

***By LaDonna Swedberg***

***Sports Writer***

Many have deemed the third round Class D2 state playoff game of Wallace versus Amherst as one of the best of the season and for those of us lucky enough to be in attendance, there would be no disagreeing.

Shane Anders kicked off for the Wildcats, to start the game and he totally stunned Amherst with the high, short kick. Not quite knowing what to do, the Broncos just watched as Anders quickly jumped on the live ball to give Wallace the first shot on offense near midfield.

The Wildcats came up one yard short on fourth down and turned the ball over to Amherst on the 26-yard line. The Broncos were able to move the ball for a couple of first downs but they too came up a yard short on fourth down so Wallace got the ball back at their 16-yard line.

The Wildcats' second drive was short lived when Amherst intercepted John Marquardt's pass that got caught up in the wind.

The Broncos wasted no time turning the turnover into points. Senior, Mason Klingelhoefler got the call on a second and five at the 14-yard line and ran it in for the Bronco touchdown. The extra point was no good so with 6:54 remaining in the opening quarter, Amherst was up 6-0.

Wallace once again came up one yard short of a first down and had to punt the ball away and Amherst picked up where they left off on their previous drive; moving the ball for positive yardage nearly every play.

The Broncos ended up scoring another touchdown on a pass play but it came with some controversy. It was third and 13, the quarterback was being pressured and scrambling and it looked as if he had decided to run but at the last minute he passed the ball. The official threw the flag because it appeared that the QB had crossed the line of scrimmage, the flag however, was eventually waved off and the touchdown stood. The Broncos tacked on the two-point conversion to give them a 14-0 lead.

The Wildcats only took three plays to turn things around. They had a third and 10 at the Wallace 28-yard line when John Marquardt passed the ball into a mob of players and Andrew Gardner was the player to come down with the ball. Andrew left his defenders behind and went the distance for the 52 yard touchdown pass. Wallace was unsuccessful with the PAT so with 1:36 left in the first quarter, they had cut Amherst's lead down to 14-6.

The touchdown provided the spark that the Wildcats needed. The defense stepped up and stopped the Broncos on their next drive. On the first play of the second quarter, Amherst was back to punt on fourth and 11 and the snap went over the punters head and into the end zone, he wisely downed the ball for a safety which gave Wallace two points and made the score 14-8.

Wallace got the ball following the Broncos free kick but they fumbled it on the second play and Amherst was back in business. On a fourth and 10 at the 15-yard line, a completed pass gave Amherst another touchdown and a 20-8 lead.

The Wildcats started their next drive at their own 20-yard line and they successfully moved the ball all the way to the Amherst 14-yard line but they couldn't get any farther.

Amherst took over on downs deep in their own territory and that proved to be a good thing for the Wildcat defense. A couple of penalty flags had the Broncos backed up to the five-yard line and Josh May licking his chops. On second and 19, May busted through the line to take the quarterback down in the end-zone for another safety and two more points on the Wallace scoreboard to make the score 20-10.

The Wildcats were not able to get a first down following the free kick but when Landon

Swedberg punted the ball down to the five-yard line, it looked as if the ball bounced up and hit the Amherst return man in the chest. Players scrambled for the loose ball and Andrew Gardner came up with it on the three-yard line.

As the Wildcat side lines erupted with excitement, the officials gathered in the end zone and decided that the ball belonged to Amherst. The Wildcat defense took the field and prevented the Broncos from putting another score on the board before half.

Amherst kicked off to Wallace to start the second half but the Wildcats were not able to get a first down and they had to punt the ball away. The Broncos however, took their opening drive right down the field for the first score of the half. The successful PAT gave them their biggest lead of the game. The score board read; Amherst 28, Wallace 10.

On the second play of Wallace's drive, Amherst intercepted the ball and took possession at the 40-yard line. Jeff Harms apparently didn't want the Broncos to have the ball so on their first carry, he stripped the ball and headed the other way. Harms ended up fumbling the ball as he was being tackled but Andrew Gardner was there to recover the ball and Wallace was back in business with the ball at the Amherst 30-yard line.

Landon Swedberg ran the ball for nine yards and then again for 18 to give the Wildcats a first and goal at the three. With 5:16 left to play in the third quarter, Swedberg got the ball across the goal line to cut into the Bronco lead. The two-point conversion was no good, so Amherst still held on to a 28-16 lead.

