SPORTS

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Leidner leads Minnesota to 43-24 win over SJSU

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Mitch Leidner grabbed attention from Division I schools as a classic, drop-back passer slinging the ball all over the field for Lakeville South High School in suburban Minneapolis.

Two years later, Leidner looked much less like Tom Brady and much more like Tim Tebow as he bulled through the San Jose State defense.

Leidner rushed for 151 yards and four touchdowns to lift Minnesota to a 43-24 victory over San Jose State on Saturday.

"I always thought I was going to be a passer," Leidner said with a chuckle after running the ball 24 times and throwing it just 12. "But it's fun running the ball, that's for sure."

Leidner was filling in for injured starter Philip Nelson, who was out with a bad hamstring. He also passed for 71 yards as the Golden Gophers improved to 4-0. Gophers coach Jerry Kill returned to the sideline a week after missing the second half because of an epileptic seizure and made it through the game without incident.

David Fales threw for 439 yards with three touchdowns and two interceptions for San Jose State (1-2). Chandler Jones had seven catches for 197 yards and three touchdowns for the Spartans, who were missing top receiver Noel Grigsby with a knee injury.

David Cobb rushed for 125 yards and two touchdowns and the Gophers dominated the time of possession 40:38-18:58 to grind Fales and the high-flying Spartans into submission.

At 6-foot-4 and nearly 240 pounds, Leidner exhibited some deceptive athleticism, using his 4.6 speed to break several big runs and his impressive size to bull over tacklers and plunge into the end zone. He learned that different style as a redshirt on the scout team last season, running the opposing team's offense against the Gophers' starting defense each week.

"I like going against Mitch," linebacker De'Vondre Campbell said. "He's aggressive. He has that competitive nature and he makes us all better."

After stubbing their toe on the opening drive and missing a 51-yard field goal try, the Gophers stuffed San Jose State on fourth-and-1 from the 15 before grinding out a 10-play drive on the ground to take the lead. Leidner capped the drive with a read option, faking a handoff and cruising untouched 10 yards for the touchdown.

Fales, who some scouts project as a first-round draft pick next spring, showed off that NFL arm all afternoon, never more so than on a perfectly placed deep ball over Jones' right shoulder for a 76-yard touchdown pass. It was effortless, just a flick of the wrist sent the ball whistling right over cornerback Derrick Wells' outstretched arms to make it 13-10.

"First half we had some rhythm and we're hitting all the throws we wanted," Fales said. "We were getting all the looks we thought we would."

His second touchdown of the day, a 32-yard strike to Jones on a seam route gave Fales 294 yards passing in the first half. The Spartans trailed 20-17 at half, but probably could have had the lead were it not for a pair of curious calls deep in Gophers territory.

The Spartans twice had third-and-5 or shorter inside the Minnesota 20 in the first half, but each time called for a running play that failed to get the first down.

The magic started to fade in the second half when Fales tried to squeeze a pass to Jabari Carr into a tight window. The ball deflected into the air and Aaron Hill made a nifty one-handed interception to give the Gophers the ball at the Minnesota 12.

"Just being more aggressive on defense and make that our identity this year," Hill said. "I thought we came out in the second half and made the adjustments we needed to. The DBs stepped up and the d-line stepped up."

Leidner scored from 1 yard out three plays later for a 26-17 lead, and the Gophers never looked back. Kill challenged the defense at halftime and was pleased with how they responded.

"I said, 'Look in that mirror before you go out there and make sure that you're giving your best,"' Kill said. "I thought they took it up an extra gear and we got (Fales) out of rhythm."

Spartans kicker Harrison Waid was ejected in the fourth quarter after a confrontation with Wells on an onside kick.

STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

Gophers quarterback Mitch Leidner (7) runs with the football in front of guard Caleb Bak (64) in Saturday's game at TCF Bank Stadium. Leidner ran for 151 yards and four touchdowns in Minnesota's 43-24 victory over San Jose State.

FOOTBALL

➤ continued from B1

The Agates started their first drive on their own 28-yard line and advanced into Bronco territory before giving up the ball on downs when a fourth-and-one play for a first down was stopped by inches on Falls' 34-yard line with 4:53 left in the opening quarter.

The Broncos scored less than 3 minutes later on a 1-yard run by Ettestad for his second touchdown of the game. Jakob Eide added the 2-point conversion on a quarterback sneak to give the Falls a 14-0 lead.

Ettestad ended up with 134 rushing yards on 27 carries.

"It's a game of momentum...," Boyle said. "I think our linemen were better (at controlling the line of scrimmage) at the beginning (of the game)."

Two Harbors began its first scoring drive late in the first quarter from its own 36 and scored on the first play of the second quarter on a 9-yard touchdown run by Lucas Kempffer, who then ran in the 2-point conversion to cut the Broncos' lead to 14-8.

