



### **By LaDonna Swedberg**

*Sports Writer*

The Wallace Wildcats continue to roll and they have added yet another game to their season. The Hay Springs Hawks made the long trip to Wallace last Wednesday only to see their season come to an end as the Wildcats took them down in defeat 48-28.

The Cat defense got things started off in the right direction when they abruptly ended the Hawks opening drive with an interception. On the seventh play of the drive, Josh May got in the backfield and was pressuring quarterback, Joey Johnson so he had to get rid of the ball before being sacked.

A couple of Wildcat defenders were in better position to get to the ball than the Hawk receiver. John Marquardt came down with the pic and the Big Blue took possession of the ball on the Hay Springs 30-yard line.

Not to be outdone by the defense, the Wildcat offense wanted to make a statement right away as well.

John Marquardt went for it all on the first play of the drive and found Landon Swedberg in the end zone.

A Hawk defender caused Swedberg to juggle the reception but as he was falling on his back, the ball came down on his chest where he trapped it for the 30 yard touchdown reception.

Josh May muscled his way across the goal line for the extra two points and with 9:33 remaining in the opening quarter, Wallace had the early 8-0 lead.

Defense was the name of the game the remainder of the half. Wallace and Hay Springs either turned the ball over on downs or they were forced to punt the ball. The one exception was the first drive of the second quarter.

The Hawks started the drive on their own 30 yard line when the Wildcats turned the ball over on downs. Just when it looked like the Big Blue defense had another stop, a roughing the passer penalty gave the Hawks a big first down.

Hay Springs then had two big penalties against them which gave them a second and 37. A successful reverse play however, netted the Hawks 15 yards of the needed yards and then a 29

yard pass play gave them a first and goal at the six yard line. It was a third and four when Jordan Houser busted through the line and across the goal line for a Hawk touchdown. An incomplete pass on the PAT caused the score to stand at an 8-6 Wildcat lead which ended up being the half time score.

Following a very competitive defensive battle in the first half, no one expected the Wildcats to deliver in the third quarter the way that they did; no one, that is, except for a very determined Wildcat team. The beginning of the half might have been a little shaky but the doubts were quickly dealt with.

Wallace didn't get off to a very good start when the Hawks intercepted the ball on the third play of half. The Wildcat defense however, responded to the turnover by getting the ball right back two plays later. Bi Gatobu recovered the Hawk fumble and the Cats were back in business at the Hay Springs 14 yard line.

Marquardt went right back to the air and found Tanner Clough for the 14 yard touchdown strike. The cats were unable to complete the PAT so they held a 14-6 lead with 10:12 left in the third quarter.

The Hawks were quick to respond with a touchdown of their own.

Following a kick off return to their 36 yard line, Jordan Houser broke loose for a 40 yard touchdown run on the second play of the possession. The two-point conversion was unsuccessful for the Hawks but they had closed the gap on the Wildcat lead which now stood at 14-12.

Wallace came charging right back looking to get more points on the board. Mixing the pass and the run, the Wildcats made their way to the Hawks' eight yard line and it was time for another pass play. Marquardt threw a bullet down the sideline just across the pylon. With out-stretched arms, Swedberg jumped to pull the pass in and he was able to get his toes on the ground, in bounce, as he fell to the ground with the ball in hand.

The Wildcats weren't able to add the two-point conversion so with 8:22 on the clock the scoreboard read Wallace 20, Hay Springs 12.

The Wildcats came up with another defensive stop and forced the Hawks to punt after a four and out.



Following the punt, Wallace started the drive on their 20 yard line. Marquardt only needed one play to find Andrew Gardner and strike again. Gardner juggled the pass but he managed to keep control as his defender fell down enabling Gardner to go the reaming yards for the touchdown. Marquardt went right back to Gardner for the two-point conversion and the Wildcat lead increased to 28-12.

Hay Springs was looking to squelch the Wildcats momentum but Big Blue had other ideas.

On a third and 12 the Hawks tried a pass play and Marquardt came up with his second pic of the game.

Wallace took over on the Hawks 28 yard line. Marquardt hit Swedberg for 10 yard pass reception and then Marquardt scampered for nine more yards to put the Cats on the 11 yard line.

