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Blackhawks can't complete comeback

By Dwane McFerrin , Staff Writer

Five-time defending league champion Kansas held off a furious rally by the Iowa Blackhawks and won 36-31 at the Mid-America Center in American Professional Football League play Friday night. In a must-win game for the Blackhawks (2-3), emotions got the better of them and crucial mistakes were made down the stretch. The Blackhawks need to regroup after suffering a three-game losing streak, the longest in team history.

"This was a critical game for us and our defense came to play tonight. We mixed up our schemes well" said head coach Mike Wolff. "Our defense was relentless and we wore them out but we lost. We now need to focus on getting more wins so that we can qualify for the playoffs."

After falling behind 16-0 early in the third quarter, the Blackhawks got on track, scoring all 31 of their points in the second half. Ryan Kaufman caught a 33-yard scoring strike from Chuck Wright late in the third period. Jerry Lakin followed with a 28-yard field goal and Elijah Simmons scored on a one-yard plunge to give the Blackhawks their first lead 24-23 with just under four minutes left in the game.

With momentum on their side, the Blackhawks forced Kansas' quarterback Nathan Bolden to pass out of his own end zone. Two near safeties could have increased the lead and given Iowa possession of the ball. Iowa's defensive surge up the middle led to what appeared to be a sack and safety in the end zone. A Blackhawks defender grabbed Bolden's face mask, however, and gave the Koyotes possession of the ball, a first down and better field position.

Kansas followed with a screen pass to Michael Steens for a gain of 12 yards and a 15-yard slant pass to wide receiver Justin Wrecke gave Kansas the ball at the Blackhawks five yard line with only a minute to play in the game. Iowa's nose guard, Cameron Gales, then jumped offside and responded to taunting by Koyotes players by head butting a player. Gales was ejected and Kansas took control of the ball and the game after scoring on a one-yard pass to Wrecke.

"We wasted a lot of opportunities and we found ways to make key mistakes" said Blackhawks General Manager and owner Jake Hiffernan. "The face mask penalty was unintentional. It's a game turner right there. We need to stay positive and hungry after this loss."

Chuck Wright threw his third interception of the game and second of the half to linebacker Dewey Morgan on the ensuing drive and Bolden scored on a one-yard quarterback keeper to put the Koyotes up 36-24 with 31 seconds remaining in the game.

Chris Pomerleau took over the quarterback duties on the final drive and hit Mike Neville on a one-yard touchdown pass to close out the scoring at 36-31.

"Three turnovers were a killer tonight. They did us in" said Wolff. "We are struggling right now protecting the football. We'll take a look at game film and address the negatives and accentuate the positives."

"The face mask penalty in the end zone and the screen pass were big plays in the game. We knew this would be a very close game" said Kansas head coach Jim Green. "Both teams had challenges controlling their emotions. In a tight game, these types of mistakes can determine the outcome."

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Kansas 7 6 10 13 - 36

Iowa 0 0 14 17 - 31

Scoring

Kansas - Nathan Bolden 3-yard run (Thompson kick) 7:44 first quarter

Kansas - Mike Steen 1-yard run (Kick failed) 11:48 second quarter

Kansas - Chris Thompson 29-yard field goal 11:37 third quarter

Iowa - Mike Stuart 2-yard run (Lakin kick) 8:45 third quarter

Kansas - Jermaine Smith 1-yard run (Thompson kick) 3:18 third quarter

Iowa - Ryan Kauffman 33-yard pass from Chuck Wright (Lakin kick) 1:00 third quarter

Iowa - Jerry Lakin 28-yard field goal 8:35 fourth quarter

Iowa - Elijah Simmons 1-yard run (Lakin kick) 3:57 fourth quarter

Kansas - Justin Wrecke 1-yard pass from Bolden (two-point conversion fails) :52 fourth quarter

Kansas - Nathan Bolden 1-yard run (Thompson kick) :31 fourth quarter

Iowa - Mike Neville 1-yard pass from Pomerleau (Lakin kick) :09 fourth quarter

