

Aviators ground Iowa



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The Iowa Blackhawks will have to wait another week to clinch a playoff spot. The Blackhawks fell to the underdog Wichita Aviators on Saturday night, 27-24, in American Professional Football League play at the Mid-America Center.

The Blackhawks (3-2) did not go down without a fight, though. With the Blackhawks down 27-16, Justin Kammrad caught a seven-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Chuck Wright with 6:34 remaining in the game. Wright completed a pass to George Patterson III to gain the two-point conversion.

On the Aviators' (2-4) next possession, they were only able to gain one yard. Kicker Ziya Gunnay attempted a 41-yard field goal, and Iowa linebacker Demetrius Richards blocked the kick. The ball was recovered by Scott Yates at the Wichita 22-yard line with 2:28 on the clock.

Patterson rushed the ball twice to put the Blackhawks in a first-and-goal situation at the eight-yard line with 59 seconds remaining. Kammrad rushed for two yards, and a false start put the ball at the 11-yard line. On second down, Wright threw to Chris Moore, who was unable to reach the ball. Wright then ran for three yards to set up a fourth-down play.

Iowa coach Mike Wolff summoned kicker Corey Harold to attempt a game-tying field goal with 14 seconds remaining. Harold's kick drifted to the right, and Wichita quarterback Jonathan Beasley took a knee to end the game.

"We drove down, we thought we could get the field goal, and it didn't happen," said Wolff, who came to Harold's defense. "When you're kicking field goals in practice it's different. You don't have eight players in front of you in practice."

Wichita scored first in the game, with wide receiver Donald Payne making his first of three touchdown catches to put the Aviators up 7-0 with 23 seconds remaining in the first quarter. This put the Blackhawks behind for the first time since their loss to the Kansas Koyotes on May 6.

"We came out flat. We weren't ready to play," said Wolff. "We never got that big break today, nothing that would sustain the momentum for us."

Both teams traded two touchdowns in the second half, with the Aviators carrying a 20-13 lead into halftime.

The Blackhawks' defense stepped up after halftime, shutting out the Aviators in the third quarter.

"The defense stepped up and played great in the second half, like they always do," noted Wright. "It was nice to see how we battled back."

John Wise scored on a four-yard run to put Wichita up by 11 with 12:16 left in the fourth. This proved to be the game-winner for the Aviators, whom the Blackhawks defeated 40-35 in their first game of the season.

"(Wichita was) more in sync offensively (in this game)," said Wright. "They had more confidence coming out."

Wright completed nine of 24 passes for 134 yards and never seemed to get comfortable in the game.

"Even from the start of the game we were out of rhythm," Wright said.

Former Thomas Jefferson and Nebraska-Omaha standout Kammrad gained 32 all-purpose yards and scored two touchdowns, including a two-yard run with eight seconds remaining in the first half to pull the Blackhawks within seven points at halftime.

Wichita 7 13 0 7 - 27

Blackhawks 0 13 3 8 - 24

Records: Wichita (2-4), Blackhawks (3-2).