

2006 MIAC Football Athletes of the Week

November 13, 2006

Offensive

Bethel University junior quarterback Ben Wetzell (Wells, Minn.) totaled 183 yards on the ground and through the air in leading the Royals to a 28-13 win over Saint John's Saturday. Trailing 13-0, Wetzell sparked the Bethel offense and lead the team to 28 unanswered points in claiming their third MIAC title in seven years and an automatic bid to the NCAA playoffs. Wetzell carried the ball 30 times for 100 yards while also completing 11-23 passes for 83 yards and three touchdowns against the number two defense in the league. All three scores came in clutch situations with the first touchdown putting Bethel on the board with 11 seconds left in the first half. The other two scores gave the Royals a one point and eight point lead and came on third down conversions in the second half against an opponent that had previously held a 149-52 edge in second half scoring and 91-0 edge in the third quarter. Wetzell was the operator of an offense that dominated the clock holding the ball almost 42 minutes while running 96 plays for 382 yards. He is currently second in the MIAC in rushing yards, averaging 73.0 yards per game while he is first in rushing scores with 12. Stats: 30 carries for 100 yards, 11-23 for 83 yards passing, 3 touchdowns, 1 interception.

Defensive

Bethel University junior safety Brandon Carr (Fergus Falls, Minn.) helped to lead Bethel and a strong defensive performance to a 28-13 win over Saint John's Saturday. Carr finished the afternoon with ten tackles, one pass break-up and an interception that sealed the victory for the Royals. Carr led a strong defensive effort that held the number two offense in the MIAC to 44 yards rushing on 15 carries (2.9 yards per carry) and only 44 plays of offense. This is the second week in a row where Carr has had a major impact on the defensive side. Last week Carr had two interceptions including one for a touchdown. Carr is currently first in the MIAC in interceptions with seven and second in passes defended with 15. Stats: five solo tackles, five assisted, one pass break-ups, one interceptions (24 yards)

Special Teams

St. Olaf College junior kicker/punter Paul Fortman (Stillwater, Minn.) hit both of his field goal attempts, from 37 and 27 yards, in St. Olaf's 35-31 victory over St. Thomas. He was also 3-3 on PATS, and had a net average of 46 yards on four punts, downing three inside the 20 yard line. His last pinned St. Thomas at their 5-yardline with 5:04 left in the game.

November 6, 2006

Offensive

St. Olaf College sophomore running back Evan Endsley (Eagan, Minn.) turned in the best performance of his career in the Oles' 48-15 victory over Carleton. Endsley rushed 11 times for 92 yards and caught five passes for 100 yards, including a 57-yard touchdown to start the second half. Endsley also returned three kicks for 72 yards. In all, Endsley had 19 touches for 264 all purpose yards (13.9 yards/touch) and a score.

Defensive

Gustavus Adolphus College junior linebacker Jared Sieling (Watertown, Minn./Watertown-Mayer) recorded seven tackles (five solo), one tackles for loss, one interception and one sack in Gustavus' 7-0 win over Concordia-Moorhead Saturday. Sieling picked off a pass by Concordia quarterback Jesse Nelson at the Gustavus 10-yard line late in the second quarter as the Cobbers were driving for a potential game-tying score. Sieling also helped to limit the Concordia rushing offense, which entered the game ranked 18th in Division III at 217.6 rushing yards per game, to 87 yards on 37 carries. Sieling now has 262 career tackles, moving up two spots to fifth place on the Gustavus career tackles list. Stats: 7 tackles (5 solo, 2 asst.), TFL for 7 yds., INT, sack

Special Teams

St. Olaf College junior kicker/punter Paul Fortman (Stillwater, Minn.) hit two field goals (20 and 24 yards), was 4-for-5 on PAT's, had a 57-yarder on his only punt attempt and averaged just under 45 net yards on nine kickoffs to put Carleton's offense with an average drive start of their own 21-yardline.

