

Blue Jays fall to Minster in OT

Written by Staff Reports

Monday, October 29, 2012 10:11 AM -

MINSTER — St. John's committed five turnovers and six penalties (45 yards) to zero turnovers by Minster and six penalties (49 yards) on a soggy — again — Friday night at Minster Memorial Field.

The host Wildcats still needed overtime and got a touchdown pass in the extra session and a fourth-down stand to preserve a 21-14 Midwest Athletic Conference victory over the Blue Jays. The Wildcats (8-2, 6-2 MAC) and Blue Jays (6-4, 5-3 MAC) will have games next Friday in the post-season, with foes to be determined.

Tied at 14-all to end regulation, Minster won the overtime coin toss — no running clock, just a play clock — and chose the ball. At the Jays' 20, Adam Niemeyer (15-of-25 passing, 159 yards) connected with Devon Poeppelman for 11 yards, then found the same receiver on a route to the left side at the 2 and the senior took it to the pylon for the six. Poeppelman converted the kick for a 21-14 edge.

The Jays took over at the Minster 20 but did not have junior tailback Tyler Jettinghoff (27 totes, 155 yards). They garnered a first down in four plays but on 4th-and-goal at the 5, Mark Boggs misfired on a pass into the end zone.

"Tyler had had his helmet ripped off before then and got hit in the nose. We kept him out as a precaution," Jays coach Todd Schulte explained.

However, he was frustrated with his team on this night, especially the turnovers.

"I told the team after the game that we have to value the football. We did not," he added. "We told them the same thing before the game: it would come down to us forcing turnovers and hanging onto the football and we did the exact opposite. We moved the football well all night but shot ourselves in the foot."

Turnovers marred the Blue Jay effort from the start; they moved from the 36 (after Andrew Metzger's 26-yard kickoff return to open the night) to the Minster 30 but a fumble recovered by Ethan Wolf ended the threat there.

A trade of punts left the Wildcats starting at the 21. Niemeyer completed 3-of-4 passes (73 yards) to help them overcome a pair of penalties (15 yards) and move the distance in six plays. At the Blue Jay 13, Korey Schultz (11 rushes, 127 yards) swept the left side and found the seam. Poeppelman (6 catches, 59 yards) added the kick for a 7-0 edge with 1:21 showing in the opener.

The Jays garnered a first down but a penalty stopped them this time, forcing a punt.

After forcing a 3-and-out, the Jays gave the ball back as Boggs (7-of-12 passing, 177 yards) completed a 59-yarder to Jared Knebel but the senior receiver was stripped from behind and Scott Sekas recovered at the Minster 10.

After forcing another 3-and-out, the Jays got on the board on the first play from the 45. Boggs dropped and threw a deep route down the right sideline to Will Buettner; the senior caught the ball on the numbers at the Wildcat 30 and outran the defense to the pylon. Metzger's point-after was good for a 7-all tie with 6:13 showing in the half.

The Wildcats then began a drive (set up by a 21-yard kickoff return by Schultz) at the 29 and — aided by a facemask call that helped preserve the drive — reached the Jays' five in 14 plays. However, a delay penalty and later a holding call stymied the drive. On play 18, Poeppelman's 31-yard field goal attempt was wide left with 16.9 ticks showing, effectively ending the half.

After the Jays held on a 3-and-out to start the second half, a holding penalty on their drive and an interception by Schultz put Minster in business at their 38. However, a fumble — one of the

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few times the hosts put the ball on the wet sod — sent them back right away and they had to punt.

After Boggs ran for 24 yards (11 rushes, 48 yards) to the Wildcats' 43, Troy Kauffman made a 1-handed grab on a deep ball to end another promising Blue Jay drive at the 17.

Minster garnered a first down before being forced to punt. On the punt came a bizarre play; the Jays' return man fumbled the ball, with the Wildcats recovering at the Blue and Gold 35; however, Schulte explained that one of the referees blew the play dead sometime before that and the punt was done over.

The Jays then embarked on a 9-play drive — aided by a Minster personal foul — from the 33 that eventually reached the Minster 9 but ended up with a 31-yard field goal try by Metzger; however, it was blocked and Minster recovered at the 17.

An incompletion later, Schultz took a handoff just off right tackle and broke through the line of scrimmage; he veered toward the sideline and turned on the jets to finish off an 83-yard run in the end zone. Poeppelman made it 14-7 with 9:59 remaining.

A fumble on the ensuing kickoff was recovered by Minster at the Jays' 34. However, the defense held on a 4th-and-1 from the 25.

St. John's then drove 75 yards in 11 plays — with six rushes by Jettinghoff (37 yards) and completions to Luke MacLennan (26 yards) and Metzger (16) leading the way. At the Minster 3, Jettinghoff took a sweep right and made one cut to find paydirt with 2:06 left. Metzger tied it at 14.

Neither team could put a scoring drive together to end regulation.