

Eagles put up good fight with No. 1 Beavers

By R.B. Headley
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“Birthday boy” Adam Giersch brought just about everything but the party hats to a Colby first-half football celebration Friday evening.

Facing 3A No. 1-ranked defending state champ Scott City, Giersch delivered opening entertainment when he shook off an ankle tackle and took that first kickoff 36 yards past midfield.

Now that’s senior leadership. Everyone wearing a Colby Eagles helmet joined in surprise festivities which could have startled the entire state.

Especially when Giersch dashed behind three Beaver defenders and spotted the ultimate birthday gift for any wide receiver:

A 53-yard touchdown pass!

“Happy birthday to Adam Giersch,” Colby coach Chris Gardner declared about the well-placed football from quarterback Josh Matchell. “It was his birthday tonight and I thought he played like that.”

Yet the fun was only beginning for every Eagle and their fans.

Colby’s second touchdown this-season featured moves far better than most birthday dances.

The moment after a Scott City pass completion jarred loose thanks to one of several booming Colby hits.

Sophomore Ben Matchell picked up the rolling pigskin, stepped quickly around one Beaver, started running and then did a 360-degree spin to avoid another tackler.

Matchell maintained his balanced and picked up speed as he

Colby closed within 14-12

ran along the sideline and simply would not stop until he rumbled 33 yards to Scott City’s end zone.

Matchell raised the football with “party on” enthusiasm, and Colby now only trailed these reigning state champs 14-12.

Not even a second consecutive missed two-point conversion trick-play pass could spoil Colby’s mood at this point.

“I’m extremely proud of this team. They came out and played well against a very well-coached ballclub,” Gardner said. “But the scoreboard is the scoreboard.”

Indeed, Scott City wasn’t ready to be the perfect party hosts, ending Colby’s fun with a 14-0 second half. Their eventual 16-point victory of 28-12 extended the Beavers’ winning streak to 16 games.

However, Colby (0-2 record) still didn’t let any Beaver turn out the lights without a good fight.

Eagle defenders recovered two fourth-quarter fumbles and had the football at Scott City’s 15 with still more than four minutes remaining.

Another good Ben Matchell run moved Colby down inside the 10.

Yet a low shotgun snap and relentless Beaver pressure ruined Colby’s last three plays. A final Josh Matchell roll-out pass fell incomplete, and it was finally time for Scott City to celebrate.

The Beavers prevailed despite Colby forcing five turnovers.

“I thought our guys played hard, and I thought they played for four



Colby High’s Josh Matchell left a fallen Scott City Beaver behind after grabbing this fourth-quarter interception against the defending 3A football state champions.

quarters,” Gardner observed in reference to the Eagles’ no-quit attitude. “You try to make your biggest improvements from week one to week two, and I thought these

guys responded well. We just have to finish more drives.”

The Eagles stopped Scott City’s first two drives cold without a single first down. Senior Andrew linebacker Andrew Taylor and junior lineman Jay Ziegelmeier set the early tone by stuffing those Beavers’ first inside run.

One series later, younger Eagles like sophomore Bryce Arnberger and junior Eric Schuette blitzed through to record a quarterback sack.

However, Scott City inserted

Trey O’Neil back into the quarterback spot after missing those early series because of an injury last week.

O’Neil ignited the Beavers with about a 25-yard screen pass, and fullback Paco Banda blasted into the end zone one play later for Scott City’s first score.

Giersch celebrated his birthday by breaking up a third-down pass during the next series. Yet Scott City went for fourth down, and O’Neil delivered a short pass to halfback Chance Yeager.

Yeager turned the corner and motored 24 yards to another TD. Scott City suddenly led 14-0 and some likely wondered if Colby’s party was already over in that opening quarter.

Ben Matchell’s own terrific kickoff return revived some Colby confidence, though, as he spun and powered his way almost to midfield. On the very next play, Giersch got behind those Beaver safeties and ran under Josh Matchell’s perfect pass.

Blitzing linebacker Garrett Rose’s tackle behind the line ended another Scott City series. Colby continued its strong defense until the Ben Matchell scoop-and-score midway through quarter two.

Both teams missed another scoring chance or two before intermission.

