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The Hays Daily News Sports Column - "Bedores Eats up New Turf"

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The Hays Daily News

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TERRY GASTON

HAYS DAILY NEWS

SPORTS

Bedore eats up new turf

Much like Herb Bender did in Lewis Field Stadium's first game in October 1936, Clint Bedore proved to be the star of the show on the stadium's new artificial surface Saturday night.

Bedore, a sophomore tailback from Stockton, scored two touchdowns — just like Bender did nearly 57 years ago — and rushed for 195 yards on 22 carries in Fort Hays State University's 17-7 win over Emporia State University.

The game was the first to be played on artificial turf at the 57-year-old stadium, and Bedore seemed to like the new sand-filled surface just fine.

"It's a lot firmer, and you can cut a lot sharper," Bedore said. "And it will get a lot better as the sand gets worked down into the turf."

After rushing for a team-high 490 yards last year, Bedore ran for nearly 40 percent of that figure in one game Saturday.

He gained the honor of scoring the first touchdown on the turf on a 30-yard sweep off a pitch from junior quarterback Dustin McEwen with 2:08 left in the first quarter.

"Good blocks by the line and the fullback, I've got to give them all the credit," Bedore said of his first TD run. "And then the defense. I fumbled a couple times, and they really rose to the occasion."

Bedore's first fumble, at the Tiger 27, resulted in ESU's only touchdown that at the time tied the score at 7.

His second mishap, in the third quarter, gave the Hornets possession at their own 42 on downs before a Fort Hays interception deep in Tiger territory stopped that scoring threat.

And after Bedore turned the ball over at the Emporia 3, the FHSU defense denied the Hornets with a midfield interception.

"As far as I'm concerned, the credit goes to the defense," Bedore said of the victory. "The offense made a lot of mistakes, and the defense did a great job."

Bedore's first scoring rush came seven plays after an apparent 70-yard TD pass from McEwen to junior receiver Frank Martin Jr. was negated by a procedure penalty.

Bedore's second scoring dash, after ESU had tied the game at 7, was on an 82-yard run in which he ran right off a pitch and cut back across the field to follow the left sideline into the north end zone.

He was aided to the end zone by a nice downfield block by sophomore slotback Lance Schwindt. Schwindt disposed of Hornet junior cornerback Chad Kreutzer of LaCrosse after Kreutzer had pursued Bedore most of the way.

That run helped give Bedore 144 yards in the first half to make him the first rusher to hit the century mark on the turf.

Ward Reigel rushed for 125 yards in Lewis Field Stadium's opener, a 32-7 Tiger victory over Chadron (Neb.) Teachers College. Bender had an interception to go with his two-touchdown performance that night.

Other milestone moments on the artificial surface:

■ The honor of being the first player with possession to run on the field went to FHSU freshman Ringzerrian Rucker, who returned the opening kickoff 14 yards.

■ The dubious honor of running the first play from scrimmage belonged to Tiger sophomore quarterback Dustin McEwen, who was dropped for a 2-yard sack by ESU junior linebacker Greg Harvey.

■ FHSU senior center C.J. Haberkorn was the first player to go down by injury on the turf, but he returned after apparently having the wind knocked out of him.

On the surface, it appeared that no serious injuries — other than one that took Hornet sophomore quarterback Chris Montgomery out of action — were suffered on the turf's opening night.

The turf also played a few roles in helping its home tenants, with junior Todd Pene getting a 17-yard roll after he dropped a snap in the first quarter. The roll turned the play into a 30-yard punt.

Rucker had a fumble in the second period, but he was able to recover the ball after it hopped back up into his hands.

Earlier in the second quarter, FHSU senior defensive tackle Aaron Mata suffered his first lost contact lens in competition.

To his fortune, Mata was able to recover the lens — something that may not have occurred in the old Bermuda grass field.

The turf's opening night drew a crowd of 5,657 which nearly packed the stands.