Swedberg completed the drive when he got around the defense to the far sideline and across the goal line.

Marquardt once again went to Gardner for the PAT and with 4:20 left on the clock, Wallace was up 36-12.

The Hawks were not about to throw in the towel. Determined to get back in the game, they marched right down the field in four plays and put six more points on the board.

Joey Johnson went three yards for the touchdown and then he turned right around and ran three yards for the two-point conversion to pull within 16 points of the Wildcats.

Wallace wanted to make sure that the change in momentum was short lived and a quick response would do the trick. Landon Swedberg took the kick off at the six yard line and started down the sideline. Seeing that there was nowhere to go, he reversed the field and went to the far sideline. Swedberg's teammates followed him, throwing blocks all the way, enabling Landon to go the distance for a 74 yard kickoff return for six more points on the Wildcat score board. The PAT was unsuccessful so with 1:45 left in the third, Wallace had a 22 point lead.

The Cat defense once again forced the Hawks to punt after a four and out. As the very eventful third quarter came to an end, the Wildcats were on the move again, looking to get first downs, kill clock and get six more points on the board.

Wallace began their drive at the their own 38 yard line.

A nine yard pass play from Marquardt to Dillon Koop started the journey and then a roughing the passer penalty flag gave the Wildcats a first down at the Hawks 19 yard line. Swedberg ran three consecutive plays and moved the ball to the six yard line. Marquardt once again found Andrew Gardner for a six yard touchdown receptions. With 10:18 left to play in the game, Wallace had a commanding 48-20 lead.

The Wildcats were so 'on fire' that it didn't matter which side of the ball they were on, they were going to create big plays. The Hawks started their drive on their 35 yard line and trying to get a lot done quickly, they went to their passing game. The big play maker was an interception by Swedberg, but a confusing pass interference call allowed the Hawks to maintain possession and get a first down.

The call only seemed to make the Cats more determined. Three plays later, Swedberg intercepted the ball again only this time Wallace took possession of the ball.

A couple of penalty flags had the Wildcats pinned back at their own six yard line. A couple of good runs by Swedberg and Marquardt however, got the Cats out to the 25 yard line. It was there that the line opened up another big hole and Josh May rumbled down the field for a big 40 yard run.

Unfortunately, Wallace was unable to get another first down and they turned the ball over on downs at the Hay Springs 15 yard line.

Though things didn't look good for the Hawks, they still battled.

With less than five minutes left in the game and a 28 point deficit, they went right to work to put together one final drive.

Hay Springs had utilized the strength of their size and their passing game all season and that is what they used to get eight more points on the board. A completed pass gave them a first and goal at the nine but then a penalty flag moved them back to the 25.

Another pass play however gave them a touchdown and a successful pass tacked on the

two-point conversion to bring the score to 48-28.

The Hawks attempted an onside kick but Josh May was ready and waiting.

Wallace had the ball at mid field and they only needed to run three plays to allow the remaining time to run off the clock.

The determined efforts of the Wildcats, especially in the second half, made the difference in the game and it set them up for the impressive win.

Every single Wildcat deserves recognition for such a big win: from the teammates on the sidelines that cheered their hearts out to each player that took the field and gave their all. It was an outstanding display of teamwork.

The statistic leaders on offence were John Marquardt who once again had an outstanding game in all areas; 11 for 23 passing for 179 yards and five touchdowns, 53 yards rushing on seven carries and three kickoff returns for 39 yards. Landon Swedberg was another leader with 67 yards rushing on 17 carries and one touchdown, four pass receptions for 66 yards and two touchdowns and a 74 yard kickoff return for a touchdown.

Josh May had a great day rushing with 53 yards on seven carries and Andrew Gardner had five pass receptions for 91 yards and two touchdowns.

Defensive leaders for Wallace were Jeff Harms with seven solo tackles, 13 assist and one pass deflection; John Marquardt had six solo tackles, five assists, one pass deflection and two picks; Landon Swedberg had four solo tackles, six assists, one pass deflection and two picks.

Other Wildcats that also had big numbers were Josh May, Me Gatobu, Shane Anders and Hayden Woodcox.

Wallace traveled to Amherst on Tuesday for the third round of the state playoffs.