

Era of 11-man football ends on a high note

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The era and tradition of 11-man football came to a close Friday night as the Saint Francis Indians took on the Wichita County (Leoti) Indians in the final game of the season at Greene Field. It was an exciting game not really decided until the fourth quarter when the Indians pulled away and beat Leoti 22-7.

The 2014-15 season will find the Indians playing a more competitive eight-man schedule.

Coach Kyle Buffington said he was pleased with the way the team pulled together in this last game of the season and never stopped playing Indian football.

"This game with Leoti was a fun one," he said. "Leoti is a much improved team from year's past. They really don't get a lot of credit as being a good team because of their record, but they play a very tough schedule. They have some great players and we knew they would make some plays if we weren't ready."

"We found a way to get our offense going once again, looking like that traditional Indian football wishbone-type team. Defensively, we were on the field a lot in this game but never gave up the big play and found a way to get the ball back in our hands."

In first quarter action the Indians received the kickoff, and after a great runback by Taylor Rogers, the offense began on Leoti's 30-yard line. The offense drove the ball downfield with good runs but sputtered and turned the ball over on downs deep inside Leoti territory.

The St. Francis defense held Leoti to short gains and forced them to punt. Saintry took over with great field position on Wichita County's 37-yard line. Great runs by Derek Queen helped propel the offense down to the 10-yard line.

On a first down, quarterback Clay Cassaw ran around the left side and scored Saintry's first touchdown. He then hit Mason Schiltz in the right corner of the end zone to convert the extra

point, and the Indians were up 8-0.

Leoti received the kick off and took over on the 35 yard line. Wichita County drove the ball down the field powered by quarterback Jantz Budde and great runs by Colton Northrup and Casey Day. The drive ended on St. Francis' 26-yard line when on fourth and 10, Budde's pass to Colton Northrup fell incomplete. Leoti turned the ball over on downs. The quarter ended with St. Francis up 8-0.

Saintry was unable to move the ball on their first possession of the second quarter and was forced to punt. Leoti took over on the 40-yard line. Again Leoti began a long drive powered by the play of Budde, Northrup and Day.

The offense overcame a couple of crucial penalties. This drive ended on St. Francis' 4-yard line and St. Francis took over on downs again.

Clay Cassaw gave Saintry some breathing room with a good run to the left side. Leoti was penalized for a hit out of bounds and the Indians had the ball on their own 35-yard line. The Indians could move the ball no further and on fourth and 7 tried a fake punt which gained only 5 yards. Leoti took over on downs.

With good field position, Wichita County converted a fourth and one and scored when Budde was forced out of the pocket and scrambled to the left for a score. Leoti kicked the extra point and trailed 8-7 late in the second quarter.

After receiving the kick-off, Saintry took over on the 24-yard line. After converting a first down on a good run by Cade Bracelin, time ran out in the half with Saint Francis out in front of a close contest 8-7.

Wichita County received the kick-off to start the third quarter as Budde made a nice runback to the Saintry 42-yard line. The Saintry defense rose up when, on second down and six, Kyler Zwegardt sacked Budde for a big 10-yard loss.

However, on the next play Budde made a great run off the left side and gained the first down by mere inches. On the next set of downs, Leoti came up short by inches and turned the ball over on downs.

St. Francis took over on the 38-yard line. Great runs by Derek Queen on two offensive sets of downs resulted in first downs. The Saintry drive continued until a St. Francis penalty for an illegal block in the back forced the Indians back.

They were unable to overcome the loss in yardage as Cassaw's pass missed Mason Schiltz in the end zone. The ball was turned over on downs at the 20-yard line.

Wichita County kept their drive alive as Jantz Budde made several key runs in the first offensive series. Colton Northrup made a big run to get the ball out to the Leoti 49-yard line as the third quarter ended.

As the fourth quarter began the St. Francis defense again rose up, putting heavy pressure on the Leoti offense and aided by two Leoti penalties. On fourth down and 35, Leoti tried a fake punt which was stopped dead in its tracks by the St. Francis defense. The Indians took over on the Leoti 32-yard line.

The Indians offense began with a good 15-yard run by Cade Bracelin, which was called back due to a 15-yard face-mask penalty call on the offense. Two plays later Derek Queen busted through the left side of the Leoti defense for a 32-yard touchdown run. Queen then ran in the extra point to extend the St. Francis lead to 16-7.

Wichita County was able to run the kickoff back for a short gain. They began their next offensive series on the 32 yard line. After another short drive, Leoti was again stopped short on their own 45 yard line when, on fourth and inches, quarterback Jantz Budde was unable to convert on a quarterback sneak. St. Francis took over on downs.

On the first play of the Indians



GARRETT BRUNK 7 breaks through the line for a big gain.

Herald staff photo by Douglas Sloper

offensive drive, Cade Bracelin had a great run down to the 25 yard line which ended abruptly when the ball was stripped out of his hands by several Leoti players. Leoti recovered his fumble and took over.

After a short gain, three passes by Budde fell incomplete and Leoti turned the ball over on downs.

The Saintry offense was unable to move the ball consistently, and on fourth and 9, Cassaw's pass to Schiltz fell incomplete and the ball was turned over on downs.

The St. Francis defense rose up again and stopped Wichita County in 4 downs and took over on the Leoti 48 yard line. Derek Queen ran the ball for a 3 yard gain on first down, then sealing the victory for St. Francis with an impressive 45-yard touchdown run off the right side. The extra point was no good and Saintry led 22-7.

As the fourth quarter wound down St. Francis kicked off, and Leoti took over on their own 37-yard line. As it had throughout the game the St. Francis defense stopped Leoti in four plays as Budde threw four incomplete passes forcing them to turn the ball over on downs. St. Francis took over on downs and ran the clock out for a very hard fought but very satisfying 22-7 victory. The Indians finished the season with a 3-4 record.

Top Rushers: Derek Queen, 13 carries 111 yards; Cade Bracelin, 8 carries 80 yards; Clay Cassaw 9 carries, 37 yards; Wyatt Landenberger, 6 carries, 25 yards; Lane Hoffman, 4 carries, 18 yards; Garrett Brunk, 3 carries, 10 yards.

Top Passing: Clay Cassaw 1 for 8 for 2 yards

Top Receiving: Mason Schiltz, 1 reception for 2 yards

Total Offense: 265 yards. (Rushing: 263, Passing: 2)

Coach Buffington summed up the season and the character of the athletes.

"It was a much needed fun and successful win these young men needed to end an up-and-down season," he said. "I know this season didn't turn out the way we started it out to be in August, but nonetheless, we had some great moments that we can all be proud of. No matter what happened week to week, these men showed up every day with a winning attitude. That kind of character will be able to carry these young men though whatever they encounter in life. I couldn't be more proud of each one of them."



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