

Hawks achieve Mission Impossible after opening with three losses, make playoffs

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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CARROLLTON - Mission impossible or was it?

Deep down did we think the Carrollton Hawks would not find a way?

The same Hawks that went to state two years ago and last season that overachieved and made it to another quarterfinal.

“Six weeks ago we think wow, how do we go from runner-up, to quarterfinals, and to 0-3?” **Carrollton head coach Nick Flowers** said. “All programs to go through it. I think this says a lot about our kids, coaches, and program.”

Carrollton, who started out at 0-3, have come back and won six in a row and won their last regular season game in style with a 50-18 victory over the **Triopia Trojans** in **Carrollton** on Friday night.

“A tough game like this will get us ready for week 1,” Flowers said. “I like to say the season starts over and like to think that we’ll be a pretty tough 6-3 team in the playoffs.”

Getting to the playoffs frequently may eventually just be business as usual, but for head coach Nick Flowers the sensation is still fresh.

“I don’t ever think the playoff feeling of joy ever goes away, Flowers said. “It’s a new feeling.”

Since their last loss, the Hawks have scored 275 points and surrendered 82, which is 31 less than the 113 they gave up in the first three weeks. Stats are facts; Carrollton has improved on all of the aspects of their game and Flowers believes the Hawks are peaking at the right time.

“Some can say that we’ve peaked right now, and I can say we’re darn close to it, but I really think offensively we’ve left some points out there,” Flowers said. “I think we are going to continue to get better in the playoffs. You wonder if you haven’t peaked in the middle of the season, are you ever going to? This group is a lot different than a lot of other groups. We’re continuing to get better, and we’re not just practicing to maintain, we’re practicing to get better.”

Jerrett Smith ran for 80 yards on 12 carries and scored **three touchdowns**. He now has 14 for the season. Quarterback Wade Prough ran for a score, but also did what he usually does and threw for two scores and 278 yards.

“A spread offense takes a lot of timing, angles, and it’s a little tougher offense to install and to run smoothly than a lot of offenses,” Flowers said. “It seems like every game, offensively, we’ve gotten better somewhere. Triopia played us some pretty tough defense at times, but then we found weaknesses out there. I feel like in our offense we have the ability to find those weaknesses. I’m proud of the boys.”

It started off great the visitors in white and sky blue.

The Trojans used a four minute and four-second drive and scored on a 3-yard run by Blake Lawson to put Triopia up 6-0. Just over two minutes later, the Hawks struck back with a Prough 4-yard quarterback keeper and the two-point conversion was good that gave Carrollton an 8-6 lead. Again, two and a half minutes later Triopia re-took the lead with another Lawson 3-yard scamper. Just before the first quarter ended, Smith scored his first touchdown on a 15-yard run that put Carrollton up for good at 14-12.

After a false start that moved them back to their 12-yard line, Carrollton scored on the first of the drive on a well executed 88-yard touchdown pass from Prough to Alex Bowker. The senior quarterback hit Bowker in stride, and the wide receiver outran his defender the rest of the way.

With three minutes to go unit halftime, Smith found the end zone again from three yards out to up the Hawks lead to 28-12, and after he had picked off Isaac Werries with 37 seconds to go, it gave Carrollton a huge opportunity to blow the game wide open, and they took it their chance.

Smith, at quarterback, took a snap, rolled to his right and heaved a 40-yard pass to Prough and the ball bounced off a Trojan defender, and landed into Prough's hands, while he was laying in the end zone for a miraculous touchdown reception. That scored made it 36-12 Hawks and outscored Triopia 22-0 in the second quarter alone.

Carrollton found the end zone two more times in the third quarter. Prough threw his second touchdown pass for 27 yards to Jeremy Watson, and Smith scored on a 4-yard run to cap off the evening.

The regular season is over, and the Hawks are in the playoffs. Multiple projections have the Hawks as 9, 8, or 7 seeds. One thing sure is that Carrollton will be a tough out for anybody given their current momentum and playoff experience.

“We love preparing for playoffs, and we’ve been putting in a lot of work. Hopefully, the kids celebrate this victory and get back and focus on Monday,” Flowers said.