



Sherwood Park Northstars vs. Fort Saskatchewan Lightning October 4, 2009

The Sherwood Park Northstars are learning a few lessons in patience. And it is paying off. Up against the winless Fort Saskatchewan Lightning, the 1 and 5 Northstars looked to get into the win column for the second week in a row.

Things didn't start out so well for the Stars, however, as it was the Lightning that showed patience in executing 13 plays as they marched downfield from their own 35 yard line. Play 14 was a 1 yard plunge into the end zone, and with a 2 pt convert, the score was Stars 0, Lightning 8.

The Stars first offensive series was shut down quickly by the Lightning as the Stars tried early to get their outside game in play. Denied a first down, the Stars turned the ball over on yards not gained and it took only 6 plays for the Lightning to score again. The convert was missed, and the score was Stars 0, Lightning 14 at the end of the first quarter.

The wet, misty weather played a factor in contributing to several fumbles by both teams. The first was on the very next kick-off. The Stars received the kick but a fumble left the Lightning with possession of the ball and with extra yardage because of a Northstar penalty, the Lightning took over in great field position on the Stars 35 yard line. Fortunately for the Stars, the defensive line was able to step up with some second quarter intensity, and Mark Risdon took out the Lightning runner in the backfield for a loss on second down. Facing a third and long field position, Fort Saskatchewan was forced to punt.

Now, with the ball on their own 12 yard line, the Stars tried their outside game again, going back to the well with Daniel Marshall. That outside run, however, was still not the darling it had been the week previous and with the Lightning defence prepared for it, the Stars found themselves punting on third. The opening Lightning play was fumbled and then recovered by the Stars, who were finally able to put positive yardage in with a gritty ten-yard run through traffic by Alex Irving. Unfortunately, that effort was followed up with an intercepted pass and the Lightning again had possession. The Star's leading tackler for the day, Adam Loov, kept the Lightning from capitalizing on the turnover and the ball was once again in the Northstar's offence possession, who continued to struggle. In fact, at times it seemed that the Stars were their own worst enemy. After a perfectly executed onside punt, with Colton Henderson recovering the ball for a huge positive gain, the play was called back due to an odd false start penalty. The Star's defence came up big again with Logan Schlamp snatching up a fumble and scampering downfield for 20 yards,

the longest gain by the Stars to that point in the game. With time running out in the half, Marshall was finally able to break free on the outside for a 24 yard run but stepped out of bounds before reaching the end zone, and with that whistle, the half was over.

They say that the second half of a football game is like starting over from scratch and for the Northstars, nothing could have been truer. The near touchdown at the end of the first half may have provided a renewed hunger for the Northstar's offence or perhaps the changes made by the Northstar's coaching staff at halftime were enough to baffle the Lightning defence, but either way, the Northstars were able to almost utterly control the game-play of the entire second half.

It began with a 48 yard touchdown by quarterback Shaun O'Neill, who called his own number on the second play of the half. The convert was missed, leaving the score Stars 6, Lightning 14. A quarterback sack by Schlamp with help from Mitch Friesen, pushed the Lightning back and forced them to punt on third down. The ball was returned 40 yards by Henderson but penalties cost the Stars and they had to settle for lining up on the Lightning 30 yard line. It was enough, though, as the Stars pushed forward with more gritty running by Irving and had the added help of a Lightning penalty, leaving them on the 1 yard line. O'Neill plunged over for the major but the convert was no good. The Stars were within 2 with 12, the Lightning 14.

A fumble recovery on the kick-off handed the Star's offence the ball once again. This time the middle opened up with a 25 yard run by Grady Forsberg, setting up a quarterback bootleg to the outside for the touchdown. With the successful convert, the Stars pulled ahead for the first time in the game, 19 to 14.

The Lightning offence didn't give up though. A completed pass up the middle on a third down attempt resulted in a long dash for a Lightning touchdown. The convert was missed leaving the Star's behind 19 to 20.

The teams exchanged fumbles as the third quarter ended. It wasn't until the beginning of the fourth quarter that the Star's outside game came to life. Plays up the middle opened up the outside allowing Marshall to sprint 51 yards for a touchdown, putting the Stars ahead 25 to 20. The convert was missed.

The Star's defence shone again with tackles by Steven Budjak and Aaron Chabaylo causing the ball to be turned over on yards not gained. The Star's offence went up the middle twice to set up Marshall, who sprinted outside for 57 yards and another major. The convert was good and the Stars were leading 32 to 20.

Big tackles again by Schlamp and Risdon allowed the offence to take over on the Fort Saskatchewan 42 yard line. A 27 yard handoff to Forsberg set up a 15 yard run by Irving for the touchdown. The convert made the score Stars 39, the Lightning 20 with time running out in the game.

Head Coach Rob MacKenzie was pleased with the second half play of the Northstars, saying “we stepped it up in the second half. The defensive line was a big contributing factor.” The Stars were also able to get everyone some playing time, an all important factor for the mostly rookie squad. The players “understand where they are going,” said MacKenzie.