Ottawa-Glandorf Falls to Kirtland in State Semi-Finals

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont, Sports Editor

CLYDE – Kirtland doesn't do anything fancy when they line up across from an opponent. What they do has worked very well for them in their last 55 football games.

The Hornets like to play smash mouth football as they move down the field behind a well-orchestrated rushing attack. Then on defense, they concentrate on taking away an opponent's strengths.

This formula was on full display Saturday night as the Hornets powered their way past Ottawa-Glandorf 28-6 in a Division V State Semi-Final on a snowy night at Clyde High School.

Kirtland, 14-0, advances to the Division V State Championship game this Saturday against Versailles, 14-1, at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton. The Hornets will be looking for their fourth straight State Championship and add to their 55 game winning streak. Ottawa-Glandorf saw one of its best seasons ever in football end at 11-4.

"They are a team that is very well coaches and their kids have a great understanding of what they want to do," Ottawa-Glandorf coach Ken Schriner said. "You look at what they did in the game, they had so many adjustments for things we did, that were unexpected."

"Normally, when we make an adjustment, it takes a couple plays for the other team to adjust, but this was almost immediately. They were very well coached and did a lot of things to shut us down offensively and their offense was just a juggernaut. We weren't really able to catch up to them. I'm proud of the kids, they battled right to the end. I was proud of the effort they put forth throughout the evening."

Offensively, Kirtland's strength was their running game as 54 of the 55 plays they ran were runs. The Hornets finished with 375 yards in the game as they use a lot of misdirection to get to the edge for large gains as they averaged 6.8 yards per carry.

"They got on the edge with their quickness and speed and we weren't able to catch up to them," Schriner said. "They had so many nice long drives and that's what we saw on the film. We knew we had to find a way to get them behind the chains to be successful and unfortunately we were never able to do that. Their third down conversion rate was good They ran off five, six, seven yards plays and that's the marquis of an excellent offense."

Gage Sulivan led the Hornet rushing attack with 172 yards on 14 carries with two touchdowns and Mason Rus had 158 yards on 29 carries with two scores. Quarterback Ramon Lescano added 40 yards rushing.

Kirtland's rushing attack was on display early as they took the opening kickoff and marched 73 yards in 10 plays as Rus scored on a three yard run with 8:12 left in the quarter.

After the Hornet defense held the Titan offense to three plays on their first possession, Kirtland was pinned at their own one yard line after a punt by Landen Jordan. That didn't faze them as the marched 99 yards on 11 plays to go up 14-0 on a Sullivan 12 yard run. Ten of the 11 plays were runs as Rus had runs of 14 and 21 yards during the drive.

While the Kirtland offense was giving their team the lead, their defense was busy protecting it.

Ottawa-Glandorf advanced through the playoffs behind a balanced offense. Saturday night Kirtland was able to limit the O-G attack as Jordan was only 8 of 19 passing for 92 yards. For the game, the Titans finished with 224 yards of

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offense as they rushed for 132 yards led by Ian Fenbert with 92 yards and the team's lone touchdown.

After the Hornets second score, O-G started at their own 39 and moved into Hornet territory when Jordan and Caleb Kuhlman hooked up on a 19 yard pass play. Two runs had the Titans facing third and two going into the second quarter. That's when the Hornet defense stepped up stopping the next two O-G runs to get the ball back on downs.

"Their defense shut us down," Schriner said. "Our passing game was off and that could be attributed to us being off the field, the field conditions (snow covered) or what ever it was. We didn't play our type of game and you can attribute that to their team as they did a great job of defending us. They were quick to the ball and defended us very well. We just weren't able to do what we normally do. For the most part, I give Kirtland credit, they are a very good program."

Two plays after the Hornets stopped O-G on fourth down, Sullivan found an opening over the right side for a 51 yard scoring run that made the score 21-0.

O-G answered back with an 11 play drive that saw them at the Hornet 21. Incomplete passes on third and fourth downs ended that drive.

Kirtland scored their final touchdown of the game with 2:03 left in the third quarter on a Rus one yard run.

The Titans answered back with their lone scoring drive as Fenbert scored on a 56 yard run with 11:25 left in the game. The extra point try failed leaving the score at 28-6.

Ottawa-Glandorf's defense forced a pair of Hornet fumbles that they recovered. Both times they started on the Kirtland side of the field, but were unable to make Kirtland pay for their mistakes.

After the second fumble, the Titans had the ball at the Kirtland five, but saw a fourth down pass attempt fall incomplete.

"Our kids came out the second half with the mentality that we were not going to go away quietly," Schriner said. "We were going to battle as hard as we could right down to the end and we did."

Cael Hoehn led the Titan defense Saturday night with 10 tackles, while Cy Rump and Beau Nienberg both had 8.5 tackles. Nienberg had a pair of tackles for losses in the game.