A muffed exchange between the QB and running back for Amherst led Swedberg to recover the ball and the Wildcats had a first and 10 at their own 35-yard line.

On the third play of the drive, Marquardt hit Swedberg for a 44 yard touchdown pass reception. Marquardt went right back to Swedberg for the two-point conversion and all of a sudden the Amherst lead was down to 28-24.

As the third quarter was coming to an end, the Broncos were on the move and on the second

play of the fourth quarter, they were able to put six more points on the board. The PAT failed, so with 11:40 left in the game Amherst once again held on to a 10-point lead.

Wallace started their next drive at their 35-yard line. Mixing the run with an occasional pass, Marquardt led his team down the field. On a second and two at the Bronco 24-yard line, he hit Tanner Clough on a screen pass and Clough scampered down the side line for another Wildcat score. A failed PAT left a four point deficit for Wallace.

Following another on-side kick attempt, Amherst started their drive at their 39 yard line with 8:35 remaining in the game. Wallace was looking for another big defensive play and Bi Gatobu came through. The Broncos were attempting a screen pass but Gatobu got in the way and ended up with the ball in his hands.

The Wildcats took over at the Amherst 37-yard line with all kinds of momentum but after three downs and no yardage it was fourth and 10. Marquardt found Swedberg cutting across the field for a 13 yard gain and a big first down. On the very next play, Marquardt went right back to Swedberg for the 24 yard touchdown strike. Another Marquardt to Swedberg pass added the two-point conversion and for the first time in the game, the Wildcats had a 38-34 lead.

Amherst may have been stunned but they were not out of the game at all, they came charging right back. Three plays after the kick off, a 29 yard pass play put six more points on the board for them and then they added the PAT and Wallace was once again looking at a four point deficit.

Marquardt went from one receiver to another and moved the ball right down the field for Wallace but the Broncos made it interesting in the red zone. Their defence caused three incomplete passes but they were called for a pass interference on the third one. Everyone on the field thought that Wallace had an automatic first down but a new rule change this year moved the ball half the distance to the goal but no first down. On fourth and goal, Marquardt lobbed the ball to the end zone trusting Swedberg to out-jump the defenders for the reception and the plan worked. With 2:57 to play in the game, Wallace once again took the lead. The Wildcats were not able to tack on the two-point conversion so they clung to a 44-42 lead.

The kick off return only advanced the Broncos to the Wallace 19-yard line. Amherst lost five

yards on the first down and only managed to gain one yard on second down. A completed pass on third and 15 however, gave the Broncos a first down at mid-field. Two more completed passes and Amherst was in the end zone for the go ahead touchdown. The Broncos were successful on the PAT and with only 50 seconds on the clock, they had a 50-44 lead.

Wallace had the ball at their 28-yard line following the kickoff return. The first play was an incomplete pass, Marquardt was looking to pass on second down but he was under a lot of pressure and as he was being tackled the ball came loose. The officials had to determine if Marquardt was down or if the ball was fumbled and who ended up with the ball.

During their time of discussion making, the clock ticked down to 19 seconds. Wallace ended up with the ball and Marquardt aired out a long pass which the Broncos came down with and as Amherst stormed the field, the time on the clock expired.

In all of the chaos, no one had notice an inadvertent whistle from the head official, no one except for the Wallace statistician who ask the sideline ref if the game could end with an inadvertent whistle.

While the teams shook hands, the officials decided that Wallace should have be given one more play due to the circumstances. The Wildcats made one more valiant effort but it was not enough.

John Marquardt led his team by completing 16 of 34 passes for 256 yards and five touchdowns. Landon Swedberg was the leading rusher with 70 yards on 15 carries and one touchdown. He was also the leading receiver with 108 yards on eight receptions and three touchdowns.

Andrew Gardner had 77 yards on three receptions and one touchdown and Tanner Clough recorded 59 yards on four receptions with one touchdown.

Wallace had a number of defensive standouts in their final game. Jeff Harms seemed to be everywhere on the field and he ended the game with five solo tackles, 16 assists and one

fumble recovery. John Marquardt had three solo tackles and 15 assist and Landon Swedberg had six solo tackles, nine assists, two pass deflections and one fumble recovery. Shane Anders ended the game with one solo tackle, 14 assist, one pass deflection and one fumble recovery.

Wallace ended their season with a nine and two record. They came up one yard short of the game tying touchdown in the Med Valley game and 50 seconds short of holding Amherst off of their game winning touchdown.