only serious injury from the game.

Scrambling: Besides some lingering injuries, one Wykon missed the Calumet game due to military obligations. Coaches scrambled to fill all the positions, and players scrambled to learn

new roles on the fly.

"It is what it is," said Berutti. "We're hoping that we have some healthy bodies for this week." About not bringing up players from the JV team, he explained, "We have a couple who are ready—but not in positions that we need. I'd just as soon keep them together."

For the last three weeks of the season, Berutti challenged his squad to set a higher standard for itself. "At some point in time throughout your lives, you have to do things the right way. Not just football.

"We'll find out what kind of people we all are in the next three weeks."

Numbers: Team offense: WIC 179 (19-119r, 3-10-60p), Calumet 346 (40-250r, 6-10-96p). First downs: WIC 7, Cal 16.

Rushing: Alec Schmelebeck, 7-52; Adam Newby, 7-51; Ron Varney, 3-10; Chasz Jonet, 1-1. Receiving: Joe Pisoni, 2-51, TD. Andrew Peterson: 3-10-60, TD.

Defense: Tackles: Colton Pangrazzi, 9t; Schmelebeck, 8t-2a; Peterson, 6t-2a; Jonet, 5t-2a. Fumble recovery: Pisoni.

Coming up: The Wykons visit unbeaten Northland Pines Oct. 6. It's their final chance to stop the Eagles' unstoppable running back, Austin Ramesh.

"He's the real deal," Berutti said recently. "We don't see many Big Ten players up here. He stands out."

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