

Blackhawks back in finals



Staff photo/Cindy Christensen - Iowa Blackhawks linebacker Chris Bradford escapes a tackle from Kansas Koyotes defensive back Henry Talley III during Saturday night's playoff game at the Mid-America Center.

Iowa runs past Kansas, 60-30

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Iowa used an old outdoor football formula to earn its way back to the American Professional Football League indoor championship game.

Relying on its running game and defense, the Blackhawks (9-1) pulled away from rival Kansas in a league semifinal Saturday at the Mid-America Center. Iowa rushed for 148 yards and six touchdowns in its 60-30 win while holding the six-time APFL champion Koyotes to just 110 total yards.

"We really wanted to get our guys a little more aggressive at the line of scrimmage," Blackhawk coach Mike Wolff said. "I think that kind of showed tonight."

Newcomer Chris Bradford scored three rushing touchdowns in his second game with Iowa, which will host Mid-Missouri in the title contest next week. He joined the squad after his other team, the Omaha Beef, finished its indoor season earlier this summer.

Bradford came to Council Bluffs to play linebacker. He played zero snaps on defense Saturday, instead complementing speed back Eric Johnson in the Blackhawk backfield.

"We call it 'Thunder and Lightning,'" Bradford said. "With little E.J., he's a lot faster. And then when they get a dose of me, it's kind of a change up. We knew it was going to work so we hit it hard tonight."

Bradford's third TD allowed Iowa to separate from Kansas in the second half. Derek Townsend added a pair of rushing touchdowns and a TD pass as the Blackhawks pulled away after a slow start.

Koyote defensive back Henry Talley III intercepted a Chuck Wright pass on the first play from scrimmage in the game and returned it 26 yards for a touchdown to start a back-and-forth first half that saw five lead changes.

The Blackhawks eventually moved in front 22-18 on a 3-yard scoring pass from Wright to Townsend. Bradford later found the end zone from 10 yards out on a toss play with 33 seconds left in the second quarter to put Iowa up by 11 at the break.

After Iowa extended its lead in the third quarter, Townsend took over at quarterback. He broke an electrifying 25-yard scoring run to make it 48-24 early in the quarter before showing his passing skills.

It was the first game back for the rookie, who has missed the majority of the season with a broken finger. He had rushing, throwing and passing scores in his return.

"It's been horrible just watching," he said. "It's not any fun at all. It feels great to be back."

Iowa's defense welcomed back lineman Albert Rodriguez while holding the Koyotes under the 100-yard mark in total offense until the final two minutes. Kansas quarterback Brandon Brill completed only 3 of his last 14 pass attempts while the Koyotes were held to just 55 yards through the air.

Kansas finished its season at 5-6 and failed to reach the championship game for the first time in the history of the APFL. The Koyotes won the league title in the first six seasons before falling to Iowa in the final at the MAC last summer.

Kansas (5-6) 12 6 6 6 - 30

Iowa (9-1) 15 14 13 18 - 60

K: Henry Talley III 26 interception return (kick failed)

I: Chris Bradford 14 run (kick failed)

I: Safety, Jordan Brill recovered fumbled snap in end zone

K: Justin Wrecke 7 pass from Brill (pass failed)

I: Mike Stuart 34 pass from Chuck Wright (Jerry Lakin kick)

K: Donnell Smith 9 run (run failed)

I: Derek Townsend 3 pass from Wright (Lakin kick)

I: Bradford 10 run (Lakin kick)

I: Bradford 1 run (kick failed)

I: Townsend 2 run (Lakin kick)

K: Gary Helms 6 pass from Brill (kick failed)

I: Townsend 25 run (pass failed)

K: Jermaine Smith 37 kickoff return (pass failed)

I: Eric Johnson 31 run (kick failed)

I: Andrew Seymour 39 pass from Townsend (kick failed)