

**By LaDonna Swedberg**

*Sports Writer*

Wallace got their football season off to a great start when they traveled to Big Springs to take on the South Platte Blue Knights. On paper, it looked like the two teams would match up pretty well as far as size and number of players but on the field, it was a different story.

Shane Anders made sure that South Platte understood that they wouldn't have many opportunities for yardage on kick-offs when he sent the ball into the end zone on the opening kick off; a scene that was replayed often throughout the game.



The defense also made a statement to the Blue Knights, yardage would be hard to come by. South Platte was unable to move the ball and had to punt on the fourth down. This, too, became a taste of things to come the remainder of the game.

The kicking game and defense were not the only ones that wanted to make a statement early in the game; the offense wanted to make a point as well. On the first play from scrimmage, quarterback, John Marquardt aired it out to Landon Swedberg who was running down the sideline for a 43 yard touchdown play. Swedberg was able to run across the line for the two-point conversion and just that quick, the Wildcats were up 8 - 0.

The first possession for each team was pretty much how the game played out; South Platte struggled to move the ball and Wallace found many different ways to move the ball and score. The Knights fumbled on their second possession of the game and Swedberg recovered to give the Wildcats the short field.

Marquardt only needed a couple of plays until he found Dillon Koop for an 11 yard touchdown pass. Andrew Gardner carried the ball through the wall of defenders for the extra two points.

Wallace had a good drive going on their third possession but on second and goal, they fumbled the ball and turned it over to the Blue Knights. Once again however, the defense only allowed them three plays before they had to punt it back.

The Wildcats decided to try their running game and found it to be as successful as the pass. Marquardt got loose for a couple of good runs as did Swedberg who was able to complete the drive with a nine yard run to the end zone. Gardner added his second two-point conversion and with 4:03 remaining in the opening quarter, Wallace was up 24-0.

Before the first quarter came to an end, the Wildcat defense continued to be relentless forcing South Platte to punt after three downs. Offensively, Wallace started another good drive but another turnover put the defense back on the field to force another punt.

The second quarter started similar to the first quarter when Marquardt once again found

Swedberg running down the sideline for a 57 yard touchdown pass. Jacob Melton was able to score the two-point conversion and four seconds into the second quarter Wallace had a 32-0 lead.

The pattern continued, after four downs on offense the Knights would turn the ball back to Wallace.

Since Marquardt had the hot hand passing he went back to the air after a couple successful running plays from Josh May and Jacob Melton. Marquardt hit Tanner Clough running across the field for a 25 yard touchdown pass.

The extra point play was unsuccessful so the score with 9:31 remaining in the half was 38-0.

The Wildcats scored one more touchdown before the half ended. Marquardt completed the drive with a 1 yard QB keeper to give his team a 44-0 halftime lead.

The second half began with South Platte kicking off to Wallace. The Wildcats hadn't had their kickoff return team on the field yet so the starting eight took the field. Each player was obviously prepared for kickoff return because when Landon Swedberg received the ball on the four yard line, they all provided him a path to the other end of the field for another six points.

The second half went by quickly due to the score causing a running clock but that didn't change the way the young Wildcat players played the game.



Early in the third quarter, after the defense stopped a fake punt, Wallace used three different players to move the ball to the three yard line. Tanner Clough finished the drive by running the ball in for six more points. The added two points gave Wallace a 58-0 lead.

A number of the younger Wildcats came up with big plays on offense and defense. Logan Hock recovered a fumble and tackled a Blue Knight for a 10 yard loss and nearly every player was involved on a defensive stop. Offensively, the line was creating openings and Jacob Melton, Josh May, Andrew Gardner and Tanner Clough were all able to come up with good yardage.

After a number of players put together a nice drive, Dillon Koop kept the ball on a quarterback sneak for the final TD of the game. The extra point was fumbled but the Wildcats were able to fall on the loose ball in the end zone to make the final score 66-0.

Wallace put together a great game in all areas and all of the players were able to contribute to the success of the game.

Statistic leaders for the Wildcats were John Marquardt with 57 yards rushing on eight carries and he was 6 for 7 passing for 147 yards and four touchdowns.

Jacob Melton also had 57 rushing yards on nine carries.

Landon Swedberg finished the game with 106 reception yards and two touchdowns and one kickoff return touchdown.

Jeff Harms led the way defensively with eight assisted and four unassisted tackles. Swedberg

followed him with three assisted and six unassisted and one fumble recovery.

**Next Action**

Wallace will play Creek Valley in a 3:30 afternoon game in Wallace this Friday, Sept. 6.