After hanging with a larger Perkins County, Neb. team for the first half, a few big plays and some ticky tack mistakes led to the Holyoke Dragons' second loss on the football field this year.

Holyoke traveled to Grant, Neb. Friday, Sept. 7 to face the Perkins County Plainsmen.

On paper, Perkins County dwarfed the Dragons but that didn't deter Holyoke from putting up a fight.

Coach John Zilla was very pleased with the way the defense looked last Friday night. He did note they were a bit gassed in the second half but they kept fighting.

Zilla said he was approached by some Perkins County parents and fans who said they weren't expecting such a hard fought and physical battle.

Holyoke won the toss and elected to defer to the second half. The Plainsmen moved the ball down to the Dragon 22 yard line on their opening drive before turning it over on downs. Holyoke then went three and out and was forced to punt the ball back to Perkins County.

Logan Tharp, at right, goes up for a pass in the end zone during Holyoke's 12-34 loss to Perkins County. The pass unfortunately was broken up by Chris Throckmorton (23).

—Enterprise photo

The Dragon defense really came alive and forced Perkins County to punt on the ensuing drive.

Pinned deep inside their own 5 yard line, Holyoke couldn't do much and again was forced to punt.

After a short punt, Perkins County was poised to punch one in the end zone as they began at Holyoke's 20 yard line. On second down, the ball popped loose and Wyatt Powell pounced on it, giving Holyoke the ball with 3:37 left in the opening quarter.

Penalties killed the drive and the team in green was forced to punt for the third time. Perkins County began on Holyoke's 48 yard line and three plays later, quarterback Elliot Carlson broke loose for a 45-yard touchdown run. The PAT was good giving Perkins County a 7-0 lead with 1:02 left in the first quarter.

Bradley Cumming took the ensuing kickoff and returned it to Holyoke's 43 yard line. Bradley, along with older brother Brett, helped set the Dragons up with decent field position all night with nice returns.

The second quarter was a back and forth battle with neither team finding paydirt.

Entering the locker room at the half, Holyoke trailed by seven but had high spirits. However things would change once back on the field.

Just over two minutes into the second half, Carlson busted loose for a long 87-yard touchdown score. After the successful PAT, Holyoke trailed 0-14 as the coaches began to scratch their heads.

Holyoke's next possession ended after an interception which set the Plainsmen up just inside Dragon territory at the 47. After two first downs, Carlson fired off a 19-yard touchdown pass to put Perkins County up by 21.

The Dragons' next possession proved to be their best of the game up to that point. They methodically moved the ball down to the Plainsmen 7 yard line but a delay of game penalty set them back. After a few plays that didn't yield much, a fumble pushed Holyoke back even further and they eventually coughed the ball up on downs to end the third quarter.

Perkins County would score again on their next possession off of a 45-yard touchdown run.

Sophomore quarterback TJ Gertner eyes one of his receivers during Holyoke's game against Perkins County in Grant, Neb. last Friday night. Gertner got the start after the team learned junior quarterback Trevor Dalton tore his ACL. Dalton went down in Holyoke's season opener against St. Francis with the knee injury.

—Enterprise photo

Bradley Cumming again gave Holyoke excellent field position after returning the ensuing kickoff to the Dragon 47. Again, Holyoke found their offense and moved down to the 22. From there, sophomore quarterback TJ Gertner found Brett Cumming open in the end zone for a touchdown pass. The PAT was no good but Holyoke was finally on the board.

Gertner got the start after Holyoke found out junior quarterback Trevor Dalton tore his ACL and will miss the rest of the season. Dalton went down during Holyoke's season opener against St. Francis, Kan. and is scheduled to undergo surgery early October.

Zilla was very pleased with the poise of Gertner who all of a sudden has been thrown into the starting role.

On the second play of Perkins County's next drive, they fumbled the ball and Logan Tharp grabbed it. With a little momentum under them, the Dragons, their sideline and the fans woke up a bit. However, a fumbled snap on the first play of the drive gave the ball right back to the Plainsmen. Four plays later, Carlson trotted into the end zone for a third time. The PAT was no good and with 3:01 left, Perkins County led 34-6.

Brett Cumming returned the ensuing kickoff to the Plainsmen 48 yard line. From there, Holyoke moved down to the 5 where Bradley Cumming took it in for his first career high school touchdown. Again, the PAT was no good leaving the scoreboard reading 12-34 with :33 left.

Perkins County took a knee to end the game.

Stats recorded

The Dragons finished the game with 225 yards of total offense. Gertner completed four passes for 66 yards, one touchdown and one interception. Tharp led the team with two catches for 38 yards. Brett Cumming caught one ball for 22 yards. Logan Zeiler also hauled in a pass.

Bradley Cumming led the rushing effort with 78 yards on 11 carries. Brett Cumming had 55 yards on 12 carries and Dylan Kotch had 29 yards on 10 carries. Others carrying the ball were Nick Ortner and Gertner.

Defensively, Tharp led the team with 12 tackles.

Zilla was pleased with the effort of the Dragons last Friday night. He noted Kotch did a fantastic job of blocking the entire game.

The Dragons will open conference play Friday night, Sept. 14 when they travel to Ault to face Highland. Kickoff is slated for 7:30 p.m.

Zilla said both the offensive and defensive lines need to fire off the ball Friday night if the Dragons want to leave Ault with their first win of the season.

Other North Central action reported

Other North Central Conference teams played last week. Cornerstone Christian fell to Denver Christian 0-24, Highland fell to Estes Park 20-27, Resurrection Christian lost to Fort Lupton 42-54, Yuma beat Lyons 14-0, Wiggins beat Front Range Christian 20-7 and Wray beat Burlington 13-0.

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