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Title eludes Team

Team fights for district title qualifies for substate

Sweaty and worn, the football players gathered into a purple circle at the end of practice to finish the night with their ritual chant. "1-2-3 Stay Hungry," they screamed. After a 1-3 start with losses against Ankeny Centennial, Urbandale and Valley, the team kept trying to improve despite criticism from some of the student body. "This whole year has been about going after it and every week bettering yourself and bettering the team," junior Sam Nielsen said.

One challenge was helping new teammates feel comfortable. It was hard to adjust when the team played the toughest opponents in the first few games. "We had all the young guys who were kind of nervous," senior Gus Geneyan said. "As the season went on we started connecting more and getting back on track with everything."

In the middle of the season the team won three straight and four out of the last five games to qualify for district playoffs. "We did have a slow start," junior Jake Meyer said. "We had too many turnovers in the beginning but we're cleaning them up as the year went on and were getting better."

At the end of the season the team had to beat both Waukee and Sioux City East to win the district title. If they would have won against Waukee it would have been the first district title in school history. "There was a little pressure going into that game because if we had won we would've done something that no other Johnston team has ever done before," senior Austin Nichol said.

The Dragons trailed Waukee 14-17 after senior Grant Gossling ran in a 27-yard touchdown in the third. One minute later Waukee answered with a touchdown. Gossling said there were a couple of times where the team had driven the ball down the field and was close to scoring but did not. He also recalled a few plays where he wished he would have blocked for his teammates better. "It was heartbreaking losing that game," Gossling said. "That's how I feel after any loss but in the end you just have to move on and learn from it because there is still more football to be played." The next week the boys won the game against Sioux City earning second place in the district.

The first round of playoffs the team played a substate game against Dowling Catholic. The boys were confident in that they had a chance to win as long as they could keep the ball from the running backs. Coach Brian Woodley said that the game turned three minutes before halftime with a score of 14-6. The team was on the 30-yard line and needed a first down, but Dowling Catholic turned the ball back and scored putting the game at 21-6. The final score was 41-6. "The indication to me was that our kids weren't intimidated and played to their best capabilities," Woodley said. "It just wasn't good enough. Sometimes you have to take your hats off to the other team."



Football Concussion



1. Junior Aaron Brown passes the ball to junior Ty Kirby at the game against Des Moines Roosevelt. The junior varsity team's record was 1-1. (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)

2. Running away from Ankeny's defense, sophomore Andrew Nord

itches the ball to Anthony Coleman, also a sophomore. Nord was out for most of the season due to a broken foot. (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)

3. Going against the number one ranked team at the time, senior

Blake Devens reaches over a Valley player. "At the time we had five people out with injuries, but we expected to win," senior Grant Gossling said. "We didn't fear them and we didn't change our expectation." (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)

4. Against S. E. Polk, junior Brock Studer catches a kick return. Johnston won the game 20-17. "We were down basically the whole game but we came back and won it in the fourth," he said. "That game really helped our confidence moving for-

ward." (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)
5. Junior Ross Hinders tackles an East player. Hinders was the starting linebacker for the homecoming game. "Emotionally I was pretty nervous for the game because it was the first game that I was starting at

linebacker," Hinders said. "I remember telling myself to not think and to just play the game. And I'm glad I was able to come in and help my team on defense." (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)
6. Senior Gannon Svestka runs the

flag onto the field before the Sioux City East game for senior night, the last home game. The team won the game 49-0 which allowed them to make districts.
7. Senior Gus Geneyan rushes the ball to the end zone at the Sioux

City East game. Geneyan scored a total off 38 touchdowns during the season. (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)