

Swedes set tone early

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Gothenburg defeats Ogallala 17-12 on opening night

Swede football players might be young and inexperienced but it didn't take them long to decide what they wanted Friday night and make it happen.

Gothenburg jumped out to an early 14-0 lead over the pre-season ranked Ogallala Indians and held on for a 17-12 victory in the first week of high school football action.

"I thought we played well," said coach Craig Haake. "For starting five sophomores, I saw very few mental mistakes."

That's a credit to Haake's team that is light on upperclassmen and heavy on young enthusiasm.

"They played the way they practice," Haake said. "They have great energy and so far it's been a lot of fun."

Gothenburg set the tone from the opening drive in which the Swedes spent 18 plays marching 75 yards.

Delayed at the 1-yard line due to an Ogallala injury, Gothenburg finally punched in the touchdown with a 1-yard run by junior Skyler Kottwitz with four minutes left in the first quarter.

A PAT kick by junior Trenton Long gave the Swedes a 7-0 advantage.

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“We made a statement,” Haake said.



The Indians made a short drive before fumbling in their own territory.

Gothenburg took over on the Ogallala 40 yard line and used five plays before sophomore Zach Wolf scored on a 13-yard run.

Another Long PAT put the Swedes up 14-0 with 45 seconds left in the first quarter.

“We kind of made it look easy,” Haake said.

Gothenburg forced the Indians to punt on their next possession but turned the ball over with a fumble at midfield.

Ogallala didn't get far, though, as the Swedes stopped another drive.

Gothenburg was headed right back to the end zone when junior quarterback Blake Ristine was picked off at the 15-yard line.

One long pass play and Ogallala was in the endzone.

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“From that point, the game was on,” Haake said.

A bad snap on the point-after attempt left Ogallala trailing 14-6.

The ball traveled back and forth in the third period with no scoring on either side.

Gothenburg managed two consecutive first downs that were taken away by penalties. Then the Swedes fumbled.

“We had a chance to open it up but we didn’t get it done,” Haake said.

With a drive carrying from the end of the third quarter into the fourth, Ogallala scored again.

An attempt at a two-point conversion failed, leaving the Swedes ahead 14-12.

With just under seven minutes to play, Gothenburg dropped a pitch play at the Ogallala 30-yard line and failed to convert on third down.

Haake said he knew they were within Long’s field goal range so he sent the kicker to the field.

Long made the 44-yard attempt, his longest in competition, to give the Swedes all the advantage they would need.

Ogallala had more attempts to score but the Swede defense stood strong.

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"They put themselves in a position to beat us but we sacked their quarterback on fourth-and-8 late and the game was over," the coach said.

Wolf finished with 95 yards rushing on 17 carries and senior Logan Sheets pitched in 74 yards on 15 carries.

Sheets was also the leading defender with two solo tackles and nine assists.

"We made a few mistakes but the kids played hard and played with a lot of heart," Haake said. "They're going to do nothing but get better."

Gothenburg (1-0) travels west to Mitchell (0-0) this week.

"The nice thing is we have a game under our belts," Haake said. "The bad thing is that all of our opponents watched us."

As a first-time opponent, Haake said he knows little about Mitchell but he's more concerned with what Gothenburg does than what the Tigers offer.

"We ran the wishbone 95% of the time on Friday and it worked out well," he said. "We just need to work on throwing out of it a little more efficiently."

The game Friday is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. MT.