

Coach Nick Flowers captures win No. 100 by large margin over Spartans

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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CARROLLTON - When the clock ran down to zero, Carrollton Hawks head coach Nick Flowers felt the sweet joy of another win. Then all of a sudden he felt the pain and glory of an ice bath a couple of players gave him by dumping the Gatorade cooler on him. Why?

Sure the Hawks remained undefeated and officially captured another WIVC South title with a 60-7 victory over the North Greene Spartans on Friday night, but it was the monumental benchmark he achieved with it.

Career win number 100.

It was bittersweet with win number 100 coming at North Greene High School because Flowers spent two seasons as an assistant coach for the Spartans early in his career.

“If the job didn’t open at Carrollton I may still be here as a coach,” Flowers said.

“I’m just one guy in the program that’s lucky to be called the head coach. It’s fun and very rewarding. I couldn’t have done it without great support and great assistant coaches.”

With that support comes Flowers’ family, who lives and breathes football.

“It’s been such a family thing,” Flowers said. “They run our spirit shack and our concession stand, our in the press box. Football is a family thing for us. It’s great that we can do it at the 1A football level.”

Two of those family members was Hunter and Zach Flowers who started for Carrollton and have been vital contributors all season long.

“It feels great because he’s my uncle, it’s pretty cool,” Hunter Flowers said. “He’s helped me stay composed, trust in my linemen and my receivers. But he’s really helped me in the off-season to get stronger and getting everything done.”

Hunter was 8-for-13 with 168 yards passing yards and four touchdowns on the night. That’s his third game of the season where he’s thrown four touchdowns passes, and he credits the offensive line for giving him plenty of time in the pocket.

“I trust in my receivers, and the line did a good job too,” Hunter Flowers said. “It’s awesome because I have so much time to get the ball to the receivers.”

“ has great composure, he loves the game, and he’s only going to get better,” Flowers said. “I was teasing his dad that we gotta get his legs stronger. If we can get him stronger, then the sky’s the limit for him.”

North Greene entered the contest winless at 0-6, but showed off some tricks every so often, specifically the first play of the game. Kaiden Heberling completed a 51-yard double reverse flea-flicker pass to Carter Hoesman down to the Carrollton 23-yard line. However, three plays later on a fourth down and four, the snap flew over Heberling and was eventually scooped up by Alex Bowker and scored on a 65-yard return.

“I’d like to think we’d be up 7-0. is a good team. We knew good things had to happen to us early or something like this could happen,” North Greene head coach Barry Creviston said. “We didn’t get the good thing early to happen and it just kind of snowball affected.”

Carrollton would go on to score 48 more points in the first half.

Soon after, Flowers connected with his favorite target, Nathan Walker on a 31-yard strike. On the next drive, Byron Holmes scored on a one-yard run and then later caught a 15-yard pass for a touchdown. That was part of the Hawks five-touchdown second-quarter barrage. Bowker caught two touchdown receptions including a 54-yard screen pass.

Another sophomore emerged tonight for the Hawks in the person of Ethan Brannan. He rushed for 76 yards on three carries with two touchdowns, including a 46-yard run late in the first half.

The last Carrollton touchdown came on a 70-yard kick return by Holmes to open the second half.

The Hawks offense has been the talking point this season, but the defense deserves plenty of credit as well. Carrollton's defense has given up on average 14 points per game so far, and tonight they were splendid again as a unit.

"We've just been working hard and study on film and focus on their best players," Nathan Cummins said. "We knew they would run some trick plays, but all week we knew they were going to run a lot too. We worked with ends setting the edge and rushing ."

The Spartans lone score of the game was a seven-yard touchdown pass to Hoesmen late in the fourth quarter. Heberling finished with 98 yards passing and threw 28 passes. Heberling, formerly a running back, filled in for the injured Keaton Brown, which adds to the increasing difficulty for the Spartans that is the injured list.

"Kaiden's our second guy, but he does a great job. We're going to keep continuing to work and take this and put it in the memory bank," North Greene head coach Barry Creviston said. "We're not going to forget games like this and what goes around comes around. It's on us. Other teams have played good, but we're beating us."

Going forward, there's a decent chance the Hawks can finish the regular season undefeated with two more games to go against Routt and Camp Point Central. Carrollton went undefeated in the 2014 regular season when Cummins was in eighth grade. Now he's a junior and starting defensive linemen that has played a role in the Hawks perfect season.

"It was pretty great. I remember my eighth-grade year I went to every game, and I was thinking then one day we were going to be up there. We're here now," Cummins said. Every day in the off-season I was saying this is going to be our year."

That all comes back to Coach Flowers, who has turned out to be one of the best and most respected coaches not only in the Riverbender area but the entire state of Illinois.

“What we’ve done is set our expectations high,” Flowers said. “That’s what we want to continue to do. The ultimate goal is we want to win state championships at Carrollton, and we’re going to keep working until we get there.

If you were wondering, Flowers record now stands at 100-44, but right now Carrollton is 7-0.

