HHS improves to 2-2, first back-to-back wins since 2008

It was all Holyoke Saturday night, Sept. 22 as the Dragon football team ran right past Cornerstone Christian Academy 55-0 in Westminster.

“It was a very good win for the kids,” coach John Zilla said Monday.

Three Dragon running backs eclipsed the 100-yard mark as Holyoke rushed for a total of 385 yards in the blowout victory. It was the second consecutive shutout victory for Holyoke after a 40-0 win over Highland a week earlier.

With two impressive victories, Zilla said he told the team, “We are the real deal. We can hit and we can play football.”

The win improves the Dragon record to 2-2 on the season. They will host Resurrection Christian Saturday, Sept. 29 at 11 a.m. at Max Bernard Field.

Cornerstone Christian Academy (CCA) won the toss and deferred to the second half. They were eager to get the ball, however, and attempted an onside kick to get things started. After an illegal procedure on the Bulldogs, they were forced to try it again. This time the onside kick went out of bounds, setting the Dragons up at their own 45 yard line.

It was evident on Holyoke’s first drive they wouldn’t have any trouble moving the ball on the ground. Dylan Kotch got things started with a 12-yard gain on the first play from scrimmage. Kotch, along with Brett and Bradley Cumming, moved the ball down to the Bulldogs’ four yard

line. From there, Bradley Cumming punched it in for the first score of the game with 9:56 left in the opening quarter. The PAT by Saul Ramos was good, giving the Dragons the early 7-0 lead.

Zilla said he was very pleased with the way the offensive line looked Friday night.

CCA managed to gain a first down on their opening drive but it quickly came to an end when they turned the ball over on downs. HHS senior guard Jesus Hermosillo laid down a nice hit to stop the Bulldogs on fourth down.

Holyoke began the next drive at their own 29 yard line. Brett Cumming took the first snap and galloped clear down to the CCA seven yard line. The run was for not when a flag was thrown on the play, negating the long run.

This would be the first of several long runs that were called back due to penalties on the Dragons.

Six plays later, Brett took the handoff from TJ Gertner and sprinted 43 yards for his first score of the game. Ramos added the PAT to give Holyoke a 14-0 lead with 5:43 left in the first quarter.

Cornerstone turned the ball over on downs on their next possession after driving down to the Dragon 23 yard line.

Gertner completed his first pass of the game on the next drive. On a second and five from his own 45 yard line, Gertner connected with Brett Cumming for a 55-yard touchdown pass. The PAT was no good.

On the ensuing drive, Holyoke knocked the ball loose and recovered it at their own 38 yard line with time running out on the first quarter.

On a second and six from the CCA 26 yard line, Gertner handed the ball off to Kotch who bulled his way into the end zone for his first score of the year. Kotch broke numerous tackles on the 26-yard scamper. With 11:18 remaining in the half, the PAT was no good, leaving the scoreboard reading 26-0 in favor of the Dragons.

Holyoke's defense continued to impress on the next drive, holding the Bulldogs to a three and out. It was the only time CCA punted the ball the entire game. They opted to go for it on fourth down much of the game.

Holyoke would commit one of its only mistakes on the next drive and cough the ball up on a fumble.

CCA had a nice long drive on its next possession and drove down to the Holyoke 32 yard line but turned the ball over on downs.

Bradley Cumming went on to score the next touchdown for the Dragons on a 25-yard run with 5:56 left in the half. Brother Brett punched in the two-point conversion, leaving the Dragons just six points from a 40-point lead and a running clock.

CCA turned the ball over on downs as the Dragon defense again stood tough.

"The defense came through and made some key stops," Zilla said. The coach also noted the play of the second string as they entered the game and stood tough on defense, stopping CCA inside the red zone.

On first down from Holyoke's 41 yard line, Kotch took the handoff and took off. He broke 11 tackles on his way to the end zone. The celebration quickly ended as the play was called back after an illegal block in the back penalty on Holyoke.

All wasn't lost. Two plays later, Kotch took the rock again and plowed his way into the end zone

with 3:08 left on the clock. CCA blocked the PAT but it didn't matter. Holyoke was ahead 40-0 which made for a quick rest of the game.

Bradley Cumming went on to score his third touchdown of the game in the third quarter on a 22-yard run. Ramos added the PAT to give Holyoke a 47-0 lead.

With time winding down in the fourth quarter, Holyoke had a lot of the younger players in on defense. They bent as CCA moved down to the Dragon four yard line, however they didn't break. Logan Tharp read the quarterback perfectly and intercepted the ball near the goal line. He returned it 99 yards for the final score of the game. The Dragons completed the two-point conversion to take a 55-0 lead and eventual victory.

The defense would hold CCA out of the end zone again as time ticked away at the end of the game.

"This was a very big win. It's another stepping stone towards improving on the season," Zilla said.

Zilla said they will face a much bigger team with more athletes Saturday when Resurrection Christian comes to town.

"It's going to be a physical game," the coach said. "We're going to have to show them we are for real and we are going to have to hit them."

Zilla said the Cougars will use both the run and the pass against the Dragon defense.

The coach said even though they have pulled off two impressive wins, the season is not over and the kids will have to stay focused and play football.

Stats recorded

Holyoke finished the game with 441 yards of total offense.

Brett Cumming had 135 yards on 10 carries. He also had one rushing touchdown. Dylan Kotch carried the ball 10 times for 133 yards and two scores. Bradley Cumming ran for 107 yards on nine carries and scored three touchdowns.

Others carrying the ball were Nick Ortner who had a 10-yard carry.

TJ Gertner completed two passes for 56 yards and one touchdown. He completed a pass to Brett Cumming for 45 yards and a touchdown. He also connected with Tharp for an 11-yard pass.

Bradley Cumming and Marques Harvey each had a two-point conversion.

Defensively, Jesus Hermosillo led the team with 11 tackles. Bradley Cumming wasn't far behind with 10.

Holyoke finished the game with one interception. Tharp returned an interception 99 yards for a touchdown. Teammate Logan Zeiler had numerous opportunities but couldn't quite haul in a pick.

Gertner recovered two fumbles while Ortner recovered one.

Brett Cumming returned one punt for 35 yards.

Other North Central action reported

Other North Central Conference teams played last week. Wiggins beat Highland 45-0, Resurrection Christian beat Yuma 36-21 and Wray beat St. Francis, Kan. 26-18.

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