

# FALL SPORTS PREVIEW

## Sweet runs for 98 yards, 2 TDs in Grid win

Nicholas County rolled up nearly 200 yards of rushing offense in Saturday's Grid-o-Rama win over Lewis County at Rowan County, but it was not enough to overcome Bluejacket coach Robert Hopkins' disappointment with his team's performance.

"I didn't like how we played at all," he said. "The first half we came out and I didn't think we played with a lot of intensity on defense. Our offense was just shaky. To go from (last week's scrimmage against Harrison County) when the line played so great, to this week where they couldn't even pick up a blitz (is upsetting)."

Despite his disappointment Hopkins learned some things about his team.

"But, that's what scrimmages are for," he continued. "It's to find your weak points and the ones who really want to play and the ones who don't really want to play. I think we've got an understanding after tonight the ones we can count on and the ones we can't."

Behind the play of Shane Sweet, who gained 98 yards on eight carries and scored two touchdowns, Nicholas County captured a 20-12 victory in its final exhibition game of the season. Even though the game was scheduled for just three quarters, Nicholas County runners tallied 192 yards on 32 carries.

Sweet was no more impressed than his coach.

"We need to work better," the senior running back said. "I've still got a lot of work on getting in shape."

Lewis County drove the length of the field on the game's opening possession, but the Lions drive stopped at the 18-yard line.

Nicholas County took over and went right to work on the ground. Andy McCarty picked up 14 yards on the first play. The Bluejackets

racked up six or more yards on four of the next six plays to move the ball into Lewis County territory.

The Blue and White gained 20 yards on a personal foul flag against the Lions after quarterback Jordan Mynear connected with Cade Gilliland for an 8-yard pass play.

The Bluejackets drove the ball down to Lewis County's 4-yard line just before the quarter ran out. However a Nicholas County penalty and an incomplete pass ended the drive at the 9-yard line.

Lewis County could not move the ball and punted it over to the Bluejackets, who started their next drive at the Lion 28-yard line.

On the second play, Mynear found Gilliland, who streaked down the left sideline for a 31-yard gain, before being pushed out of bounds at the two.

Sweet ran the play in the middle on the next play for a touchdown with 9:04 left to play in the half. However, the Bluejackets were unable to add the extra point.

The Lions moved backward on their next possession after a pair of penalties and a 7-yard loss when quarterback Andy Downing slipped behind the line on third down, forcing the team to punt.

Lewis County needed just two plays to get the ball back as Downing intercepted a Nicholas County pass and returned it 18 yards.

Lewis County went to the air and had some success, picking up two key third downs on long pass plays. The drive nearly stalled at the Nicholas County 42-yard line when a fourth-and-10 pass play appeared to be broken up by a Bluejacket defender. However, pass interference was called on the play, giving Lewis County new life.

The Lions took advantage of the opportunity as they returned to the Bluejackets

game and needed just three plays to get into the end zone. Cole Cooper hauled in a 9-yard pass for the score with 1:36 remaining until halftime.

Lewis County tried to run the ball for the 2-point conversion, but was stopped just short of the goal line leaving the score tied at 6-6.

Nicholas County moved the ball on its final drive of the half as Mynear found Brandon Tedder for a 20-yard pass play. The senior quarterback picked up another 23 yards on a pair of running plays, but time ran out with the ball at the Lewis County 35-yard line.

At the start of the second half, the Bluejackets needed just three plays to break the tie. Sweet took an inside handoff and ran untouched through the middle of the Lion defense for a 64-yard touchdown. McCarty added the extra point and Nicholas County moved ahead 13-7 with 10:04 left in the game.

"We came out in the third quarter after challenging (the team at halftime)," Hopkins said. "I think we got the right people in the right positions as far as running the ball and running it hard. I thought the Sweet led came out in the second half and really ran hard. I thought number nine (Logan White) ran the ball pretty hard at fullback and did a good job."

Mynear recovered a fumble on the Lions' ensuing drive and Nicholas County took over at the Lewis County

45-yard line.

The Bluejackets returned to their ground game and ran the ball for seven straight plays. Sweet started the series by picking up 19 yards. However, the drive stalled at the 6-yard line and Nicholas County attempted a field goal. The center and the holder could not make the connection and the drive ended with a pass attempt that fell incomplete.

Lewis County gave the ball right back by fumbling the snap on their second play and Droye Miles recovered it at the Lion 15-yard line.

After the Lions tackled the Bluejackets in the backfield for a loss on first down, Mynear rushed the ball down to the 5-yard line on a pair of carries, before White punched it in for the score. McCarty added the extra point to give Nicholas County a 20-6 lead with 3:05 to play.

Lewis County went to the air for the final drive and Downing hit Jon Everman for a 31-yard gain on fourth-and-10 to keep the series alive. Downing suffered an injury later in the drive and replacement quarterback Caleb Enix found Blake Kilgore for a 25-yard gain to put the ball on the Nicholas County 10-yard line with just over two minutes to play.

After being stopped on three straight plays, the Lions finally got into the end

zone on fourth down, when Enix found Cooper over the middle for a 10-yard score with 18 seconds left. The Bluejacket defensive line blocked the ensuing point after attempt and then Miles recovered Lewis County's onside kick to essentially end the game.

Nicholas County finished with 267 yards of total offense. Mynear was 6-for-11 for 79 yards through the

air and added 62 yards on nine carries on the ground. Gilliland topped the receivers with two catches for 39 yards.

"Overall we are looking forward to the season," Hopkins said. "We've got two weeks before our opening game against West Carter (Sept. 5 at home). I believe that we can take care of some of those problems we had and get ready to go."



Head Coach Robert Hopkins

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