

Jewell wins in three overtimes, advances to NAIA semifinal

By Bill Richardson

sports writer

Alpine, Texas—In a seesaw battle marked by big plays and three suspense-filled overtimes Saturday, William Jewell escaped with a 44-43 football victory over Sul Ross (Texas) State and moved into the semifinals of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division II playoffs.

Immediately after the game, the NAIA announced that William Jewell will meet Northwestern of Orange City, Iowa, in a semifinal game Dec. 4 in Liberty. The championship game will be Dec. 11 at a site to be determined.

Kelly Groom's 20-yard touchdown pass to tight end Scott Martin and Steve Hudson's conversion pushed Jewell ahead 44-37 in the third overtime. But Sul Ross bounced back and scored on a 2-yard run by Andrew Hill, then decided to gamble for the victory on a two-point conversion attempt.

Quarterback Larry Hill's pass for the conversion fell incomplete, but when Jewell was detected with 12 men on the field, the Lobos were given a second chance. Tailback Maurice Stephens attempted to run over the right side of his line but was turned back by a surge of outside defenders and was stopped short of the goal by linebacker Tim Johnson.

"Our defense from the outside plugged it up," said Johnson, a sophomore from Rockhurst High School. "He had nowhere to run. He ran right into me."

Johnson and his Jewell teammates seemed more relieved than happy at the conclusion of the game that thrust the Cardinals into the semifinals for the third straight year.

"It's probably the most intense situation I've ever been in," Johnson said. "This game really brought our team together. Sul Ross has a super team. It's too bad both teams can't advance after a game like this."

Sul Ross Coach Joe George said he had three good reasons for going for the two-point conversion instead of taking the kick and forcing another overtime. George said he figured momentum was on the Lobos' side, that Jewell's

offense was beginning to take its toll on his defense, and that he had a gut feeling it was time to go for two.

Then George lamented, "Right now I wish I had kicked it. Of course, hindsight is always better. But it was only a yard and a half."

Groom, a senior quarterback, gave his tight ends the credit for coming up with the decisive touchdown pass.

"The tight ends kept telling me all afternoon they were open over the middle," Groom said. "We never ran it until the third overtime. Then we went for it on first down and scored. Scott (Martin) was wide open and did a great job of taking it all the way for the touchdown."

Groom passed to fullback Steve Hodges for a 3-yard touchdown in the opening overtime and Hudson converted. Hill's pass to Maurice Stephens for a yard and Charles Muller's conversion tied it at 37-37 for Sul Ross. Neither team scored in the second overtime. Muller missed a field-goal attempt from 52 yards and Hudson's shot from 28 yards was blocked.

Hill, Sul Ross' senior quarterback, was named outstanding offensive player of the game. Hill set four NAIA passing records with 31 completions in 55 attempts for 415 yards and four touchdowns. Nose guard David Roensch of Sul Ross was named the top defensive player. He blocked Hudson's 20-yard field goal with 3 minutes, 50 seconds left in regulation play and forced the overtime.

In the overtime format, each team is given the ball at the opponent's 20. A team can make a first down while advancing for a score.

Groom completed 17 of 22 passes for 251 yards and four touchdowns. He connected with junior split end Andre Nelson for a 33-yard score in the first quarter and again with Nelson on a 10-yarder with 3 minutes, 9 seconds in regulation as Jewell fought back from a 30-16 deficit.

Jewell, 9-1, totaled 436 yards of offense while Sul Ross, which made the playoffs for the first time and finished 8-1, totaled 443 yards. The Lobos made only 28 yards rushing in 26 attempts.