Unfortunately for Colby, Scott City started the second half much like that first. The Beavers’ first drive ended in a two-yard TD plunch from O’Neil. An ensuing PAT kick made it 21-12.

The Eagles showed their toughness again by starting a truly great drive downfield.

Colby coaches hold up large cards on the sideline that signal plays with different team helmets and logos.

A Pittsburgh Steelers sign led to some power football, and Ben Matchell went off tackle for about 17 yards.

Perhaps a Kansas State sign inspired quarterback Josh Matchell to run like former Wildcat great Collin Klein, because Matchell ran up the middle and powered ahead for about 15 more yards.

Colby moved inside Scott City’s 25 until a dreaded high shotgun snap sent the Eagles tumbling about 20 yards back.

The Beavers eventually forced and survived a fourth-down Colby pass before answering with their final touchdown.

“We’ll get there,” Gardner concluded. “We’ve set the bar now. We’ve got to build from this. We can’t play well one week and not play well the next.”

Colby competes in large Wamego meet

Colby High sophomore Andrea Browne reached the 4A Top 10 in an early-season showdown at the Wamego Invitational on Saturday.

“This meet is a good indicator of what the competition will be like at the state meet,” coach Chris Giersch said.

Returning state qualifier Browne finished in 16:54 (10th).

Colby’s girls finished 11th among 4A teams (252 points) while the boys placed 19th (494).

Other best finishers for the girls were sophomore Sydney Stephens (59th, 18:52), junior Taylor Lem-

man (60th, 18:53), junior Bridget Bickner (78th, 19:59), freshman Cassie Berndt (91st, 21:30) and senior Maura Hansen (95th, 24:45).

The Colby boys featured junior Aaron Faber (59th, 19:53), senior Jaden Morrison (92nd, 20:43), freshman Ernie Lieja (112th, 21:39), senior Luke Cox (119th, 21:57), junior Alec Onstad (120th, 21:58) and senior Marc Bremenkamp (126th, 24:02).

“Most of our times were improved from Goodland (on Sept. 5),” Giersch observed.



KEVIN BOTTRELL
Goodland Star-Tribune
Jaden Morrison ran a faster time for Colby on Saturday.

Crusaders rumble to first win

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Flawless center snaps, a 26-0 second half and Blaine Wertz’s 243 rushing yards powered Heartland Christian past Wheatland-Grinnell, 48-20, Friday evening at Grainfield.

Wertz dashed past the Thunderhawks for three touchdown runs of 35 to 45 yards. He also added a five-yard score, although his final totals weren’t anywhere near his previous career bests.

“He had almost 400 yards rushing in a couple of games last year,” Heartland coach Steve Ziegelmeier said. “Blaine is super fast. He also has good vision with an ability to cut back, but he’s probably one of the fastest kids in the area.”

Brook Ziegelmeier (15 yards), Corey Wertz (five yards) and Brennan Ziegelmeier (nine yards) also rumbled to six-point paradise as Heartland Christian (1-1 record) tallied seven rushing TDs.

Yet like any level of football, the Crusaders’ success really started upfront.

“Gabe Schriner did a great job at center with perfect snaps,” coach Ziegelmeier observed. “We run a lot of shotgun offense (meaning the quarterback stands behind that center), and Gabe was perfect snapping the entire game.”

Besides good line play and pushing kids around, the Crusaders (1-1) proved thievery can also be an acceptable practice even among Christian schools. They took the football from Wheatland-Grinnell three times with fumble recoveries to highlight that shut-out second half.

Nick Delzeilt pounced on two loose pigskins while Cory Wertz recovered one. Brook Ziegelmei-

er also broke up three potential Thunderhawk pass completions.

The Crusaders needed all these heroics to break free after a tight 22-20 first half. They jumped ahead 4-0 only to see Wheatland-Grinnell (0-2) deliver some big-play touchdowns.

“I sort of feel like (Kansas State coach) Bill Snyder. I’m never all that happy,” coach Ziegelmeier

concluded. “We have a lot of improvement to do if we’re going to be as competitive as we need to be. We need to continue working on small details, like maintaining blocks and not letting them (opponents) behind us on defense.”

The Crusaders return to action with another road trip. They’ll travel to Salina and play Flint Hills starting at 6 p.m on Saturday.

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