

The EMAK Report

King's Knights 2023

**Comeback against
Seton Catholic falls
just short**



The EMAK Report



King's High School Football
Building champions
while pursuing championships

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Knights Run Out of Time Against Seton Catholic



Early in the 3rd quarter, Jack Fuller pulled in a 37 yard pass from Noah Clark to cut the Seton Catholic lead to 34 - 21.

20 point deficit at halftime too much to overcome.

By Sam Roach

In a game that featured lots of offense from both teams, in the words of Jim Shapiro, "We just ran out of time," as the Knights fell to the Seton Catholic Cougars 56 - 48 on November 12th at Woolsey Stadium ending their season at 9 - 1.

The first quarter ended with the score deadlocked at 7 all. Then came the turnovers. Seton Catholic recovered two King's fumbles deep in King's territory to give themselves a short

field and score 24 unanswered points and take a 31 - 7 lead. At the time, it looked like the route was on.

Looks can be deceiving though. This was playoff football where the game is never over until it's over and King's showed the world what they were made of. They would outscore Seton Catholic 41 - 25 for the rest of the game.

Late in the second quarter, Noah Clark hit Caden Kennelly for a 44 yard touchdown pass. In the third quarter Clark would find Jack Fuller for a similar pass with the same results.

In addition to the passing game, the

Knights got their running game going as well scoring rushing touchdowns on three consecutive possessions. Clark scored twice from three yards out, Braeden Caulk scored on a 30 yard run and Garrett Hagen powered his way into the endzone from four yards out.

Shapiro, writing about the Knights on social media, had this to say about their effort. "Last night I witnessed Kings Knights Football's true character. I saw men, not boys, fight until the end. No quit in them. Toughness, grit, determination. We lost the game, but I'm 100% confident these guys will win at life."

He was absolutely correct. King's never quit playing until the clock read double zeros at the end of the final quarter. In addition to the plays that worked there were two notable plays that came so close to extending drives or stealing a possession. One was an onside kick attempt and the other was a halfback pass. Both just missed by inches of being successful as King's fought to crawl back into the game.

King's offensive production was led by Clark who completed 22 of 25 passes for 298 yards and two scores. In addition, he rushed for 98 yards and two touchdowns. The leading receiver for Kings was Fuller with 161 yards on 9 receptions and one score. Caulk led the Knight's rushing attack with 110 rushing yards and two touchdowns.

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Perseverance: The Inside Story of the 2023 King's Knights

Perseverance: The quality that screams to be written about when describing the 2023 King's Knights is their persistence. Regardless of their circumstances on the field, this team never quit playing, they never quit trying to find a way to win games and it showed throughout the season. It was the unwritten storyline that set them apart from perhaps every other Knight's football team in the history of King's Knights football. Without this distinct quality, this team might have finished the season with a 7 - 3 or 6 - 4 record and possibly would not have even made the state tournament. In this final edition of the 2023 EMAK Report, I want to recap the four games where this persistence made a difference in the game.

Nooksack Valley: The word on the street for months before this game was played was that King's was going to have a hard time in this game, in fact, many so called experts, pundits, predicted that Nooksack Valley would win this game, and those were just the people who weren't from Whatcom County. The game would be close, they said, but Nooksack Valley had too many horses for King's to win that game... News flash, somebody forgot to tell King's that.

King's was a bunch of opportunistic ball hawks that night. Mak Kanzler recovered a fumble on the opening kickoff to put the Knights in business and three plays later Noah Clark hit Cole Adams for an eight yard touch-down pass giving King's the lead.

Nooksack Valley wasn't fazed however. They scored on their next two offensive series to take a 14 - 7 lead. The visiting Pioneers were in a position to take over the game after a King's drive failed to produce points but then the determination of the 2023 Knight's became apparent again. Kanzler intercepted a pass deep in Nooksack Valley territory, Clark scored on the next play and, in the following drive Clark found Jack Fuller in the endzone for a 17 yard touchdown pass to give King's their second lead of the night.

The lead was short-lived. Nooksack Valley scored at the end of the second quarter to take a 20 - 19 lead into the locker room at halftime.

This is the point in the ball game when many teams, good teams even, fold. King's didn't. They scored on their first drive of the third quarter to take the lead.



Photo by Shelby Echelbarger



Photo by Shelby Echelbarger



Photo by Dianna Roach

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Perseverance: The Inside Story of the 2023 King's Knights (continued)

That lead was short lived. Following a Clark interception, Nooksack Valley took the lead again, 26 - 25 with two minutes remaining in the 3rd quarter. King's didn't flinch. They owned the rest of the game.

