

# Knights take conference with 27-7 victory

## Lourdes stays unbeaten in Johnson Creek contest

By Brad Hartmann  
HERALD CONTRIBUTOR

Winning conference championships at Lourdes Academy is nothing new to the school. Ever since the girls volleyball team won the Trailways Conference small division last season there have been five more conference crowns added to their trophy case with a possibility of two additional fall sports titles in boys soccer and girls cross country.

While the standard for each program remains high for Knights athletes, Friday night in Johnson Creek the football program won back-to-back conference championships in a thrilling 27-7 victory.

"We have a lot of multisport athletes. They expect success across their various sports. We want each other to do well," Knights coach Kevin Wopat said. "It's fun when everyone enjoys it and I think that could be a little extra competition. When you work hard good things are going to happen to you and that is what has happened to a lot of our teams."

On a cold and windy evening the No. 5 ranked Knights (8-0) were ready for a shootout with another explosive offense. Lourdes entered the game averaging 46.3 points a game while No. 7 Johnson Creek (7-1) had put up 40.9.

"They come out in a bunch of formations such as wing-T, spread, trips and the option. That was our big focus in practice this week. We feel our secondary is our



Photo by Andy Ratchman

*Lourdes quarterback Josh Bauer eludes a Johnson Creek defender as he looks for a receiver Friday night.*

weak spot of our defense but coach Behnke got them ready to go," defensive coordinator Marcus Hofmeister said.

The defense set the tone early for the Knights by forcing a three-and-out on the Bluejays' opening possession. Quarterback Joshua Bauer quickly got the offense going with a 37-yard pass to Nathan Slagter as two defenders brought him down.

"We knew they were going to respect the bubble with Preston's (Ruedinger) speed. Bauer made a good throw and I ended up catching it," Slagter said. "Every team's game plan is to try to figure out how to stop Preston and Bauer. You have to respect everyone on our team. There is not any guy you can slack off on."

The next play Bauer would call his own number, rolling right and finding the gap for his conference-leading 16th touchdown of the season with 10:32 left in the first quarter.

"It was an 18 sweep. I ran outside. I trusted my blockers. I knew I only needed a couple of yards and put my body on the

line to get those six points," Bauer said. "It was a huge score especially how our defense stopped them on their first drive."

On the Bluejays' third possession Knights junior linebacker Tyler Budde put a hit on Bluejays running back Sam Budig that got a roaring reaction.

"That was probably one of my best plays. I stuck him. I stopped him right there and that is what I am supposed to do," Budde said. "As a middle linebacker it's all about the hits. The popping sound was me hitting him that hard using all my force."

But the defensive play of the game came on third and 3 from the Knights 8-yard line as Tyler Johnsen knocked a pass away from Wyatt Owen and on the next play Justin Swanson overthrew his receiver to turn the ball over on downs.

"I pushed him out of bounds so there was no chance of him getting the ball. He fake blocked me," Johnsen said. "I knew it was coming because he didn't touch me at all. I knew he was getting the ball. I saw him try to throw me off before so I had to

just push him out of bounds and ref said it was clean play."

Knights junior running back Tim Kaull would leave the game with a hip injury on their third possession but would return to start the second half.

"In Rosholt my leg was bent back and stretched out my hip and my knee," Kaull said. "Rudy (James Rudolph) got me back to where I can play on it. In this game a guy cut me off on my ankle. He hit me on top and stretched it out back again. It wasn't a good feeling."

In the fourth quarter with 7:05 remaining Kaull scored his sixth touchdown of the season to cap off a 12-play, 66-yard drive from nine yards out. Lourdes' other scores came from Bauer as he tossed touchdown passes of 20 and 22 yards to Slagter.

"I was very surprised. I was like I better not drop this. I wasn't expecting to get the ball. I was trying to run my route with (Caden) Chier but everyone went with him. You got to respect him. I knew Bauer would see me. I trusted he would make the right read," Slagter said. "The second score was the same. I was wide open. They didn't change their defense. It was a confusing play and I will take that any day."

Defensively the Bluejays were focused on shutting down Ruedinger, the conference touchdown leader with eight, and it worked as Ruedinger was limited to one explosive play.

After the game Hofmeister sprinted down midfield, sliding into the team huddle as field grass flew into the air. "The slide felt great. Any time we can run into a huddle to celebrate a victory — especially against a very good team on the road. That's a really good football team," Hofmeister said.

Bauer completed 11-of-18 passes for 163 yards. Kaull led on the ground with 83 yards on 17 carries and a touchdown. Chier chipped in with 54 yards on four carries. Ruedinger had six receptions on 44 yards while Slagter hauled in three receptions for 79 yards. Defensively Budde forced 12 tackles, Charlie Weber had eight and Reid Spanbauer had six.

The Knights hope to make it 9-0 when they travel to Deerfield (2-6) Friday night and try to become the first team in school history with a perfect record in the regular season.

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