

Blackhawks suffer heart-breaking title game loss

A Kansas Koyotes miracle field goal was the only thing that kept the Iowa Blackhawks from accomplishing the impossible.

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TOPEKA, Kan. - A Kansas Koyotes miracle field goal was the only thing that kept the Iowa Blackhawks from accomplishing the impossible.

With 3.6 seconds remaining in the game and Iowa having taken a 24-23 lead only seven seconds earlier, Kansas kicker Jerry Lakin kicked a 33-yard field goal to give the Koyotes a 26-24 victory in the American Professional Football League championship game.

The game was a roller coaster battle that included four fourth-quarter lead changes. Kansas held a 15-9 lead going into the final quarter. The Koyotes moved the ball down to the Iowa one-yard line, but the Blackhawks' defense held their ground, stopping Kansas at the one-yard line with 12:44 remaining.

Iowa's offense took over, but quarterback Chuck Wright promptly threw an interception to Koyote defender Bobby Bihiray with 11:30 left. The Blackhawks returned the favor on the next play, when Dontrell Ducker intercepted a Chris Coffin pass in the end zone.

Two plays later, Ryan Kauffman took a Wright pass across the field, giving the Blackhawks a first-and-goal at the two-yard line. On third down, George Patterson III snuck through the Iowa offensive line into the end zone, and Corey Harold kicked the extra point to give the Blackhawks their first lead of the game, 16-15.

"We knew with the fourth quarter coming that we had to make some big plays, and we did," Weight said.

Kansas drove down to the 10-yard line, and on fourth down Lakin, an import from the Kansas Storm, missed a field goal attempt. However, the Blackhawks were flagged for illegal defense, which moved Kansas into first-and-goal territory, and on the next play, Donnell Smith ran five yards for a touchdown. The Koyotes made the two-point conversion, giving them the 23-16 lead with 5:10 left.

On the ensuing kickoff, Eric Johnson avoided falling down twice to move the ball to the Kansas 18-yard line. The Blackhawks moved the ball to the two-yard line, and on third down, Wright threw to Yano Jones in the end zone, bringing the score to 23-22. Coach Mike Wolff immediately had his offense go for the two-point conversion.

"We had momentum on our side," explained Wolff. "(Going for two) was a pre-determined plan."

Wright once again threw to Jones, who barely got into the end zone to put the Blackhawks up 24-23 with a mere 11 seconds on the clock. Harold's kickoff went to Chris Galloway, who ran the ball 27 yards before he was finally tackled at the 18-yard line with 3.6 seconds left.

Koyotes Coach Warren Seitz sent Lakin out to win the game, and his kick drifted to the left before barely clearing the suspender above the left upright, winning the game for Kansas.

"We put on a hell of a show for the crowd tonight," Wolff said. "I told (the players) that it was a tough loss, but to keep their heads up high. It was a great game."

Defense ruled the game in the first half, with each team exchanging a field goal in the first quarter. Kenny Shields added a touchdown catch to put Kansas up 9-3, and both teams thwarted scoring attempts with an interception apiece in the final minute of the half.

"Some points of the night we were in synch, and some points of the night we weren't in synch," said Wright.

"We had to regroup a little bit on offense," added Wolff. "(The Koyotes) were leaving the middle open for us."

Galloway returned the opening kickoff of the second half 48 yards for a touchdown to give Kansas the game's biggest lead at 15-3. Two Harold field goals closed the gap to one possession at 15-9 leading up to the fourth quarter.

Wright completed 10 passes for 104 yards in the contest. Kauffman caught three passes for 62 yards, and Justin Kammrad had 16 carries for 49 yards.

Kansas won its third APFL championship in as many seasons, continuing an unprecedented streak of 30 consecutive victories, having never lost in APFL play.

"It hurts," said Wright. "Emotions were high. I thought we had it."

"It was everything ... a title game should be," Wolff reflected. "Neither team deserved to lose."

Iowa Blackhawks 3 0 6 15 - 24

Kansas Koyotes 3 6 6 11 - 26