October 30, 2006

Offensive

Bethel University sophomore wide receiver Kyle Lee (Burnsville, Minn.) had an impressive day in helping the Royals to a 35-0 win over Hamline Saturday. Lee provided most of the offensive scoring power as he finished the afternoon with four catches for 150 yards and two touchdowns. Lee started and ended the scoring as he put the Royals on the board early in the first when he caught a 72-yard touchdown pass and sealed the victory on a 24-yard touchdown reception in the fourth. Lee leads the team in receiving yards this season with 25 catches for 491 yards. He is also currently seventh in the MIAC in receiving yards/game with 68.5. Stats for the week: 4 receptions for 150 yards and 2 TD's (72, 24)

Defensive

Bethel University senior linebacker Kirby Carr (Fergus Falls, Minn.) helped lead Bethel and a dominating defense to an impressive 35-0 win over Hamline Saturday. Carr continued his strong season finishing the afternoon with seven tackles, 1.0 TFL, one pass break-up, and an interception, which he returned 52 yards for his second defensive touchdown of the year. All this happened while the Bethel defense held the Pipers to only 47 offensive plays and only 3 series out of 12 that went more than four downs. Carr was instrumental in a Royal defense that also held Hamline to only 72 rushing yards on 25 carries (2.9 yards per carry) and 78 passing yards for 150 yards of total offense. The Carr led defense has yet to allow a team to rush for more than a 100 yards all season. Carr also played on the offensive side of the ball rushing two times for 11 yards. He is currently second in the MIAC in TFL with 12.5, fourth in sacks with 5.5 and sixth in tackles with 7.2 tackles a game. This is the sixth time in eight games that the Royals have held their opponent to under 200 yards of total offense. Stats for the week: four solo tackles, three assisted, 1.0 tackles for loss, one pass break-up, one interception (52-yard return for TD), two carries for 11 yards.

Special Teams

Saint John's University senior wide receiver Brandon Royce-Diop (Minneapolis, Minn./DeLaSalle) returned the opening kickoff 90 yards for a touchdown in the Johnnies' 27-7 victory at St. Thomas last Saturday. Without Royce-Diop's return for a touchdown, the complexion of the game may have been very different as the Johnnies' early 6-0 lead was the only scoring until 00:49 remained in the second quarter.

October 23, 2006

Offensive

Bethel University senior running back Phil Porta (Cambridge, Minn.) was a key performer in the Royals 35-29 win over St. Olaf. The Royals ran for 380 yards as a team with Porta accounting for 236 of those on 34 rushes (6.9 yards a carry) including the game winning touchdown. He also made three receptions for 35 yards. On the game winning drive, Porta rushed for 48-yards and in the process broke the All-Time MIAC rushing record previously held by St. Thomas alum Jake Barkley. He now has 3,979 career rushing yards in MIAC play. Porta also leads the conference in rushing yards this season with 675 yards on the ground (135.0 per game). Stats for the week: 34 carries for 236 yards, 1 rushing touchdown, 3 receptions for 35 yards.

Defensive

University of St. Thomas junior outside linebacker Pat Sommerstad (Apple Valley, Minn./Eastview) had 10 tackles (four solo), a fumble recovery, one pass knockdown and one other pass break up to help the Tommies post a 21-15 road victory at Concordia-Moorhead and stay in the conference title race. Sommerstad led a secondary that limited the Cobbers to 3-for-17 pass completions for 31 yards. The UST defensive starters have allowed just 10 TDs in seven games. The Toms rank among the Division III leaders in pass defense with 14 interceptions (three by Sommerstad) while allowing just 128 passing yards per game. The Tommies host 8-0 Saint John's this week.

Special Teams

University of St. Thomas freshman wide receiver/punt returner Sam Moen (Mahtomedi, Minn.), with UST clinging to a 7-6 lead in the third quarter, Moen's 63-yard punt return for a touchdown (the longest in the MIAC this season) helped the Tommies in their eventual 21-15 road win at Concordia-Moorhead. Moen also had a 19-yard punt return to the Cobber 39-yard line that set up the Toms' first touchdown. He's averaging 15.6 ypr on 12 runbacks this season. One of six true freshman making big contributions for the 5-2 Tommies, Moen has two of the longest TDs in the conference this season, he caught a 71-yard TD pass on the game's third play last week against Augsburg. UST ended a four-game losing streak to Concordia and won its third in a row to stay in the MIAC title race as it hosts 8-0 Saint John's this week.

October 16, 2006

Offensive

St. Olaf College junior wide receiver Andrew Schmiesing (Stillwater, Minn.) had an explosive day for St. Olaf in the Oles' 49-14 victory over Concordia on Saturday. With the Oles leading 7-0 near the end of the 1st quarter, facing a 3rd and goal situation, Schmiesing threw a 7 yard TD pass to Ryan St. John on a receiver option pass. To start the drive Schmiesing caught a 17 yard pass on 3rd and 7 from the Concordia 13 yard line. With 2:06 in the half and the Oles backed up to the Cobber 5 yard line, Schmiesing broke the game open with a 95-yard catch and run. The TD reception is the longest of his career and the longest on record in school history. Schmiesing ended the first half with four catches for 121 and a touchdown, and was 1-1 passing for 7 yards and a touchdown as the Oles took a 35-0 lead to the lockerroom.

