

Hilltops capture top spot in MSJFL

Manitoba-Saskatchewan Junior Football League

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Saskatoon Hilltops found out, 24 hours after clinching first place in the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Junior Football League, that they could have made it backwards.

'Toppers, before about 1,500 shivering fans Saturday night, clinched first place with a 25-12 penalty-studded triumph over Winnipeg Rods at the Gordon Howe Bowl.

But, a day later, Regina Rams, who went into the final weekend of MSJFL action tied with Hilltops, were dumped 19-10 by Winnipeg Weston Wildcats, giving Hilltops a unanimous decision in the final league standings.

Hilltops needed either a win over Rods or a Ram loss to assure themselves a first place finish and successful defence of the Hugh Tait Memorial Trophy.

The Saskatoon club, defending champions, finished with six wins in eight matches while Rams and Wildcats ended the season with 5-3 won-lost marks. Rams, however, won three of four inter-provincial contests — worth two points each — while Wildcats managed only one win against Saskatchewan opponents in four tries.

YARDSTICK STORY		
	Rods	Hilltops
First downs	13	25
Yards rushing ...	97	216
Yards passing ...	92	262
Total offence	160	470
Passes made/attempted	7/16	13/20
Interceptions/vds.	2/0	1/25
Punts/ave. yards	12/36.6	9/39.8
Fumbles/lost	3/1	4/4
Penalties/yards ...	13/114	16/163

Rods, four-time losers to Weston, finished winless in eight games.

A young rookie, getting his

first chance at the controls, stole most of the show after taking over for regular Dave Pickett midway through the second quarter.

Doug Tastad, who replaced Pickett with 'Toppers ahead 17-0 after the starting signal-caller was shaken up, showed his teammates, fans and the Hilltop coaches that they had a reliable back-up man.

Fighting a shaky start, fumbles and a rash of second half penalties, the youngster led 'Toppers to one touchdown march and was rated with "a pretty good job" by head coach Al Ledingham.

"He moved the ball fairly well but got a little anxious when we moved into scoring position," said Ledingham. "The penalties also stalled our offensive drives."

'Toppers were assessed a total of 16 penalties — 13 during the second half — for

a total yardage loss of 163 yards. The high 'Hilltop total, along with Rods' 13 infractions for 114 yards, frequently destroyed outstanding offensive plays on both sides.

"If we had been playing against good competition, we wouldn't have even been in the game with all those penalties," the coach said.

With Tastad at the helm, the club gained 158 yards on the ground and another 91 via the air route, with the standby pilot hitting on six of 11 pass efforts. Pickett, during his stay, clicked on six of seven passes for 143 yards while the club rushed for 58.

Besides that, Doug Rudolph threw one pass on a halfback option play for 19 yards and Dick Chinn, who was close to getting a crack at quarterback during the fourth frame before Rudolph injured an ankle, clicked on both his

pass attempts for nine yards — both on halfback option plays. One of Chinn's passes came after he was trapped deep in the 'Hilltop backfield and resulted in an eight yard loss, with Tastad on the receiving end.

Ledingham was impressed with the pass receivers, particularly flanker Barry Reid, and with the play of middle linebacker Don Seaman.

"Reid made several great catches," said the coach, "and Seaman played really well." Seaman is considered one of the league's outstanding linemen.

Archie Thompson scored two touchdowns and end John Storey the other to pace the 'Hilltop point attack. Soccer-style place kicker Stan Polak added six points on a 38-yard field goal and three converts while Darrel Chambers, with a 52-yard single, rounded out the scoring.