Rochester Defeats Lackawanna in North Star Bowl

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Big and confident, that's what Rochester Community and Technical College noticed about its North Star Bowl foe during the banquet prior to Saturday's football game.

"We saw at the banquet that they were big. Even their coaches were big," RCTC coach Brad LaPlante said about Lackawanna Community College.

"They're a confident team, too. But so are we," LaPlante added.

But were the Yellowjackets intimidated? Hardly. They proved early that they could play with the Falcons and went on to post a 19-13 victory over Lackawanna in the first North Star Bowl held at Rochester Regional Sports Stadium.

"I think we could tell from the opening kick that they didn't think we were big, fast, strong or smart enough," RCTC running back Seth Karlsrud said. "But we went out and proved it."

The Yellowjackets sure did. They used a swarming defense to limit the Falcons to just 150 total yards.

Karlsrud also provided RCTC with its two biggest plays. He scored on a 73-yard kick return in the second quarter and snapped a 13-13 tie with a 27-yard touchdown run in the third quarter.

"We stuck together like Silly Putty," Karlsrud said.

Lackawanna came into the game ranked in the top 10 in the nation in rushing offense, and was prepared to run behind a pair of 350-pound tackles. But RCTC, ranked No. 1 in the nation in run defense, held the Lackawanna ground game in check most of the game.

"We knew we had to come in and stop the run, get them out of their comfort zone," RCTC linebacker Trevor Glomski said.

RCTC did that, allowing 126 yards on the ground in 38 attempts. On the Falcons' first series, RCTC stopped three straight running plays for losses.

"The first series really set the tone," Glomski said. "We came out flying around and showed our speed."

"That was definitely a factor," Falcons coach Mark Duda said of RCTC stopping the run. "Their linebackers had as good as day as anyone in the last three or four years against us. They were the difference."

Glomski, Johnathan Price and Stephen Barnes all had big games at linebacker for RCTC. Barnes had two sacks and recovered a fumble. And LaPlante said the front seven was able to stay close to the line of scrimmage because the defensive backs covered the secondary so well.

Lackawanna quarterback Michael Eargle ran for a touchdown and threw a scoring pass to tie the game late in the half. But he was just 4-for-21 passing for 24 yards. RCTC safety Joe Geike was also strong against the run with three tackles for loss.

"We were ready; we watched a lot of film," Glomski said. "We got the job done and executed."

Lackawanna, led by linebacker Jamal Nelson, the defensive MVP of the game, also excelled on defense. RCTC managed just 176 total yards.

But a couple of big plays lifted RCTC. The Yellowjackets trailed for just 10 seconds the entire game. That's how long it took Karlsrud to return a kick for a TD after an Eargle scoring run in the second quarter.

"It was supposed to be a leftside kick (return)," said Karlsrud, the game's offensive MVP. "But I busted it right up the middle. It was wide open."

“I think our special teams probably won the game for us,” LaPlante said. “Not only with (scoring), but in field position.”

Cody Rejda’s punting pinned Lackawanna deep on several occasions, Michael Kusnierz kicked a pair of field goals and Howard Risher and DeAndre Jackson both had punt returns to set up RCTC scores. Jackson’s 15-yard return in the third quarter set up Karlsrud’s 27-yard TD run on the next play, a nice cutback on a sweep to the left.

“The receivers blocked well and the cutback lane was executed perfectly,” Karlsrud said.

RCTC’s defense also held the Falcons three times in its own territory, but Lackawanna did not threaten while going into the wind in the fourth quarter. As a result the Yellowjackets (8-2) won their fifth straight while the Falcons (7-4) closed the season with two straight losses.

RCTC 19, LACKAWANNA 13

Scoring BY QUARTERS

Lackawanna	0	13	0	0	— 13
RCTC	3	10	6	0	— 19

FIRST Quarter

RCTC — Michael Kusnierz 31 FG, 7:52.

Drive: 9 plays, 26 yards. Key play: Anthony Aker 15 pass from Stephen Owens on third-and-14 from RCTC 29.

SECOND QUARTER

LAC — Michael Eargle 15 run (Rhett Poppell kick), 14:52.

Drive: 3 plays, 10 yards. Key play: Sean Price blocked an RCTC punt to set up the short drive.

RCTC — Seth Karlsrud 73 kick return (Kusnierz kick), 14:42.

Key play: The return followed the Lackawanna touchdown.

RCTC — Kusnierz 32 FG, 0:49.

Drive: 4 plays, 7 yards. Key play: Howard Risher 9 punt return from Lackawanna 31 to the 22.

LAC — Johnny Cotson 27 pass from Eargle (kick failed), 0:03.

Drive: 5 plays, 49 yards. Key plays: Eargle 18 run; the TD came on a fourth-and-6 play.

THIRD Quarter

RCTC — Karlsrud 27 run (bad snap on kick attempt), 11:25.

Drive: 1 play, 27 yards. Key play: DeAndre Jackson 15 punt return.

TEAM statistics

	Lack	RCTC
First downs	8	10
Total Net Yards	150	176
Rushes-yards	38-126	39-66
Passing yards	24	110
Comp-Att-Int	4-21-0	12-26-2
Punts-Ave.	6-31.2	7-29.9
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	1-0
Penalties-Yards	9-48	11-78

individual statistics

Rushing

Lackawanna — Michael Eargle 16-49, Keith Carlos 8-39, Raju Easterling 9-37, Wesley Queen 4-2, Johnny Cotson 1-(minus 1).

RCTC — Seth Karlsrud 16-41, Stephen Owens 14-20, Will Christopherson 2-12, Howard Risher 4-4, Dominick Pahl 1-(minus 4), Tyler McKee 1-(minus 2), Ben Anderson 1-(minus 5).

Passing

Lackawanna — Michael Eargle 4 completions, 21 attempts, 1 TD, 24 yards. RCTC — Stephen Owens 12-26, 2 Ints., 110 yards.

Receiving

Lackawanna — Johnny Cotson 1-27, Raju Easterling 1-3, Keith Carlos 2-(minus 6). RCTC — Anthony Aker 4-47, Howard Risher 3-36, Tyler McKee 1-15, DeAndre Jackson 1-11, Jauhem Byrd 1-9, Ben Anderson 1-(minus 2), Seth Karlsrud 1-(minus 6).