Defensive

Hamline University senior outside linebacker Jordan Below (Waseca, Minn.) was all over the field in Hamline's 16-11 win over Carleton on Saturday. Below posted 11 tackles (six solo, five assists), with 3.0 tackles for loss, 1.0 sacks, a forced fumble, and a fumble recovery. He recovered a fumble on the Knights' first possession of the second half at the Hamline 2 to stop the drive. He also added a sack on the Knights' last possession of the game that stalled at the Hamline 2. The Pipers held the Knights to 12 rushing yards on the game.

Special Teams

University of St. Thomas sophomore kick returner Mikkell Haugen (Kenyon, Minn./Kenyon-Wanamingo) averaged 37 yards on three returns to help the Tommies post a 47-21 win over Augsburg. After the Auggies pulled within 13-7 on a blocked punt return, Haugen's 57-yard kick return to the Augsburg 30 regained momentum and set up another TD. The 57-yarder was UST's longest kick return since 2004. The Toms play Saturday at Concordia.

October 9, 2006

Offensive

Saint John's University junior quarterback Alex Kofoed (Cold Spring, Minn./Rocori), in his first start at quarterback since dislocating the thumb on his throwing hand on September 23, Kofoed threw for 320 yards (23-of-33) and four touchdowns to lead the Johnnies to a 37-21 win at St. Olaf last Saturday. Kofoed completed his first 12 passes and recorded the fifth 300-yard passing performance of his career.

Defensive

Bethel University senior linebacker Kirby Carr (Fergus Falls, Minn.) helped lead Bethel and a dominating defense to an impressive 40-0 win over Gustavus Saturday. Carr continued his strong season finishing the afternoon with five tackles, 2.5 TFL, one pass break-up, and an interception, which he returned to the Gustavus seven yard-line, setting up the Royals final score of the game. All this happened while the Bethel defense held the Gusties to only 52 offensive plays and only 3 series out of 16 that went more than three downs. Carr was instrumental in a Royal defense that also held Gustavus to only 37 rushing yards on 26 carries (1.4 yards per carry) and 88 yards of total offense. Carr also played on the offensive side of the ball making two receptions for four yards and also rushing two times for nine yards. He is currently second in the MIAC in sacks with five, and leads the conference in TFL with 11.5. This is the fifth time in six games that the Royals have held their opponent to under 100 yards rushing and 200 yards of total offense. Stats: two solo tackles, three assisted, 2.5 tackles for loss, one pass break-up, one interception (35-yard return), two receptions for four yards, two carries for nine yards.

Special Teams

University of St. Thomas freshman punter A.C. Clouthier (Appleton, Wis./Xavier), with St. Thomas clinging to a 14-10 lead, Clouthier twice pinned Carleton inside the 10-yard-line with fourth-quarter punts to help close out the four-point win. His 33-yarder with 14:10 to play was fair caught at the 9-yard-line. With 1:43 to go in the game, Clouthier's 34-yard punt went out of bounds at the one-yard-line, leaving

Carleton 99 yards from the go-ahead points. He averaged 36.3 yards on four punts on the day, including a 56-yarder with the wind and a 22-yarder into the wind. Clouthier is averaging 35.3 ypp this season with eight downed inside the 20-yard-line. St. Thomas is 3-2 overall and 2-1 in the MIAC.

October 2, 2006

Offensive

Concordia College senior fullback Kevin Williamson (Britton, S.D./Britton-Heck) tied a school record for the most touchdowns in a single game as he ran for five TD's, including the game-winner in overtime, in the Cobbers' 34-28 victory over Augsburg on Saturday. The five scores were the only touchdowns in the game for Concordia as they won for the first time this season. Williamson finished the game with 178 rushing yards on 31 carries. The 31 carries ties for the seventh most rushes in a single game in program history. Williamson now has six touchdowns on the year and needs only three more to break the school record for TD's in a career. Stats for the week: TD's: 5; Rushes: 31; Rushing Yards: 178; Yds. Per Carry: 5.74

Co-Defensive

St. Olaf College junior defensive end James Bechdol (Orono, Minn.) was all over the field in St. Olaf's 41-13 victory over Gustavus. A strong Bechdol-led defense held Gustavus to only 12 net yards rushing. For the day Bechdol had 10 total tackles, 2.5 tackles for loss with 1.5 sacks.

