By LaDonna Swedberg
Sports Writer

Following a week off, the Wallace Wildcats had to make the long haul north to Dunning to take on the Sandhills/Thedford Knights. The Wildcats started the night short a few starters due to injury and illness and the problem grew as the evening progressed. This proved to be a big problem as they faced a large and quick opponent.

Sandhills/Thedford surprised the Wildcats on the opening kickoff with the ball rolling on the ground a short 10 yards where Shane Anders quickly fell on it.

The Cats began the game with great field position and they opened with a nine-yard pass from Taylor Doell to Landon Swedberg. Needing only a yard for a first down, a determined Eric Koop didn't stop until he had gained six yards. The offense was off to a great start but they stalled on the 20-yard line and the Knights took over on downs.

After a couple good runs from senior Dillon Simonson, quarterback Brady Marten, connected with Tyler Lee for a 45-yard pass reception and with 10:03 left in the first quarter, the Knights were on the board leading 6–0.

The ensuing kickoff from Sandhills/Thedford looked just like the opening kickoff. With only half a field to travel, Eric Koop took the handoff from Doell on the first play of the drive and went the distance for a 43-yard touchdown run. Still having lots of adrenaline running through him, Koop ran the ball in for the PAT and the Wildcats were up 8–6.

The rest of the first quarter, however, was all Sandhills/Thedford. Marten and Seimonson took turns running at the Wildcats getting good yardage with each run and ultimately scoring. The Knights were leading 20–8 at the end of one quarter of play.

The second quarter started out with a defensive battle. Both teams moved the ball down the field on their first possession and then turned it over on downs. Wallace had to punt on their second possession after Koop went down with a knee injury.

The Knights, however, were able to come up with two quick scores. With 3:49 left in the half, Marten found a wide open Tyler Lee once again for a 41-yard touchdown pass. The Knights were able to get on the onside kick and on their first play they went right back to the pass; Martin again connected with Lee and just that quick the score was 34–8.

Wallace had to make some changes at halftime; with three more players sidelined and players

playing in different positions, the offense went from a running game to mostly passing. The Knights didn't have a need to make any changes and they came out running again.

Brady Marten continued to find openings for big yardage and on the fourth play of the third quarter, he put six more points on the board for the Knights. A successful PAT made the score 42–8.

The Wildcats had some success with the pass on their first drive. Swedberg moved into the quarterback position and completed passes to Dustin Fosbinder and Kody Funk for good yardage before the Knights came up with an interception to end the drive. Just like the first drive of the quarter, on the fourth snap of the drive, Marten found a hole for a 55-yard touchdown run and the score was 50–8.

The Wildcats desperately needed a score so they found a way to make it happen. Swedberg had to scramble on the first play of the drive and gained 19 yards. Two plays later he found Doell for a 15-yard pass reception which put the ball on the eight-yard line.

It looked like the drive might stall again but a pass interference call gave Wallace a first down on the four-yard line. Mark Jameson wasted no time busting through the Knight defense for a Wildcat touchdown and the scoreboard to read 50–14.

Wallace attempted an onside kick following the touchdown and it looked as if Anders had successfully recovered the ball but an early whistle caused the Cats to have to re-kick the ball and Sandhills/Thedford got on the ball the second time.

The Knights were on the move as the third quarter came to an end and on the first play of the fourth quarter, Blayne Bradley ran the ball for a 19-yard touchdown. The PAT was successful and the Knights increased their lead to 58–14. Wallace continued passing the ball and eventually it paid off.

With 4:41 left in the game Taylor Doell caught a 31-yard touchdown reception and then caught the pass for the PAT as well as making the score 58–22. The game ended with the reserve players competing against each other and the Wallace JVs did a good job on both sides of the ball.

The Wildcats had a tough battle and considering all that they had to overcome they gave their best effort and never gave up.

They were led offensively by Landon Swedberg with 77 yards rushing and 99 yards passing. Eric Koop had 68 yards rushing with one touchdown. Taylor Doell and Mark Jameson each had a touchdown as well.

Leading the defense for the Wildcats was Swedberg with nine tackles and Tanner McCoy with seven unassisted and two assisted tackles. Shane Anders, Josh Harms and Eric Koop also contributed big for the defense.

Next Action

The Wildcats will host the Medicine Valley Raiders Friday night for parents night.