

# Jewell coach becomes poll watcher after loss

Wallace says team shouldn't fall below eighth in ratings

By Bill Richardson

A Member of the Sports Staff

Now comes the next painful step for the William Jewell Cardinals — waiting until Wednesday.

Stunned by a 9-7 upset loss to Mid-America Nazarene on Saturday, the top-ranked Cardinals are agonizing over their fate in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division II poll and wondering how far they will fall.

"We should drop to no less than eighth," Jewell Coach Vic Wallace said. "If we win our last two games, we'll be in the playoffs."

The NAIA picks the top eight ranked teams for its Division II playoffs following the end of regular-season play on Nov. 13. Jewell's final two games are against Benedictine on Saturday night in Atchison, Kan., and Tarkio on Nov. 13 in Liberty.

Jewell was the only team among the top 10 in the Division II poll to lose Saturday. The Cardinals, 6-1, had been ranked No. 1 since Oct. 6 and were a solid choice for the top spot in last week's poll, receiving 14 of the 16 first-place votes.

"Well, Jewell did lose a close game Saturday," said Steve Veal, assistant director of communications at the NAIA's headquarters in downtown Kansas City. "Sometimes that won't drop a team too far. Other times, I've seen teams drop way down. Mid-America was not a ranked team, so that could be a factor. You don't know how the 16 raters are thinking. We'll just have to wait until 2 p.m. Wednesday to find out."

Wallace offered no excuses for the Cardinals' subpar performance against Mid-America Nazarene, a team that Jewell had dominated the previous three years. Mid-America, 4-4, came into the game with four straight losses.

"I think we were flat," Wallace said Saturday. "I feel we were frustrated as much as anything else.

Mid-America Nazarene did a super job. They did something no one else has been able to do, and that's bottle us up.

"If we played again tomorrow, I'd use the same game plan. They (Mid-America) were hitting and sliding to the gaps. Usually they will have some breakdowns. Their techniques dominated us. Last week we had 302 yards rushing against Baker. This week we had 23."

The players at Mid-America Nazarene, in only its fifth year of varsity football, began their celebration on the field as the clock ticked off the final seconds of the upset victory in Olathe.

"You betcha, we're tickled to death," said Derek Dirks, Mid-America's sophomore quarterback from Hereford, Texas. "This takes the cake. I'm still having a hard time believing we won."

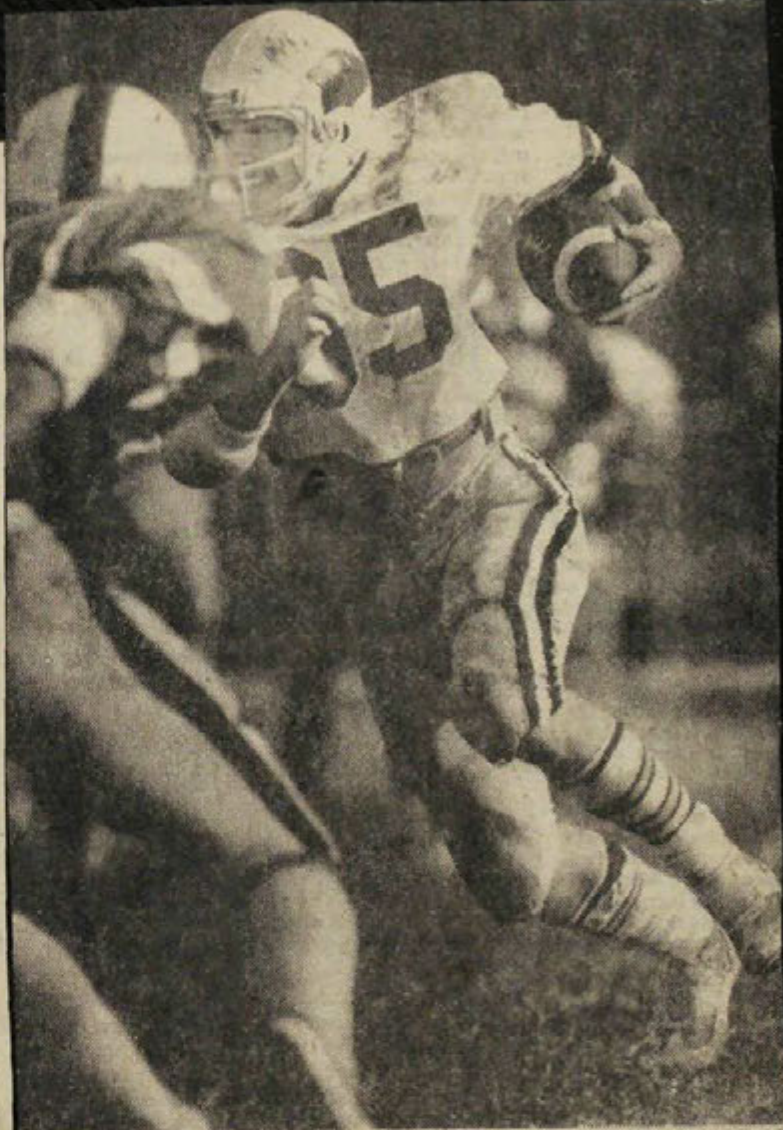
"Nobody thought we could win this game except ourselves. We had our own little secret. We figured that with Jewell being No. 1, they were probably taking us lightly."

"We've thought all along we were a good team, that we could play with Jewell. We kind of came together for this game. We went out there thinking we had nothing to lose. On the opening drive, we took it down their throats. We didn't do much after that, but it seemed like when we had to have the yards or the first downs, we got them."

Dirks said the Pioneers went into the game prepared to throw.

"Because their rushing defense was highly ranked, we thought we'd have to pass 70 percent of the time," Dirks said. "But we found some holes to run. The offensive line did a great job. Jeff Martin (tackle) and Ward Young (guard) opened up some good holes on the right side, and when we needed to run left, Rick Allen (guard) and Greg Boatman (tackle) opened them up."

"Because Jewell uses a 4-3 (de-



Mark Hinojosa/Staff

Running back Steve Hodges of William Jewell tries to find room to run against Mid-America Nazarene. But the Pioneers defense stopped Hodges and the rest of the Jewell offense in taking a 9-7 victory.

fense), nobody was lined up over our center, Scott Johnson, but he had a lot of reach blocks on the linebackers. We flexed our tight end out a lot and made them bring a linebacker over there against him. That stretched their linebackers."

One of the big plays for Mid-America was a third-and-8 pass from Dirks to Jeff Kent with 1 minute, 53 seconds remaining. The 10-yard gain gave the Pioneers a first down on their 44. By the time Jewell got the

ball back for a final desperation pass, there were only 14 seconds left.

Meanwhile, Pittsburg State's outlook for the NAIA Division I playoffs brightened. The Gorillas, ranked seventh last week, defeated Wayne State of Nebraska 28-7 and improved their record to 7-1. Second-ranked Moorhead State of Minnesota was tied by Minnesota-Morris 13-13, giving Pittsburg an opportunity to move up. All other teams above Pittsburg State won.