

Jewell hopes to end semifinal losing streak in NAIA playoffs

By Bill Richardson

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In the last four football seasons, the William Jewell Cardinals have lost only one game on their home field in Liberty.

That's a good omen for the Cardinals as they prepare to play host to Northwestern of Orange City, Iowa, in the semifinal round of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division II playoffs on Dec. 4. Westminster College (Pa.), 9-1, plays at Linfield College (Ore.), 10-0, in the other semifinal game.

The NAIA Division II semifinals, however, have proved to be a stumbling block for William Jewell. The lone home loss during the four-year

period came in a 31-10 trouncing by Wilmington College (Ohio) in the 1980 Division II semifinals. William Jewell was knocked out by Austin of Texas 33-28 in the semifinals last year.

"Two years in the semifinals and we haven't won," senior quarterback Kelly Groom said Saturday in the aftermath of the Cards' 44-43 triple-overtime victory over Sul Ross State. "We've got to get ready to play, give it our best effort, see what happens."

The Cardinals, 9-1, will need their best effort against Northwestern, 12-0, and ranked No. 1 in the final Division II poll. Northwestern quarterback Lee McKinstrey led the NAIA with 37 touchdown passes.

"I think you're going to see a

game similar to our one Saturday against Sul Ross State," Jewell Coach Vic Wallace said. "Northwestern has a great passer, too. He ranks right up there next to Larry Hill in the national statistics."

The Cardinals saw enough of Hill on Saturday. Although not highly mobile, Hill had an uncanny knack for sidestepping tacklers and getting off passes. He completed 31 of 55 for 415 yards and four touchdowns against Jewell and set four NAIA playoff passing records.

Despite playing on a losing team, Hill was chosen the outstanding offensive player of the game in a vote of the media. Groom also had an outstanding day with 17 completions in 22 attempts for 251 yards. He also threw

four touchdown passes, two in the overtime periods.

Groom endorsed Hill's selection for the award.

"That's the best job of quarterbacking I've ever seen," Groom said. "It was a courageous effort on his part. I have no problem with Hill getting the award."

One of the key passes in the game didn't originate from a quarterback. In the third quarter, with Jewell trailing 30-16 and Sul Ross seemingly in charge of the game, Jeff McGuire, back in punt formation, connected with Mike Newman for a fourth-down 16-yard gain to the Sul Ross State 49.

The pass gave Jewell a first down, and the Cardinals went on to complete

a 72-yard touchdown drive. It was the second time this season McGuire has completed a first-down pass off punt formation.

"We felt like we could pass in that situation," Wallace said. "We called it on the sideline. It was a fake all the way."

The offensive battle was finally settled on an outstanding defensive play by Jewell sophomore linebacker Tim Johnson. Sul Ross gambled on a two-point conversion run instead of choosing to kick for one point and force another overtime period. Johnson stopped Sul Ross tailback Maurice Stephens on a smash into the line.

Jewell had to stop the Lobos' last-ditch gamble twice. Sul Ross drew a reprieve after Hill's incomplete pass

when Jewell was penalized for having 12 men on the field. Wallace said the Cardinals decided to change their goal-line defense, but one of the players affected didn't know of the change and went into the game.

"I thought it was pretty gutsy that they went for two points," Jewell defensive back David Armstrong said. "There was no doubt we had 12 men on the field. The official spotted it right away, and after the play was over, he counted again."

"When they ran the play again, I just thought we've got to stop them one more time. Tim Johnson stopped him. When somebody is on the goal line, it's a good bet TJ is going to win the battle."