

Jackets fall to Colonials in home opener

By PETE TOBEY -- tobey@poststar.com | Posted: Saturday, July 17, 2010 11:54 pm

GLENS FALLS -- No rain fell on East Field, but the visiting team put a damper on the Glens Falls Greenjackets' home opener Saturday evening.

With lightning and thunder as a backdrop, the Glove Cities Colonials scored three touchdowns -- two on quick strikes following interceptions -- to seize a 35-0 halftime lead en route to a 49-27 North American Football League Empire Division victory over the Jackets.

"It's what I was afraid of, in the first half especially," associate head coach Jeff Higgins said. "We've got a bunch of guys who didn't play together, haven't practiced much together, so warmups and the first two quarters were basically their practice. We settled down in the second half and played better, but we ran out of gas."

The chippy, penalty-filled game was delayed for 20 minutes as a thunderstorm passed near the field, just after the Colonials (2-0) had taken a 28-0 lead with two minutes left in the first half.

The Colonials' Justin Kastner took advantage of several Glens Falls defensive lapses to pass for 315 yards and five touchdowns. He threw three scoring strikes in the final 3:29 of the first half as Glove Cities opened its big lead.

The Jackets (0-2) rallied to score four second-half touchdowns, including scoring passes of 14 and 78 yards from Mike Leonbruno to John Brennan in the fourth quarter, pulling within 42-27. Brennan caught five passes for 104 yards, and Larry Alberts added seven catches for 131 yards.

Leonbruno, who was seeing his first action of the season, completed 16 of 35 passes for 245 yards, but threw five interceptions, three leading to Glove Cities touchdowns. The Jackets were held to 82 yards and three first downs in the first half, turning the ball over on downs twice deep in Colonials territory.

"No excuses, I just didn't throw the ball well tonight," Leonbruno said. "The first two drives we moved the ball, but we didn't finish. Then we lagged for a while on offense before we figured out what was happening. Finishing strong is the good part about this game."

"That was Mike's first action since last October, but I thought he played pretty good for not practicing much," Higgins said. "Once he got in a rhythm, he did well, and we mixed it up, going inside-outside. Three of his five picks in the first half were because we were pressing to make something happen before the half."

Kastner, who completed 19 of 32 passes and also ran for a touchdown, threw four scoring strikes to Pleasant Rowe and another to Jesse Bennett.

"Losing (linebacker) Shane Sportman (to a knee injury) in the first half definitely didn't help," Higgins said. "We made some discipline mistakes and you can't have that in a shootout."

The Jackets got on the board on Kamar Elliott's 15-yard fumble return for a touchdown with 6:38 left in the third quarter. They then unveiled a new rushing threat in 300-plus-pound Jamar Lacy, who set up the Jackets' second touchdown by rambling 34 yards to the 3-yard line, and D.J. Jones scored on the next play.

"We're still a good football team," Higgins said. "We got better as the game went on, but it wasn't enough."

The Jackets are scheduled to host the Elmira Evolution in an NAFL game Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at East Field.

Glove Cities (2-0) 7 28 0 14 -- 49

Greenjackets (0-2) 0 0 14 13 -- 27

First Quarter

GC - Rowe 3 pass from Kastner (Lott kick), 8:45

Second Quarter

GC - Kastner 2 run (Lott kick), 14:55

GC - Rowe 7 pass from Kastner (Lott kick), 3:29

GC - Bennett 40 pass from Kastner (Lott kick), 2:00

GC - Rowe 32 pass from Kastner (Lott kick), :23

Third Quarter

GF - Elliott 15 fumble return (Bagstad kick), 6:38

GF - Jones 3 run (Bagstad kick), 1:37

Fourth Quarter

GC - Rowe 28 pass from Kastner (Lott kick), 14:44

GF - Brennan 14 pass from Leonbruno (Bagstad kick), 8:06

GF - Brennan 78 pass from Leonbruno (kick failed), 4:38

GC - Smith 5 run (Lott kick), :57

TEAM STATISTICS

GC GF

First downs 21 11

Rushes-yards 25-122 17-105

Passing yards 315 245

Comp-Att.-Int. 19-35-0 16-35-5

Punts-ave. 1-29 0-0

Fumbles-lost 1-1 1-1

Penalties-yards 10-79 9-102

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING -- Glove Cities: Smith 10-59, 1TD; Ponder 10-45, Person 3-14, Rowe 1-2; Kastner 1-2, 1TD. Greenjackets: Williams 12-57, Lacy 2-56; Jones 2-12, 1TD; Leonbruno 1-(-20).

PASSING -- Glove Cities: Kastner 19-32-0, 315 yards, 5 TD. Greenjackets: Leonbruno 16-35-5, 245 yards, 2TD.

RECEIVING -- Glove Cities: Rowe 7-122, 4TD; Quinn 4-60; Bennett 3-82, 1TD; Esopi 3-22, Smith 1-8, No. 44 1-20. Greenjackets: Alberts 7-131; Brennan 5-104, 2TD; Zieniuk 2-8, Williams 1-10, Jones 1-(-8).