Co-Defensive

Saint John's University senior defensive end Kevin McNamara (Mahtomedi, Minn./Mahtomedi) collected 10 tackles (4 solo) including 3 tackles for a loss of 9 yards and 1.0 sack in the Johnnies' 29-19 win over Carleton last Saturday. His 1.0 sack moved him into fourth place on the SJU all-time sack list. McNamara is currently tied for the team lead with 7.0 tackles for a loss and 3.5 sacks.

Special Teams

Hamline University senior linebacker Brody Anderson (Floodwood, Minn.) scored his first career touchdown for the Pipers with a 61-yard touchdown run off a fake punt in the third quarter of Hamline's 35-7 win over Macalester Saturday afternoon at Klas Field. Anderson finished the day with five tackles, four for loss, and a fumble recovery in the win.

September 25, 2006

Offensive

Carleton College senior offensive tackle Matt Topeff (Andover, Minn./Blaine), a former tight end, caught a key pass that set up Carleton's first touchdown and then threw the eventual game-winning touchdown pass of 53 yards as Carleton upset Bethel, 17-14. It marked the Knights' first win over Bethel since 1993. With the Knights trailing, 7-3, midway through the second quarter, Topeff caught a pass from Darren Caspers on a tackle-eligible play, rumbling down to the 2-yard line. Carleton eventually scored to take a 10-7 at halftime. With the Knights trailing midway through the fourth quarter, Topeff took a lateral from Caspers and hit wide receiver Matt Frank for a 53-yard TD. Topeff was part of an offensive effort that had only one turnover on the afternoon in Carleton's biggest upset win in 20 years.

Defensive

Carleton College senior free safety Mike Kootsikas (Rosemount, Minn.), who had started his previous 22 career games at wide receiver, tallied six tackles, two pass breakups and an interception in his second career start at free safety in Carleton's 17-14 upset win over Bethel. Kootsikas, who didn't play football his rookie season, ranks in Carleton's all-time top 10 in receptions and receiving yardage, moved over to defense this season to aid a young secondary and responded with a huge game this week. He broke up a key third-down pass on Bethel's last drive from the Carleton 25-yard line and intercepted a pass late in the first half, allowing Carleton to try a 48-yard field goal at the end of the half. The Knights' defense held Bethel to 233 total yards and only 77 yards rushing, including 36 yards on 19 carries by preseason All-American Phil Porta. Porta had averaged 141 yards rushing in his three previous career games against the Knights. Kootsikas was an all-metro defensive back during his prep career at Rosemount High School.

Special Teams

St. Olaf College first-year kick returner Carson Jones (Farmington, Minn.) returned three kicks for 90 yards, including a 47-yarder to set up an Ole score in the third quarter. Jones also rushed once for 29 yards down to the Augsburg five-yard line which set up St. Olaf's third touchdown and a 22-0 lead.

September 18, 2006

Co-Offensive

St. Olaf College junior quarterback Matt Penz (Rochester, Minn./Mayo) in just three quarters and 10 seconds of play, threw for 350 yards and three TDs in leading St. Olaf to a 31-6 victory over Hamline in the MIAC opener for both teams. In just his third career start, he completed 20 of 36 passes while distributing the ball to seven different receivers. His touchdown passes covered 19 yards, 72 yards, and 71 yards. He also rushed for 7 yards. Penz has the Oles off to a 3-0 start and has thrown 6 TDs with only 1 INT. Stats: 20 of 36 for 350 yards, three TDS (72, 71 and 19 yards), no interceptions.

Co-Offensive

Carleton College senior quarterback Darren Caspers (Bemidji, Minn.) threw a career-high five touchdown passes and the Carleton offense rolled up 494 yards of total offense in beating Macalester, 52-0. Caspers was 10-for-15 for 248 yards, as he tossed touchdown passes of 5, 19, 7, 72 and 60 yards, all in the first half. He and the first-string offense didn't play in the second half. For the season, Caspers is 24-of-34 for 481 yards and six touchdowns with no interceptions and a quarterback efficiency rating of 247.66.

