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The Wallace Wildcats could not have scripted a better evening of season opening football; beautiful weather, an enthusiastic crowd and an incredibly exciting game. The Wildcats had to come from behind to defeat the Potter-Dix Coyotes 22–18 Friday night in their season opening game.

The first quarter of the game was action packed with five touchdowns being scored. The game began with Landon Swedberg taking the opening kickoff from Potter-Dix for a 13-yard return, but the Wildcats then went three and out and had to punt. Potter-Dix, however, had a little more success with their first possession.



On their first play from scrimmage, quarterback Luke Johnson threw a screen pass to Ty Ottoson who then scampered 53 yards for the first points of the game. The PAT failed and with 10:04 left in the first quarter, the score was 0–6.

Wallace had to punt on their second possession following another three and out. Potter-Dix opened the door for the Cats when the quarterback missed the snap on second down and Eric Koop scooped up the ball and ran 20 yards for a defensive touchdown. Koop was unable to cross the goal line for the PAT so with just under eight minutes left in the quarter, the score stood at 6-6.

Potter-Dix wasted no time marching down the field once again. On the sixth play of the drive, Johnson found Ottoson running down the sideline all alone for another Potter-Dix touchdown. Taylor Doell stopped Kyle Gorsuch on the PAT attempt so the score remained 12–6.

The ensuing kickoff created some excitement on the Wallace sidelines. Outstanding blocking enabled Swedberg to get ahead of his defenders and sprint 74 yards down the sideline for a quick response to the Coyotes touchdown. Koop once again fell just short on the PAT and the score, with the first quarter half over, was even at 12–12.

Following a Shane Anders kickoff, Potter-Dix continued passing the ball to move down the field. The Coyotes mixed screen plays and short passes across the middle to keep the Wildcat defense scrambling. QB Johnson found junior, Brady Knigge in the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown reception to cap off the drive. Wallace was once again able to stop the PAT so the score remained 12–18.

With 4:53 still remaining in the first quarter, the Wildcats were looking to get their offense on the move. They began their drive on the 18-yard line. Swedberg attempted a pass to Doell who was

tripped up and then Koop and Doell each ran for short yardage.

It appeared the Cats were going to have to punt the ball away but an equipment penalty against Potter-Dix kept the drive alive. Wallace kept running at the Potter-Dix defense getting the needed yardage to keep the drive alive. Wallace, however, turned the ball over on downs at the Coyotes 36-yard line as the first quarter came to an end.

The second and third quarters proved to be as eventful as the first, but instead of scoring, turnovers and penalties created the excitement. Both teams were able to put together good drives but a penalty or a turn over would prevent a score.

The Wildcats were having success moving the ball and they had some great drives, but they were just unable to get points on the board. On the other hand, the Wallace defense came up with one big play after another.

Mark Jameson continually found his way to the Potter-Dix backfield throwing them for a loss or creating a fumble. Swedberg was able to knock down a number of long passes to throw a wrench in the passing game. Every defensive player was getting in on plays and Potter-Dix didn't know who to watch out for.

As the time on the clock ticked down, the excitement of the game escalated. The Wildcats' second possession in the fourth quarter began after Doell had a great punt return. The cats started their drive near mid-field.

Koop and Swedberg followed great blocks by their team mates and just ran at the Coyotes to move the ball down to the nine-yard line but on a fourth and five the Cats came up short and they were called for a holding penalty. Potter-Dix declined and took over on downs.

The tensions were mounting with each tick of the clock. The heat had taken its toll on all of the players but it was obvious that no one was ready to give up: it was going to be a fight to the very end.

The Coyotes started their drive like they had all night long, with a pass. However Marquardt was looking for it and nearly intercepted the ball. A bad snap on the second down sent the ball over Johnson's head and into the end zone. He quickly got to the ball and tossed it out of the back of the end zone which resulted in a safety.

With just over two minutes left in the game, the score was 14–20. Wallace would now receive a free kick from Potter-Dix as a result of the safety.

Doell received that kick at his 25-yard line and returned it to the 36 where the Cats would begin their drive for a chance to win the game. Koop had run hard all night but he appeared to have found an extra gear because he kept running after being hit; he dragged players with him to get a few extra yards.

Koop and Swedberg combined to get the ball to the 30 for a first down. On the first play with a new set of downs Swedberg was only able to pick up one yard; then Doell got the ball on a reverse and picked up eight more yards.

Following a time out with 1:44 on the clock, it got scary for the Wildcat faithful. Koop slipped in the backfield and lost a couple of yards and then the Cats were called for a holding penalty.

After a Potter-Dix time out Wallace took the field facing a fourth and three. After a couple of handoffs, Swedberg had the ball nearly at mid-field and two defensive players in his face; he launched a pass down the sideline to Marquardt. Catching the ball as he was falling back, Marquardt managed to hold on. The ball was now at the two-yard line with less than a minute to play.

Koop manhandled his way for nearly a yard then Swedberg made it to the corner to get the ball across the goal line. At this point Koop had so much adrenaline that there was nothing that

could stop him from adding the PAT. With just 32 seconds left on the clock, the Wildcats were finally on top with a score of 22 - 20.

The Cats knew that 32 seconds was more than enough time for a good passing team to score and that the game was far from over. Wallace elected to swift kick the ball to prevent a return.

The Coyotes recovered the ball on the 39-yard line. Mark Jameson had been in the Coyotes backfield nearly as much as their QB had been so it was no surprise that he threw Johnson for an eight-yard loss on first down. The second down was sure to be a long pass and the defense was ready. Swedberg was able to knock the ball away from Ottoson on the far sideline.

With 18 seconds left Johnson decided to try a long pass down the other side of the field and Taylor Doell was waiting for it, he stepped in front of the receiver to intercept the ball. The Cats only needed to take a knee to end the game.

Both Coach Hager and Coach Hesse were very pleased with the effort of the players. Coach Hager said that he was proud of the boys for never giving up and for giving their all until the final buzzer.

Coach Hesse said that he was so pleased with how much heart the kids played with. He said that it was great to get the win but even if they had come up short, he couldn't have ask for anything more than they gave; it was just a great game.

Statistically, the Wildcats were led by Landon Swedberg with 108 yards on 29 carries and he was three for six passing for 44 yards. Eric Koop added 88 yards on 26 carries.

The defense was also led by Swedberg with a total of eight unassisted and four assisted tackles. Mark Jameson had six unassisted, one assisted and three sacks and Tanner McCoy had four unassisted and four assisted tackles.

Next Action

The Wildcats will travel to Paxton this Friday to battle with the Tigers in their season opening game.