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Ferndale tailback Jeff Hindley earns tough yards up the middle against Hoopa defenders on Saturday at home. Tyson Ritter/The Eureka Reporter

Wildcats sneak past Warriors, earn L4 title

by Bryan DeMain, 11/12/2006

Ferndale got its second scare of the season at home on Saturday, but was able to hang on 12-6 over Hoopa in a defensive battle to earn a seventh consecutive Little Four title.

Both teams played textbook defense in the opening half as the game went scoreless into the locker room.

After Hoopa ended its opening possession three-and-out, Ferndale's Jeff Hindley ripped off a 20-yard run on the Cats' first play from scrimmage.

From there, however, Hoopa's defense repelled anything the Cats threw at them.

Hoopa's Kyle Moon, Alex Pratt, Matt Lewis and John Mitchell all made tackles for losses and soon both teams were playing for field position.

The Ferndale defense was just as stellar, allowing Hoopa to gain two first downs in the opening half and six all game.

A.C. Cloud picked off Jake Morris, the Cats' defense forced two Hoopa fumbles and each team ended the first half with very few impressive plays on offense.

In the second half, however, Ferndale finally capitalized on Hoopa's turnovers. The Warriors turned the ball over four times to the Cats' two in the game.

Ferndale opened the second half with a 14-play, 44-yard drive that was capped off by a 2-yard touchdown run by Chris Hubbard.

The Warriors fumbled on the ensuing possession and the Cats turned around and scored on an eight-play, 36-yard drive, after Jake Morris found a wide open Jeff Hindley 25 yards out on fourth-and-10.

"We had a couple of key big plays and we needed them to win," said Ferndale head coach Kim Jorgensen.

The Cats wore down the Warriors' defense with a steady diet of Hindley, who finished the game with 87 yards rushing on 23 carries and two catches for 63 yards.

Hoopa ran just seven plays from scrimmage in the third quarter before coughing up the ball twice.

The Warriors battled back late in the game, scoring on a 27-yard touchdown pass from Talbert Alvarado to Bill Sylvia.

Hoopa tried an onside kick with just 58 seconds remaining, but the ball was corralled by Ferndale's Brice Titus.

Ferndale and Hoopa each racked up 175 yards of total offense in the game.

"Those four fumbles were just deadly for us," said Hoopa head coach Marty Wilkes. "Now it's sudden death time for us. We're going to host a playoff game for the first time in Hoopa's history and the boys should be proud of that."

Ferndale (10-0 overall, 6-0 in league) and Hoopa (7-3, 4-2) are expected to receive top seeds in the North Coast Sections Class A and Class B playoffs, respectively.