

Defense keys Prosser's 28-7 win over Kennewick

BY JEFF MORROW

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The Prosser Mustangs knew they would have a pretty good offense after winning the state 2A football title last season. They just weren't completely sure about what kind of defense they would have.

Led by senior quarterback Tanner Bolt — who threw for 330 yards distributed to 10 different receivers, and connecting for four touchdown passes — the Mustangs opened the season with a 28-7 non-conference victory over the visiting Kennewick Lions. But it was the Mustangs' defense that raised eyebrows. Prosser held Class 3A Kennewick to 209 yards of offense, and the Mustangs harassed the Lions offense with 17 tackles for loss, including eight sacks of Kennewick quarterback AJ Templeton. "The defense came to play," Prosser coach Cory Ingvalson said. "We have some huge things to work on. But I was happy with our guys."

Leading the way were defensive lineman JR Coleman and linebacker Kolby Swift. Coleman had 12 tackles — including three QB sacks and four more for loss. Swift added 10 tackles, with two QB sacks, two more for loss, and one hurry. "We lost a lot of guys last year to graduation," said Coleman. "Tonight, we just used our defensive ends and speed to contain their guys from getting outside."

Swift agreed. "Our defense stepped up," Swift said. "The young guys have filled the position those seniors left. We wanted to try to stop their run tonight. We knew their quarterback (Templeton) is good." So was Bolt, who finished 21-for-33 for 330 yards. He had TD strikes of 25 yards to Chase Courtney, 31 yards and 26 yards to Logan Hamlin, and 24 yards to Swift.

He seemed to find the holes in Kennewick's secondary. One drive even went for 99 yards. "We were able to make some big plays," Bolt said. "We had a really good mix of plays. And for the first game, we felt a big statement had to be made."

But even Bolt had to give props to his defensive unit. "The defense is playing at a high level already," Bolt said. "But we've still got a ways to go. The state championship game is played in December, not September."

The game looked like it might be a battle early, when the Lions took the opening kickoff and moved down field, converting two times on fourth down to keep the drive alive. Templeton even connected on a TD play, but it was called back on a holding penalty. Eventually, Templeton was picked off at the 1 by Prosser's Robert Perez. The Lions couldn't get their offense going in the first half, as the line was called for three holding penalties.

"That was one of the things we talked about," Kennewick head coach Bill Templeton said. "We can't lose a game by making dumb mistakes. We didn't make the plays early on, and they did." It could have been different. The Lions got deep into Prosser territory a few times. But the Mustangs defense picked AJ Templeton off three times inside the 5-yard line. Kennewick looked better in the second half on both sides of the ball.

"We've got a lot to build on," Bill Templeton said. "We just weren't physical up front as we wanted to be." Besides catching the two TD passes, Hamlin also had seven tackles and two interceptions for Prosser. Cedric Riel led Kennewick's defense with eight tackles, one for loss, and a pass breakup. Blake Loftus added 6 tackles, two pass breakups and one cover.

Kennewick	0	0	7	0	—	7
Prosser	7	14	7	0	—	28

SCORING PLAYS

P — Chase Courtney 25 pass from Tanner Bolt (Ricardo Herrera kick)

P — Logan Hamlin 31 pass from Bolt (Herrera kick)

P — Hamlin 26 pass from Bolt (Herrera kick)

P — Kolby Swift 24 pass from Bolt (Herrera kick)

K — AJ Templeton 2 run (Emilio Ramos kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING — K, Tim Gee 3-36, Ronny Loomis 10-26, Isaac Ruiz 8-minus 5, Templeton 24-minus 8. P, JR Coleman 5-29, Josiah Stutzman 6-25, Noah Flores 9-16, Bolt 1-minus 13, Team 1-minus 14.

PASSING — K, Templeton 15-26-4-160. P, Bolt 21-33-0-330.

RECEIVING — K, Blake Loftus 3-43, Jacob Schuldheisz 2-35, Loomis 3-30, Keyshawn Owens 1-27, Austin Albertin 4-18, Tucker Newman 2-7. P, Hamlin 4-78, Michael Kernan 3-57, Tyler Durbin 2-46, Swift 3-42, Flores 2-38, Courtney 1-25, Robert Perez 2-22, Angel Rivera 2-15, Stutzman 1-5, Jordan Garcia 1-2.