After both teams exchanged punts, the Falls advanced the ball to the Agates' side of the field before giving up the ball on downs at Two Harbors' 31-yard line with just over 5 minutes before halftime.

The Agates then tied the game on a 65-yard touchdown run by senior running back Mike Nordean with 4:21 left in the second quarter. The 2-point conversion run by Kempffer gave Two Harbors a 16-14 lead.

The Broncos were able to regain the lead before the half expired. The Falls started its scoring drive on its on own 43 and kept the drive alive on a fourth-and-13 play from Two Harbors' 43 when a pass from Eide to senior end Luke Spilde advanced the ball inside the 10-yard line.

Spilde ended up leading the Broncos in receiving with three catches for 77 yards.

Eide capped off the drive with a 2-yard touchdown run with 44 seconds before halftime. The pass for the 2-point conversion failed as the Falls remained in front, 20-16, which is how the half ended.

The Agates regained the lead with 5:10 left in the third quarter on a 44-yard touchdown run by Kempffer. Nordean ran in the 2-point conversion to extend Two Harbors' lead to 24-20.

After a Bronco fumble by Ettestad gave the Agates the ball back near midfield late in the third quarter, Kempffer scored his third touchdown on a 4-yard run with 9:13 left in the game. Two Harbors remained in front, 30-20, after the run for the 2-point conversion failed.

STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

The Broncos' Jakob Ettestad (32) runs with the football with blocking protection from Nehemiah Olson (21) in Friday's Homecoming game at Sports Stadium. Ettestad led the Falls in rushing with 134 yards on 27 carries and two touchdowns.

After the Broncos went back on offense from their own 27-yard line, the Agates intercepted a pass from Eide on Falls' 40-yard line. However, Two Harbors was then stopped on downs from the Broncos' 35-yard line.

The Falls benefited from Two Harbors penalties to advance the ball down the field before a fumble gave the ball back to the Agates on their 17-yard line.

Two Harbors ended up punting the ball back to the Broncos, who took over on offense at their own 17-yard line.

Eide's second interception of the game gave the Agates the ball back on Falls' 26-yard line, which is where the Broncos recovered a Two Harbors fumble to go back on offense.

The Falls lost both of its fumbles and had two passes intercepted for four turnovers, while the Agates lost one of two fumbles with no interceptions for one turnover.

"We definitely put the ball on the ground way too much," Boyle said. "We gave up those two big fumbles... and that's definitely something we're going to have to look at and not something we can keep doing if we want to win football games."

The Broncos scored their final touchdown with 1:41 left to play when Eide connected with Spilde on a 34-yard pass. Eide added the extra point to cut Two Harbors' lead to 30-28.

Falls attempted to recover the ensuing kickoff when sophomore Ethan Phung squibbed an onside kick, which was recovered by the Agates, who then ran the clock out to seal the victory.

The loss dropped the Broncos' season record to 1-3 overall and 0-2 in the Sea Range Conference. The Falls returns to action this Friday with a conference game at home against Hermantown, which is 3-1 overall and 2-0 in the Sea Range.

"We're still doing a lot of things well (but) we're not putting a full game together," Boyle said. "That's what we need to do against Hermantown.

"Hermantown's a very tough team, a very big school. But they still have to make the long trip up to I. Falls, and I feel that if we put in a good week of work, we can definitely give them a run on Friday."

Two Harbors 30, I. Falls 28

Two Harbors	**0**	**16**	**8**	**6**	**— 30**
I. Falls	**14**	**6**	**0**	**8**	**— 28**

Scoring: IF: Jakob Ettestad, 4-yard run (Pass failed); **IF:** Ettestad, 1-yard run (Jakob Eide run); **TH:** Lucas Kempffer, 9-yard run (Kempffer run); **TH:** Mike Nordean, 65-yard run (Kempffer run); **IF:** Eide, 2-yard run, (Pass failed); **TH:** Kempffer, 44-yard run (Nordean run); **TH:** Kempffer, 4-yard run (Run failed); **IF:** Luke Spilde, 34-yard pass from Eide (Eide run).

Team statistics: IF: 194 yards rushing, 155 passing, 349 total. **TH:** 363 yards rushing, 46 passing, 409 total.

Rushing: IF: Jakob Ettestad, 27-134, 2 TDs; Nehemiah Olson, 11-42; Cody Hallin, 2-16; Jakob Eide, 3-2, 1 TD; Austin Geiselhart, 1-0. **Passing: IF:** Jakob Eide, 9-15, 155 yards, 1 TD, 2 INTs. **Receiving: IF:** Luke Spilde, 3-77, 1 TD; Ben Humbert, 4-60; Cody Hallin, 1-10; Jakob Ettestad, 1-8.

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