

Swedes resilient in first district win

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Four fumbles hinder progress in first half.

Four fumbles in the first half would be enough to force a sideline ball boy to inspect a football closely for slippery residue and to wrap the ball in a towel between possessions, even when there's no moisture in the air.

But it wasn't enough to make Gothenburg coach Craig Haake panic Friday night.

The Swedes had four fumbles before halftime. Two, Haake said, happened when running backs tried a little too hard to add extra yards on a rushing play. Two more came as the result of missed blocking assignments.

"What's important is we were able to overcome," Haake said. "I'd just really rather not have to do that again."

The Swedes came back from a 9-6 halftime deficit to beat Valentine 24-15 in the first district matchup of the season.

"This is a resilient bunch, you have to give them that," Haake said. "We kept getting inside the red zone and coming out without a score but they never gave up."

Gothenburg moved the ball well both on the ground and through the air. With 260 yards rushing and 174 passing, the Swedes had a strong night offensively.

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“When I added up the stats, it surprised me,” Haake said. “We were able to move the ball well, we just needed to get more out of it. We should have racked up a lot more points on 434 yards.”

The problem, though, was the turnovers in the first half.

The Swedes' first fumble came on their second possession when on third-and-7 Valentine's Mason Beel recovered a fumble at the Gothenburg 38-yard line.

The Badgers drove the field but came up short when Swede senior Tanner Schwanz intercepted a Valentine pass near the 20 yard line and returned it to mid-field.

The Swedes forged into Badger territory to end the first quarter and opened the second period on a first-and-10 just inside the Valentine 15 yard line.

Again, the Swedes turned the ball over on a fumble at the 4 yard line.

Gothenburg's defense held Valentine to three-and-out, taking over just inside Valentine territory but the next series resulted in another fumble near the Badger 20 yard line.

“Those things happen,” Haake said. “Unfortunately they just kept happening to us.”

After the Swede defense held the Badgers again, Gothenburg finally got on the board with 4:29 to play when Tannor Mroczek threw a 44-yard halfback pass to Cody Ostergard.

“We see Cody as a dangerous receiver,” Haake said.

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Although Trent Long's PAT kick failed, the Swedes had a 6-0 lead.

It didn't take long for Valentine to reply. Marshall Miller returned

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