Defensive

St. Olaf College junior defensive end James Bechdol (Orono, Minn.) was dominant in St. Olaf's 31-6 victory over Hamline in the MIAC opener. Bechdol led the Oles defense in limiting Hamline to just 128 yards of total offense. Bechdol had 5 solo tackles and 2 assists, 2.5 TFL for 30 yards, he forced 2 fumbles, knocked down a pass, broke up a pass, blocked a punt and added 1.5 sacks. Beyond those statistics, Bechdol had incredible pressure on the Hamline quarterback all afternoon, limiting him to a 9 of 23 passing for just 65 yards. Stats: Seven

tackles (five solo), blocked punt, two forced fumbles, two pass break ups, 2.5 TFL (1.5 sacks).

Special Teams

St. Olaf College sophomore kick returner Evan Endsley (Eagan, Minn.) continued to explode in special teams, setting the tone by returning the opening kickoff 68 yards to set up a score two plays later giving St. Olaf a lead they wouldn't give up. Endsley also rushed for 10 yards and had 33 yards receiving. He finished the day with 111 all-purpose yards.

September 11, 2006

Offensive

Carleton College junior running back R.J. Jackson (Roseville, Minn. / DeLaSalle) set a new Carleton single-game record by scoring six touchdowns (on only 12 touches) in leading Carleton to a season-opening 50-14 win at Minnesota-Morris. Jackson's scores, which all came in the first half, came on TD runs of 11, 30, 2 and 1 yards, a 46-yard screen pass and a 93-yard kickoff return for a touchdown. He broke Skye Flanagan's '98 previous school record of five touchdowns, set against St. Thomas in 1996. Jackson played only one series in the second half as Carleton scored on its first five possessions of the game in taking a 41-7 lead at halftime. Stats: 10 carries, 69 yards 4 TDs, 1 reception, 46 yards, 1 TD, 1 KO return, 93 yards, 1 TD, 208 all-purpose yds.

Defensive

Bethel University senior linebacker Kirby Carr (Fergus Falls, Minn.) led the Royals and a strong defensive unit to a 23-17 win over Simpson on Saturday. He finished the afternoon with eight tackles a forced fumble, a pass break-up and what could be considered the momentum changer with a 58-yard interception return for a touchdown giving the Royals their first lead of the day, 17-10. Carr was part of a defense that held the Storm to 54 yards rushing on 35 carries (1.5 ypc) and 195 yards of total offense. At a critical point in the game, Carr also threw a fake punt pass to brother Brandon for a 28 yard gain, helping to secure the win. Stats: one solo tackle, seven assisted, one forced fumble, one pass break-up, one interception for 58-yard TD, 1-1 passing for 28 yards.

Special Teams

St. Olaf College sophomore running back Evan Endsley (Eagan, Minn.) sparked St. Olaf to a hard-fought victory over Luther College with his 82-yard kickoff return at the end of the third quarter. Luther had just hit a field goal to draw within 21-16, before Endsley took the ensuing kickoff down to the Luther 9 yard line. The Oles scored on the next play to grab momentum heading into the 4th quarter. Endsley also carried 2 times for 10 yards and caught 6 passes for 40 yards. Endsley has 151 total yards in the 35-16 Ole win.

September 5, 2006

Offensive

Saint John's University junior quarterback Alex Kofoed (Cold Spring, Minn./Rocori) recorded his fourth career 300-yard passing game by throwing for an even 300 yards (23-of-38 passing) in the Johnnies' 15-11 win over Wis.-Eau Claire last Saturday. Kofoed is now 60-for-84 passing (71.4%) for 757 yards and four touchdowns in three career games versus the Blugolds. Stats for the week: 23-of-38, 300 yds.

Defensive

Saint John's University senior linebacker Jamie Steffensmeier (Mankato, Minn./East) led the Johnnies with 13 tackles (4 solo) and 1.5 sacks, including a 0.5 sack for an SJU safety in his first appearance back after suffering a season-ending knee injury in the season opener versus the Blugolds last season. Steffensmeier was a first-team All-MIAC selection in 2003 and 2004. Stats: 13 tackles (7.5 total), 1.5 sacks including .5 for safety

Special Teams

St. Olaf junior kicker/punter Paul Fortman (Stillwater, Minn.) was flawless in less than ideal conditions, battling wind and rain in the Oles' 31-14 win over VCSU on Saturday. Fortman averaged 53.3 yards on three punts, 57.3 yds on kickoffs, was a perfect 4-4 on PATs and started the scoring in the game with a 23 yard field goal, his only FG attempts of the day. Stats: Three punts for 53.3 yard/avg, long of 62, 1-for-1 FG (23 yds), 4-for-4 PATs, 57.3 yd/avg on kickoffs.