Nooksack Valley had no answer for the King's short passing game and the Knight's swarming defense kept Nooksack Valley at bay. King's kept the pressure on but even with that, they had to rely hard work and determination to win the game. After Matthew Williams missed a potential go ahead field goal, King's never lost their poise. With three minutes remaining, Williams got an opportunity to kick the game winning field goal and this time he was successful. Their perseverance paid off.

King's held on to win that game 28 - 26 and this was only the first time that their perseverance would win them a ball game. Two weeks later, it was on display again.

Cascade Christian: This was the game that will forever be known for, "The Reach," the reception by Adams of a one yard pass from Clark on the final play of the game that gave the Knights their fifth win of the season.

This game was a defensive struggle that was won in the trenches and on special teams. Cascade Christian scored first and King's battled back in the second quarter to tie. Cascade Christian answered with a drive at the end of the second quarter but King's put up a goal line stand and held Cascade Christian out of the end zone.

In the third quarter, Cascade Christian scored on a perfectly executed screen pass to take the lead again. King's bounced back after that score and was relentless in the way that they kept the pressure on Cascade Christian in the 4th quarter. With three minutes remaining, King's had not led the entire night, when they got the break that they needed. An errant snap on a punt produced a safety that cut the Cascade Christian lead to four points.

Cascade Christian never saw the ball again that night. King's took the ensuing kick off and, starting on the Cascade Christian 46 and scored the game winning touchdown as the clock read double zero to seal the win. One of the key factors was that King's kept playing hard.



Photo by Shelby Echelbarger



Photo by Shelby Echelbarger



Photo by Shelby Echelbarger

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Perseverance: The Inside Story of the 2023 King's Knights (continued)

Granite Falls: To understand the significance of why the Granite Falls win put the Knights' perseverance on display, one has to understand the history behind the King's vs. Granite Falls rivalry in the past decade. Although in the past few years, King's has beaten Granite Falls easily, since 2017, there have been several tightly contested games that could have gone either way and, in the second quarter, this game had the feel of those games rather than the blowouts of recent years.

King's jumped out to an early lead, but by the end of the second quarter, Granite Falls had found something they thought they could exploit and had tied the game at 21 all with 21 seconds remaining in the half. However, Clark threw a deep post route to Caiden Castillo to put the Knights in field goal position and Williams delivered, giving King's a lead they never relinquished.

In the second half, King's made some defensive adjustments and handily won the game 52 - 28. Here's the thing though. A non-resilient King's team doesn't score that field goal and goes into the locker room at halftime tied and, at best, trades scores with Granite Falls in the second half and, if the game goes like the usual close Granite Falls vs King's games had in the past, it's a toss-up as to which team will win. Granite won two incidentally. What set this King's team apart though is that they had more perseverance than those other King's teams.

Seton Catholic: With 2:21 remaining in the second quarter, Seton Catholic had a 31 - 7 lead on the Knights. That was a 24 point lead and even though it was a state playoff game, there aren't many teams that come back from that deficit but King's almost did. With 7:33 remaining in the 4th quarter, King's had cut the deficit to six points. Although they came up short, if the Knights had not displayed perseverance, that game would not have been that close.

Conclusion: Without perseverance 2023 King's Knights probably would have lost to both Nooksack Valley and Cascade Christian and possibly at Granite Falls. Also, they probably wouldn't have hosted a first round playoff game either. In the end though, because of their perseverance, they controlled what they could control, specifically their effort, and finished 9 - 1.



The EMAK Report

The Individual Awards

Emerald Sound All League Honors

Noah Clark - Conference Offensive MVP

Wesley Blackmer - Conference Defensive MVP

Matthew Williams - Conference Special Teams MVP

Braeden Caulk - All Conference Running Back and Linebacker

Jack Fuller - All Conference Wide Receiver

Cole Adams - All Conference Wide Receiver and Defensive Back

Wesley Blackmer - All Conference Offensive Line

Simon Vanderwel - All Conference Offensive Line and Defensive Line

Jackson Miller - All Conference Offensive Line and Defensive Line

Noah Clark - All Conference Linebacker

Caidan Castillo - All Conference Defensive Back

2023 Team Honors

MVP varsity skilled offense Noah Clark

MVP varsity skilled defense Cole Adams

MVP varsity defensive line Wesley Blackmer

MVP varsity offensive line Jackson Miller

MVP JV skilled offense Garrett Hagen

MVP JV skilled defense Nate Bjella

MVP JV defensive line Aiden Shelford

MVP JV offensive line Aiden Shelford

JV Most Improved Brandon Roberts

MVP varsity special teams Matthew Williams

MVP JV special teams Jackson Kelly

Every Man A Knight Nathaniel Bemis

Varsity Most Improved Caidan Castillo

Coaches Award Greyson Armbruster

Captains

Jackson Miller

Noah Clark

Mak Kanzler

Wesley Blackmer

John Brannan