Wykons on verge of perfect 9-0

Written by Peter Nocerini Tuesday, October 22, 2013 1:04 PM -

IRON RIVER—Barring a colossal upset by a Class D team that goes in with a 2-6 record, West Iron County will complete its first-ever unbeaten football season this Friday night at Bark River-Harris. __PUBLIC__

Making their regular season finale at Nelson Field Oct. 18, the Wykons scored on their first four possessions on their way to a 35-6 win over Hancock.

That improves their record to 8-0 overall. It also wraps up a 6-0 record in the West Pac Conference, the conference title and home field for the playoffs.

"We did what we needed to do on senior night and parents night," Coach Mike Berutti said. "The kids played well early."

Heady stuff! But this is a team that can go far in the playoffs if they keep playing to their potential. They didn't let down after big wins earlier this year, and they didn't let down against Hancock after their big Homecoming win over Northland Pines six days earlier.

The Wykons went right to work after the kickoff, covering 68 yards on six plays. Alec Schmelebeck ran for 22 yards and later scored from 30 yards out. Ryan Rogers' kick put the Wykons up 7-0.

Brandon Olson's punt return near midfield set up the second score. Schmelebeck ran for 18, and QB Andrew Peterson's 9-yard pass to Rogers got the Wykons to the Bulldog 3. Chasz Jonet ran it in from there, making it 14-0.

After two scoring drives, the Wykons struck quickly after the next Hancock punt: On first down, Peterson passed to Rogers for 52 yards and six points. With Rogers' kick, the lead was up to 21-0.

Soon Andy Ridolphi recovered a Hancock fumble at the Bulldog 41, and the Wykon offense took the field again. On the first play of the second quarter, Jonet converted a 3rd and 3 play in fine style, busting loose for a 34-yard touchdown.

With a 28-0 lead, Berutti used his backup backs for the rest of the half. West Iron drove to the Hancock 1 but lost ground on a penalty, and a field goal try failed. It was still 28-0 at halftime. Hancock only had 44 yards of offense in the first half and punted soon after the second half kickoff. After several running plays, Peterson connected with Rogers again for a 36-yard touchdown pass. The kick put WIC ahead 35-0 and started the running clock.

The Wykon defense kept Hancock off the scoreboard until the final play of the game, when Tanner Kearley passed 17 yards to Alex Almquist for a score.

In one way, it was a very unusual game for West Iron's stingy defense—no interceptions (two got dropped). So far, seven different Wykons (Colton Pangrazzi, Rogers, Joe Pisoni, Tylor Capadagli, Nick Helgemo, Jake Polich, Olson) have totaled 15 interceptions.

"Our defensive backs [Pangrazzi, Rogers, Pisoni] are playing real well in the air," said Berutti. "We're doing a real nice job with our pass defense—which is going to come into play come playoffs. The teams that get there are going to be able to throw the ball."

The coach also said the Wykons seemed to lose focus at times, especially that drive deep into the Hancock end that wound up being pointless. "We did a few things that shot ourselves in the foot, and we don't get into that end zone.

"We've got to get better at maintaining our focus. As we get going, the games are going to be a lot closer, and we will have to pay more attention to detail."

Berutti also wanted to pass more—passing will be more important in the playoffs. But with the game getting out of hand early, that wasn't possible.

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Teams stats: WIC, 425 total yards (40-298 rushing, 5-7-127 passing). Hancock, 152 total yards (25-80 rushing, 7-14-72 passing). First downs: WIC 10, Hancock 5.

Rushing: Alec Schmelebeck, 8-91; Chasz Jonet, 5-84; Brandon Olson, 6-52. Passing: Andrew Peterson, 5-7-127, 2 TDs. Receiving: Ryan Rogers, 3-97, 2 TDs; Schmelebeck, 1-22; Nick Helgemo, 1-8.

Defense (tackles-assists): Jake Polich, 9-1; Bryson Heimerl, 5-2; Tylor Capadagli, 5-0; Schmelebeck, 3-1; Jonet, 3-0, Sacks: Jonet, Peterson. Fumble recovery: Andy Ridolphi.

• The Wykons travel to Bark River-Harris Oct. 25 to wrap up the regular season against the Broncos. Bark River enters with a 2-6 record, getting its wins over Gwinn and Stephenson. North Central whacked them 40-12 last Friday.

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