

ANDALE FOOTBALL SMOKE SIGNALS

November 19, 2018

The largest crowd to ever witness a football game in Pratt filled their newly expanded seating and ringed the field with standees to watch the two 3A heavyweights, the Pratt Greenbacks and the Andale Indians. They duked it out Friday night for a ticket to the state championship game in Hutchinson the Saturday after Thanksgiving. The game was no place for the faint hearted as both teams toyed with the crowd's emotions, sending the hopes of their fans soaring and as quickly crashing in an epic battle that was decided with 39 seconds left in the game. Andale had just scored on an Easton Hunter to Scotti Easter 10 yard pass after the same combo had hooked up on a 32 yard completion to put the Indians in range. The Frogs held a 21-19 lead, forcing the Indians to go for the two point conversion. With everything riding on the conversion, the Greenbacks stamped their ticket to Hutch with a stop of the two point try.

The game started out quite differently with the Indians taking the Pratt opening kickoff and grinding out yards until the Frogs forced a fourth down situation near midfield. Andale punter Easton Hunter stepped as to kick then threw a 17 yard pass to Mason Fairchild. Junior Mac Brand picked up 34 yards in two carries to the Pratt 2 yard line. Ethan Baalmann finished off the drive for the score and with Eli Clouse's PAT the Indians led 7-0.

The Frogs responded with a long drive that the Indians finally stopped on downs at the Andale 12 yard line. From there the Indians drove all the way down to the Pratt two yard line for a first and goal. A holding call set the Indians back to the 14 yard line. The Black and Gold fans anticipation of a two touchdown lead evaporated when Baalmann's pass in the corner of the end zone was picked by the Frogs, giving them the ball on the 20 yard line on the touchback.

The Greenbacks responded with a 48 yard pass by quarterback Travis Theis that put them in the red zone inside the 10 yard line. The Indian fans went wild when the Andale defense stiffened and again denied the home team a score as the first half was winding down.

Pratt had deferred to the second half to receive the kickoff. They proceeded to march down the field to the Andale 20 yard line. Cayden Albers' sack forced the Frogs to surrender the ball on downs. Pratt returned the favor forcing the Indians to punt. Theis returned the punt 21 yards, threw for 24 yards, then burst through the Andale line for Pratt's first score. The Frogs' conversion tied the game at 7 all.

Scotti Easter returned the kickoff for 27 yards. Sophomore Eli Rowland caught a Baalmann pass for 21 yards, then reeled off a nice 17 yard run. What looked like a sure bid to answer Pratt's score suddenly vanished with two back-to-back holding calls, forcing the Indians into a punting situation. Easton Hunter's 44 yard punt rolled dead on the Frog 2 yard line. Theis advanced the ball to the six yard line on the third quarter's final play.

Knowing the Frog star's credentials as a four year starter and the sophomore experience of leading his team to the 4A-II championship, the Indians knew that in order to win they had to keep Theis from breaking the big one. But Theis found the crease in the Andale defense and put distance between himself and his pursuers enroute to a 94 yard score.

Not to be deterred, the Indians came right back, driving to the Pratt two yard line. Andale fans, anticipating an Indian score, were dismayed to see the ball squirting out of the scrum and falling into the hands of a Frog.

A three and out forced the Greenbacks to punt. Eli Rowland fielded the ball at the 36 yard line and returned it to the three yard line. Mac Brand punched in the score. The Indians failed to convert leaving them trailing 13-14.

Buoyed by Andale's one point deficit, Theis finished off a 57 yard drive with his third touchdown of the game, setting the stage for Andale's final scoring drive.

Mac Brand led the Andale rushers with 105 yards. Ethan Baalman and Easton Hunter each passed for 72 yards and Scotti Easter caught four passes for 54 yards and a touchdown. Mac Brand had 11 tackles and Scotti Easter had 10 tackles to lead the Indian defense.

All four semifinalists in 3A are undefeated. Sabetha won the East semifinal, shutting out unbeaten Galena. Sabetha is the defending champion in the old 3A class.

The AVCTL Div.IV all league teams have been announced. When league teams are selected, sometimes the number one priority for a coach is to get his players named to the team, ignoring the elephant in the room. The Indians collectively defeated their five league opponents 242-20, three of whom were spared a larger margin by the "mercy rule". The composition of the all-league team suggests that the Andale team is a team that plays above its talent level.

Named to the first team offense were: Sawyer Simon, senior running back; Cooper VenJohn, senior offensive line; Ethan Shackelford, senior offensive line, Cory Mohr, senior center, Mason Fairchild, senior tight end; and Scotti Easter, junior special teams. Mason Fairchild was named the offensive MVP.

Earning first team defensive honors were: Cayden Winter, sophomore defensive line; Mac Brand, junior linebacker; Caden Parthemer, sophomore linebacker; Ethan Baalman, senior defensive back; Scotti Easter, junior defensive back; and Mason Fairchild, senior defensive end. Mac Brand was selected as the defensive MVP.

Picked for second team offense were Mac Brand, junior running back; Devin Marx, senior running back; and Carson Fair, junior offensive line. Gaining second team defensive honors were Carson Fair, junior defensive line; and Easton Hunter, junior defensive back.

Honorable mention selections were Ethan Baalman, senior quarterback; Scotti Easter, junior wide receiver; Easton Hunter, junior punter; Devin Marx, senior linebacker; and Eli Clouse, junior linebacker.

Congratulations to Morgan Brasser and Jacy Anderson on their selection to the Wichita Eagle's All-Metro girls' golf team. The Andale girls' golf team finished second in the 4A state championship tournament to Topeka Hayden. Andale medalists were Brasser in second, Anderson in fifth, and Jaela Albers in tenth. Irv Schuler, AHS golf coach, was named the "Kansas golf coach of the year".

Andale's volleyball team, under the direction of Kaylie Bergkamp, won their sub-state tournament at Andale and finished fourth in the state tournament with a record of 34-9.

All-Metro football teams will be announced later in the week and All-State the following week. We will keep you posted.

Congratulations Brint Walstad for the correct answer to last week's Andale Trivia Question: Tim Fairchild was an assistant football coach at Pratt in the '90s.

This week's Andale Trivia Question: How many times has Andale played in the state football semifinals?

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