

GICC upsets Swedes in playoffs Gothenburg finishes 7-3

Written by Deb Egenberger

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GRAND ISLAND—A split second of hesitation seems like such a minor thing in the grand scheme of life.

When that slight pause comes repeatedly at the line of scrimmage during a state playoff football game, it can mean the difference between advancing and turning in the pads.

“It looked like we were moving at two different speeds,” said Gothenburg coach Craig Haake of last week’s Class C-1 playoff game between the Swedes and the Crusaders of Grand Island Central Catholic. “And we were the slow team.”

A little hesitant and sometimes confused, the No. 4 seeded Swedes were upset by 12th-seed GICC 24-14 on the artificial turf at Grand Island High School Nov. 3.

“We weren’t able to run as effectively as we thought we should,” Haake said. “We seemed to be a little confused up front and never really did adjust.”

The Crusaders got on the board right away as GICC quarterback Caleb Kluender went outside on the first play from scrimmage and cruised 78 yards for a touchdown.

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“We’ve had that happen to us previously,” Haake said. “What bothered me is that he ran away from us. We have a pretty fast team and we never even came close to catching him.”

With only 20 seconds off the clock, a PAT kick by Eric Juarez gave GICC a 7-0 lead.

Gothenburg responded rapidly, though, carrying the ball 79 yards in six plays.

The drive was nearly foiled by a Swede fumble in the endzone but the officials decided there had been an inadvertent whistle and ordered the down replayed.

“It was pretty much a do-over,” Haake said. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like it.”

Three plays later Tyler Aden scored on a 7-yard run. A PAT kick by freshman Trent Long tied the score at 7-7 with 8:26 to play in the first quarter.

“At that point it looked like whoever had the ball last would end up winning,” Haake said.

But that prediction didn’t necessarily come true.

GICC drove the field on the next possession and scored on a diving catch by receiver Riley Shoemaker from 11 yards out.

A PAT kick by Juarez put the Crusaders up 14-7 as they held Gothenburg to three-and-out on the Swedes last possession of the quarter.

GICC pushed ahead 17-7 with a 30-yard field goal to start the second quarter.

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Neither team scored again before halftime.

“I thought they’d have to make numerous adjustments to stop us,” Haake said. “As it turned out, they didn’t. They just attacked our gap and took away the veer.”

The Swedes were hoping to get some big plays past the Crusaders.

One came to start the second half as Swede senior Tannor Mroczek fielded the opening kickoff at the Gothenburg 16 yard line and returned it 84 yards for a touchdown.

Long’s PAT kick put the Swedes down just 17-14 with the whole second half ahead.

Things looked even brighter for Gothenburg when Mroczek

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