

Knights rally after poor start but fall short at Taco Shack

Despite the fact that he caught his first varsity touchdown pass, sophomore JD Jordan's varsity football debut was less than ideal. No, the game was a downer because the Knights lost, 14-7 to their arch-rivals to the north, the Anderson Trojans, in the (COVID)-19th annual Taco Shack Bowl.

Anderson's scores both came within the first seven minutes of the game. With just over 10 minutes left in the first quarter, junior Colin Page ran 43 yards to the house after receiving a pitch from quarterback Fred Dale. Three minutes later, he again found the end zone, this time from 36 yards out, on a similar play with 7:16 left in the quarter.

After Anderson compiled 133 yards of offense in the first quarter alone, the McCallum defense stiffened, limiting the Trojans to just 99 yards of total offense for the remaining three quarters and, more importantly, holding them scoreless the rest of the game. The Trojans did not even get in field-goal range after the torrid start.

The Knights depended on the run early in the game with the biggest gains coming on runs from senior running back Andres Rodriguez and kick returns from junior defensive backs and special teams stalwarts Jake Hissey and Wyatt Cunningham.

"Coming from playing defense, it was nice to just take that ball down the field," Hissey said. "I wanted to have a kick return to touchdown in this Taco Shack game, and I thought I was homeward bound then I saw their kicker and my heart dropped."

Not only did Hissey help the offensive gain field position but the young safety proved himself on the defensive side of the ball recovering a fumble in Anderson territory near the end of the third quarter.

While the Knight defense repelled the Trojan offense, the McCallum offense was met with the same defensive fervor. With the exception of Jordan's touchdown catch, the offense struggled with consistency and was only able to make to the red zone a few times. Near the end of the first quarter, they were stopped on fourth-down-and-goal inside the 5-yard line.

For the game, McCallum amassed a total of 257 yards of total offense, 104 through the air and 153 on the ground. The run game was featured in the first half, but after halftime, pass plays and quarterback scrambles become the primary means to move the ball down the field. The team struggled on third down, converting only one in three third-down plays for first downs, and two second half interceptions proved decisive in the game's outcome.

"Offense was driving down the field consistently," senior cornerback Jake Allison said. The offensive rhythm was "a lot better than last season, but we really just need to keep on working."

Jordan agreed but believed that the offense needed to clean up the mistakes, capitalize in the red zone and convert on third down. The sole Knight touchdown came with eight minutes left in the third on a 17-yard pass from junior quarterback Jaxon Rosales to Jordan, bringing the Knights within a touchdown of the Trojans.

"It was really exciting, but there are lots of ways we can improve," Jordan said. "I know it was a high point for me and for the team. I just am going to work hard, try to score more touchdowns and hopefully win some games with my team."

Unlike last year's Taco Shack Bowl, the Knights had an excellent chance to win. Down seven with under two minutes remaining and the clock ticking down, the Knights advanced the ball into scoring range. On a fourth-down play, Rosales launched a bomb into the hands of junior wideout Major Faught for a 47-yard completion that brought the Knights inside the Anderson 30. With 20 seconds remaining; however, Anderson safety Cole Canaday intercepted a Rosales pass in the end zone to seal the victory for the Trojans. *Story by Grace Nugent*

GOING ALL OUT: Despite Ez Guenther's full layout for a touchdown-saving tackle, Anderson running back Colin Page was able to finish this 43-yard run for the first score of the game. The Trojans went on to beat the Knights 14-7. "We're taught to have a one-play-at-a-time mentality," Guenther said. "After those first two touchdowns we came together on the sideline to evaluate what we saw on the field. We took the second quarter as an opportunity to reset the tone and challenged ourselves to hold them the rest of the game." *Photo by Dave Winter*

ALMOST had IT

WORKING as a team



"It was awesome to be able to score in my first game on varsity. Seeing my teammate's and coaches' reactions was pretty great. On the kickoff, Anderson fumbled the ball, and we were able to recover the ball and get going on offense again."

Photo by Risa Darlington-Horta
JD Jordan (10)



"The special teams played really well against Anderson by setting up our offense with good field position and getting a fumble on the kickoff. Overall, it was a good game for special teams."

Photo by Anna McClellan
Jake Hissey (11)



"[The muffed punt] gave our defense great field position to get a stop and get our offense closer to the end zone. Stuffing the opponent close to their own goal line also gives the whole team a boost of confidence that is needed when playing from behind." *Photo by Lindsey Plotkin*

Xavier Hutson (12)