

Blackhawks earn title-game berth

The Iowa Blackhawks are headed to the American Professional Football League championship game after beating the Wichita Aviators 50-42 Saturday evening at the Mid-America Center.

By **JOSH MURPHY, Staff Writer**

Published: Monday, July 11, 2005 2:00 AM CDT

The Iowa Blackhawks are headed to the American Professional Football League championship game after beating the Wichita Aviators 50-42 Saturday evening at the Mid-America Center.

Justin Kammrad ran for three touchdowns to lead Iowa. George Patterson III scored on a kickoff return in the first quarter and a seven-yard run in the fourth, and Yano Jones added two touchdown catches for the Blackhawks.

"We challenged our guys all week in practice ... and they responded," said Blackhawks coach Mike Wolff. "They came out jacked up. They were ready to go."

The Blackhawks (6-3) got off to a rough start despite scoring on four of their first possessions and never trailing in the contest. Six defensive penalties for Iowa helped give Wichita 52 extra yards in the first half.

"We made some mental mistakes and some penalties we shouldn't have made," said Kammrad.

"Fortunately, the penalties didn't hurt us (in the end)," added Wolff.

Despite the penalties, the Blackhawks took a 31-21 lead into halftime. Wichita (5-6) brought the game back within three points when Chris Williams caught a Jonathan Beasley pass for a touchdown with 10:15 remaining in the quarter.

Iowa got a scare with around 3:30 left in the quarter when quarterback Chuck Wright injured his right knee on a play. Under pressure, Wright threw an incomplete pass to Kammrad and fell down awkwardly under a Wichita defender.

"(The defender) rolled into my knee, and at first my leg got caught up under his body," said Wright. "It (feels) pretty bad. I'll be fine for next week."

Teammates helped Wright off the field for treatment, and he returned with under a minute remaining in the quarter, which was a turning point for the Blackhawks.

"(Chuck is) the heart and soul of our offense," said Wolff. "When he's on we're tough to beat."

"If we didn't have Chuck, we wouldn't be where we are," agreed Kammrad.

The Blackhawks came out more disciplined in the fourth quarter, with Jones, Kammrad, and Patterson each scoring a touchdown to pull away.

"We just came out and got rid of the mistakes," said Kammrad. "We all came together."

A Williams touchdown catch pulled Wichita to within eight points with 23 seconds remaining. The ensuing onside kick was recovered by Kammrad, and Wright took a knee to run out the clock.

Patterson finished with 133 of the Blackhawks' 364 all-purpose yards. Eric Johnson had 80 kick-return yards, and Kammrad added 62 rushing yards.

Wolff gives the offensive line credit for the consistency of the offense.

"The offensive line dominated tonight," Wolff said.

The Blackhawks will travel to Topeka, Kan. on Saturday, July 16, to take on the Kansas Koyotes in the APFL championship game. Iowa will come in having won its last three contests, though they will take on a Kansas team that has never lost in three years of APFL play.

Blackhawks general manager Jake Hiffernan remains optimistic about his team based on Saturday's performance.

"Regardless of all the penalties and all the things that went wrong in the first half," Hiffernan said. "They still went out and played consistent ball."

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