

By JOHN HENSON

Harlan County Sports.com

GATE CITY, Va. — Trailing 7-0 after one quarter Friday to the Class A, Division 2 state champs, the Harlan County Black Bears had their first test of the 2011 season in dealing with adversity.

Like just about everything else in their 3-0 start this year, the Black Bears passed in impressive fashion.

Harlan County reeled off 22 unanswered points in the second quarter and rolled to a 48-7 victory over the Blue Devils.

The Black Bears gained 364 yards on the ground led by junior running back Jake Middleton with 116 yards on seven carries and senior quarterback Jordy Brewer with 113 yards on 14 carries.

Gate City (0-2) was limited to only one yard on the ground on 25 carries, including eight for losses.

"We just got took out behind the woodshed, and that's going to happen to you once in a while," said Gate City coach Bill Houseright. "Our problem is adjusting out on the field and it showed. We've had the same problem in practice and the last game. We have to get that corrected."

Senior defensive end Marcus McMillian was especially troublesome for the Bears as he spent much of the evening in the Gate City backfield as he ran down play all over the field.

"Marcus came to play. He can really come off that edge in a hurry," Harlan County coach Tom Larkey said. "He played a fantastic defensive game."

"He had a great game. He is as quick as can be," Houseright said.

Harlan County appeared to take the lead in the first quarter when Middleton broke free up the middle for a 75-yard touchdown run, but the play was nullified by an illegal contact penalty.

A second mistake cost the Bears points as McMillian had to leap to pull down a high snap as he lined up for a punt. He tried to pick up the first down by running after snatching the ball out of the air but was stopped three yards short on the Harlan County 31.

Pass interference and illegal procedure penalties helped the Blue Devils score with only 13 yards of offense on the drive, which ended when Elliott Seaver went in from the 1 with 5.7 seconds left in the first quarter. Nick Bowen hit the extra point for a 7-0 lead.

The Blue Devils led after one quarter despite being held to 12 yards of offense.

Harlan County played a penalty free second quarter and took command of the game behind Brewer, who was able to pick his spots out of the shotgun and continually found openings in the Gate City defense.

"I don't think they had prepared much for that," Larkey said. "We didn't have to get in that much last week against Dunbar. We lined up in the Power I and ran it at them and had around 570 yards. I guess that's what they put most of their time in working against. They did a good job stopping it. I'm kind of disappointed we couldn't stay with it.

"I think spreading it out and mixing things up worked pretty well for us. Jordy does a good job with. We have some speed out there. We just have to take advantage of it and use it."

"I felt pretty good about taking care of the power game. We faced the other set last week, and we have some mismatches when people spread the field," Houseright said. "We don't cover the field very well. It gave us some problems."

A holding penalty against Gate City on a punt attempt by the Bears kept the first HCHS scoring drive alive. Brewer picked up a nice block by tight end Aaron Caldwell and went 44 yards. Brewer went 11 yards for a touchdown on the next play as McMillian and Carson Whitehead helped clear a path. Middleton added the two-point conversion for an 8-7 lead with 9:30 to play in the second quarter.

Brewer found Caldwell for a 14-yard gain on a third-and-10 play on the Bears' next drive, which covered 50 yards in seven plays and ended with McMillian breaking two tackles on a 15-yard scoring run. Josh Jenkins' extra point pushed the lead to 15-7 with 3:51 to play in the first half.

After another three-and-out by the Devils, Harlan County had time for another scoring drive. Brewer ran 21 yards and McMillian went 36 on successive plays as the Bears battled the clock and the outmanned Gate City defense. Brewer went the final yard with 13.7 seconds to play. Jenkins' extra point gave HCHS a 22-7 lead at the break.

With the Blue Devils stacked near the line to stop the HCHS running attack, Brewer found a wide open Treyvon Long for a 31-yard touchdown pass with 6:28 to play in the third quarter. Jenkins added the extra point.

McMillian gave the Devils fits from his defensive end position as he dropped a receiver for an 11-yard loss after a catch, then brought a ball carrier down for a two-yard loss on the next play.

The Harlan County special teams got into the act when Carson Whitehead blocked a punt and recovered it in the end zone. Jenkins added the extra point for a 36-7 lead.

Harlan County's second-string offense marched 64 yards in 10 plays to close the scoring as freshmen Devin Daniels and Hunter Lewis each picked up first downs before Lee broke free for a 31-yard touchdown run with 4:10 left. Cory Chorak's extra point attempt was off the mark after a penalty.

With the clock running, Gate City was able to run only one play before time expired.

The one negative of the night for the Bears came in the first quarter when junior linebacker/fullback Tucker Lewis went out with a knee injury. Lewis missed all of last seasons with a torn ACL. The extent of his latest injury is unknown until he's examined next week, but he was unable to return to the game.

"We all feel bad about Tucker and know the story about him missing his sophomore year and doing all the rehab on his knee," Larkey said. "We can't give up yet. It's a possibility he might be all right. We'll get it checked out."

Harlan County is off next week before playing its home opener on Sept. 16 against Lee, Va.

Harlan County 0 22 20 6 — 48

Gate City 7 0 0 0 — 7

GC — Elliott 1 run (Bowen kick)

HC — Brewer 11 run (Middleton run)

HC — McMillian 15 (Jenkins kick)
HC — Brewer 1 run (Jenkins kick)
HC — Long 31 pass from Brewer (Jenkins kick)
HC—Whitehead recovers blocked punt in end zone (Jenkins kick)
HC — Middleton 85 run (kick failed)
HC — H. Lewis 31 run (kick failed)

HCHS DHS

First downs 16 4

Rushes-yards 39-364 25-1

Passing 46 51

Comp-Att-Int 3-4-0 6-8-0

Punts-Avg 1-10 6-35

Fumbles-Lost 0-0 1-0

Penalties-Yards 8-55 8-60

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Harlan County, Middleton 7-116, Brewer 14-113, McMillian 7-75, H. Lewis 4-38, Daniels 5-15, Chorak 1-6, Long 1-1. Gate City, Franklin 5-5, Miller 2-5, Elliott 3-4, Hicks 3-1, D. McMurray 1-0, T. McMurray 2-(-1), Morris 2-(-1), Bowen 7-(-12).

PASSING—Harlan County, Brewer 3-4-0-46. Gate City, Bowen 6-18-0-51.

RECEIVING—Harlan County, Long 1-31, Caldwell 1-14, Middleton 1-1. Gate City, Miller 3-(-7), Collier 2-54, McMurray 1-4.