

Outlaws championship bound

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Mid Missouri Outlaws coach Travis Jobe will celebrate his 39th birthday next week. On Saturday, he got one of his presents early, as his Outlaws powered to decisive 35-27 victory over the Springfield WolfPack in their APFL semifinal game.

“It’s awesome,” he said of the victory.

The Outlaws attack was powered by their run game as running back Marcus James had a breakout game with three touchdowns. Lineback Chad Jackson had a crucial interception and kicker Adrian Trevino added in a stadium-record 51-yard field goal in a game where the Outlaws never trailed.

James came out charging, pushing across the goal line at the 9:39 mark, giving the Outlaws early momentum and a 7-0 lead after Trevino tacked on the extra point.

The Outlaws defensive line packed pressure onto Springfield’s front four, causing a number of high snaps and dropped passes, but the WolfPack soon matched Mid-Missouri’s seven-point score, putting up a touchdown of their own with a play that cut across the field.

“Springfield plays a lot of zone defense so we felt they were vulnerable on the run,” Jobe said of the Outlaws running attack. “Next week we may spread it out because Iowa outweighs us by about 100 pounds on the line.”

Springfield appeared to be mounting a scoring drive of its own in the first with a big pass to the Mid-Missouri five-yard line, but a high snap flew over Derek Rasmussen’s head to the Springfield 20. The WolfPack ended up turning over the ball over on downs after another incomplection.

As the second quarter started, Mid Missouri struggled itself. But the Outlaws were still able to score as Trevino boomed a 51-yard kick toward the Springfield endzone. The ball bounced off the hand of a Springfield defender and over the crossbar.

Trevino’s best was a 60-yarder against Iowa three weeks ago, but Saturday’s field goal set a stadium record. Trevino said it was difficult to place the kick with the arena’s low-hanging ceiling.

Springfield then gave up a safety as the ball was snapped over Rasmussen’s head and couldn’t capitalize when Trevino missed the field goal on the Outlaws’ subsequent drive.

Trailing 19-7, the Wolf Pack came out strong in the second half, putting up a quick score with a pass across the length of the field to pull within five less than a minute into the third quarter. The teams then traded touchdowns to bring the score to 26-21 and Trevino added another field goal to put Mid Missouri up eight at the end of the third quarter.

Trevino then added another field goal before the WolfPack drove quickly across Mid Missouri territory to claw within five points again on another touchdown, but the Outlaws mounted their own drive to put three more on the board and put the game just out of reach at 35-27.

Defensive back Chad Jackson put the final nail in the coffin with an interception with 59 seconds left. He said the play and the Outlaws overall dominance gave them confidence for the upcoming championship.

“It felt great, especially for an old guy like me,” he said.

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