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Chiefs rally for injured teammate Iroquois defeats Sweet Home for 'A' title after QB breaks leg early

by JASON NADOLINSKI
Reporter



Sweet Home's Marcus Johnson finds a hole in the Iroquois defense during second quarter action at last Friday's Section VI Class A final at Ralph Wilson Stadium. Iroquois won 53-20.

Photo by Patrick McPartland

The number seven has played a prominent role in Iroquois football coach Frank Payne's life.

His daughter was born on March 31, weighing in at seven pounds and seven ounces. She was born in the hospital's room number seven. And in Payne's seventh year as the Chiefs' coach, the team's star player was number seven, senior quarterback/kicker Kyle Shevlin.

So when Shevlin went down with a broken leg not even two minutes into the first quarter of last Friday's Section VI Class A championship game against Sweet Home, the Chiefs could have easily surmised that it wasn't their year and given up.

However, the power of number seven wouldn't deny the Chiefs that night as they went on to soundly defeat the Panthers at Ralph Wilson Stadium, 53-20, behind a 35-point third quarter that blew the game wide open. The championship is Iroquois' second in three years.

"This one is just as sweet,"

Payne said. "It's something you can't get used to. In the game of football, when you have great coaches like John Fallor and the other guys we've played against, to go 9-0 ... you never get bored with this."

After the game, Iroquois's players celebrated the victory in part by hoisting Shevlin's jersey for

the crowd to cheer. It was a similar scene to two years ago, when the Chiefs were holding up running back Steve Mamak's jersey following their 18-14 win over Lewiston-Porter for their first sectional title. Mamak, the team's star at the time, did not play most of that game after suffering an ankle injury.

"It's weird because it's almost the same thing that happened with Mamak in 2004," Payne said. "It's so ironic; our horse goes down at sectionals in 2004, and now Kyle goes down and the kids are carrying seven jerseys. We're just want Kyle to be healthy, that's the thing we care about right now."

Junior Wyatt Mariacher filled in admirably for Shevlin in the quarterbacking department, finishing the game 5 of 8 for 123 yards and three touchdowns. Mariacher wasted no time establishing the Chiefs' passing game, completing both his attempts on his first drive for a total of 59 yards, including a 26-yard touchdown pass to senior Mike Perilo. The two-point conversion pass was no good, though, leaving Iroquois in front 6-0.

"I didn't know what was going on, it hit me so fast," Mariacher said. "It was scary. We're like brothers. We played the game for him. It was incredible, I just can't explain it."

Sweet Home, which played in the title game last year, was not fazed by the Chiefs' early success,

marching down the field in its first drive to knot the game at 6-6 with 4:18 to play in the first quarter. The Panthers, who took four minutes off the clock with their eight-play, 61-yard long drive, tied to score when junior Eric Lawrence hauled in a 20-yard pass from senior Ian Goree. Sweet Home missed the extra point kick attempt, leaving the score tied at 6-6.

Sweet Home's defense then came up big at the end of the quarter, catching Iroquois sophomore Brandon Murie at the four-yard line after he ripped a 54-yard run on a third and two situation. The Panthers' goal line defense held strong from that point on, holding the Chiefs out of the end zone to get the ball back with 1:11 to play.

Neither team could really get anything going again until midway through the second quarter, when Mariacher and Perilo hooked up for a touchdown pass once again. Scoring on fourth down from one yard out, the Chiefs reclaimed the lead, 12-6, but the two-point conversion

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Field Hockey

Sweet Home wins Class A title on penalty stroke

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Sweet Home field hockey hadn't won a Section VI title since 2002 but that all changed Monday night at Amherst Central High School.

Alivia Ruiz scored the

game-winning goal in penalty strokes as the Lady Panthers edged reigning three-time section champion Williamsville North, 2-1. Ruiz was the third of five penalty strokers for Sweet Home.

"She got a lot of power behind

it and was able to hit the corner," said Sweet Home coach Dawn Kauderer-Kromer. "A great shot."

Sweet Home beat North for the title in 2002.

The game was scoreless until five minutes remaining in regulation when Chantae Miller put North ahead 1-0. Sweet Home tied it at 1-1 when Lauren Korniczky scored from Brianne Galli on a corner with no time left.

"Katie Mazuchowski was passing the ball out from the end line," said Kauderer-Kromer. She passed it up to Brianne who dished it to Lauren. Lauren got a great low shot off and it went in."

The teams played two 10-minute overtime sessions. Each team had scoring chances, including a point-blank save on a penalty stroke by Sweet Home goalie Leann Stiver on Miller. Stiver finished with 31 saves.

"I'm just so proud of them," said Kauderer-Kromer. "They came into this game ready for the challenge and refused to give up. That's just the way they've played all season. We had a lot of close games throughout the season and kept fighting. For North to score with five minutes left and for us to still go out and fight for it and tie it up, says a lot about the girls. They went out to do it together. That's been a huge part of our success."

The October snowstorm cancelled the regular season match-up.

Sweet Home (15-1-2) plays Section V's Penfield at 5 p.m. Thurs-

day at Amherst in the Far West Regionals.

Sweet Home and North advanced to the finals last Wednesday in different ways. North defeated Clarence, 5-1, while Sweet Home won a 3-2 double overtime thriller over Orchard Park. Mazuchowski scored the game-winning goal with 4:35 remaining in the second OT.

"Moneta (Kandakai) got a pass and started hitting up field, made a nice dodge around the defender, sent a pass across and Katie was right there to put it in," said Kauderer-Kromer. "It was a really nice play."

Ruiz (Sara Heron) and Lauren Peczkowski (Galli) put Sweet Home up 2-0 in regulation before

Orchard Park's Deena Butryn and Emily Girasole tied it up late.

"Both teams played hard and aggressive," said Kauderer-Kromer. "Even though we came out on top, both teams really played well."

Stiver made 23 saves.

Sweet Home opened its playoff run with a 8-1 quarterfinal win over Kenmore West. The Lady Panthers led 4-0 at halftime.

Mazuchowski and Kandakai each scored two goals. Mazuchowski also had an assist. Galli and Danielle Gangi each scored a goal and added an assist. Peczkowski had a goal and two assists. Ruiz scored a goal.

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Sweet Home's Lauren Peczkowski, left, and Williamsville North's Lucy Papia battle for the ball during Monday's Class A final at Amherst. Sweet Home won 2-1 after penalty kicks.



Sweet Home's Marisa Kelly hit the ball away from a charging Ainsley Stoll of Williamsville North. Also in on the play is Brianne Galli.

Photos by Joe Eberle