

## **11-0 Broncos defeat Sioux County, win state championship**

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Friday, 16 November 2012 18:29 - Last Updated Friday, 16 November 2012 18:33

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**Connor Kayton stiff arms a Warrior defender. Kayton finished the game with 208 yards and two touchdowns.**

**By Diane Stamm**

**The Wauneta Breeze**

The Wauneta-Palisade football team wrapped up a dream season Friday in Kearney with a 26-16 win over Sioux County in the state championship game.

The Broncos kicked to Sioux County to start the game. Starting at its own 23-yard line, the Warriors used its running game to move the ball steadily down the field. Sioux County advanced to the WP 27-yard line, but Jonny Dunn was stuffed on fourth and one to end the threat.

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Connor Kayton got the call on the Broncos' first play and ran for five. Following a Jack McGraw one-yard run, Kayton hit Hayden Pollmann for a 47-yard touchdown strike to put the Broncos up 6-0 with 5:22 left in the first quarter.

An illegal block during the kickoff return pinned Sioux County at its own six to start its next possession. After a dropped pass, Garret Gray broke loose down the Wauneta-Palisade sideline and raced 74 yards for a touchdown. The successful kick gave the Warriors its first and last lead of the game.

Kayton's kickoff return quickly returned the momentum to the Broncos. Kayton broke several tackles before being hauled down on the Sioux County 27-yard line. McGraw opened the series with an eight-yard run. The Broncos were held to no gain on second-and-seven, but on third down Jacob Maris found Weylin Davis from 20-yards out for a touchdown. The kick gave the Broncos a 14-8 lead.

Once again ahead on the scoreboard, the Bronco defense turned up the pressure. Dunn gained seven yards on first down, then a fumbled pitch moved the Warriors back four. Nathan Woodrum's pass found Josh Kling for seven yards to bring up fourth-and- five. Woodrum's next pass missed its mark and the Broncos took over on the Sioux County 38.

Kayton opened the drive with an 11-yard run. After a false start gave the Broncos second-and-nine, McGraw ran for seven and Kayton added one. The Broncos went for it on fourth-and-inches, but the Warriors stiffened and didn't allow the first down.

Wauneta-Palisade picked up its first turnover of the game early in the second quarter. Dunn ran for three yards to end the first quarter and Gray picked up 10 yards on the first play of the second. Following a false start, Gray dropped back to pass. With McGraw dragging him down, Gray's pass went right into the hand of Davis who ran the ball in for a touchdown. A hold on the run back wiped the points off the board, but set the Broncos up on the SC 32.

Pollmann got his second catch of the game from Kayton, this one for 22 yards, to move the ball to the 10-yard line. Kayton ran the ball into the end zone on the next play to raise the score to 20-8.

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The Warriors once again used its running game. Sioux County ran three straight times to advance 21 yards. McGraw, who spent most of his time on defense in the Sioux County back field harassing Gray and Woodrum, caught Gray behind the line of scrimmage for a one-yard loss. Forced to pass, the Warriors spread the field on third-and-12 but couldn't complete the pass and punted.

Running three plays and finding itself with fourth-and-eight the Broncos kicked the ball back to Sioux County.

Wauneta-Palisade's defense, with the help of Gray's slip in the back field and a dropped pass by Philip Parker, forced Sioux County to punt on fourth-and-20. McGraw nudged the punter Gray and the roughing the kicker penalty set Sioux County up with a first down on the WP 37-yard line.

Sioux County took advantage of the mistake. Dunn scored on the first play after the penalty to narrow the Broncos' lead to 20-16 with 3:53 left in the half.

A false start and a dropped pass hampered the WP offense's next possession. With 1:29 left in the half, an incomplete pass on fourth-and-nine gave Sioux County back the ball on its own 31.

Despite a five-yard face mask penalty, Sioux County struggled to move the ball past midfield. A 15-yard pass to Dunn put the ball on the WP 25 with 23 seconds left in the half. Wes Anderjaska shut down the Warriors' drive with an interception on the Broncos' one-yard line.

After a McGraw run, the Broncos headed into halftime with the 20-16 lead.

The Broncos opened the second half with good field position when Chris Carl fell on the Sioux County squib kick at midfield.

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Kayton's 25-yard run and McGraw's six-yard run moved the ball to the Sioux County 10-yard line. Two incomplete passes stalled the drive and the Broncos turned the ball over on downs.

The Sioux County drive opened with four Dunn runs and the Warriors caught a break when Woodrum's tipped pass was caught by Josh Kling at the WP 29-yard line. An incomplete pass and a sack by Davis forced the Warriors to punt on fourth-and-27, but Kayton fumbled the return and gave possession back to Sioux County on the WP 18.

Dunn continued to carry the load for the Warriors, running three more times to get the ball to the seven-yard line. On fourth-and-five Logan Bischoff picked off the Warriors' pass on the one-yard line.

A 12-yard run by Kayton gave the Broncos some breathing room, but the Broncos still faced fourth-and-one. Kayton gained 10 yards off the pitch from Anderjaska on the run/punt option.

Kayton and McGraw kept the ball moving down the field and the Broncos entered the final quarter of the season with third and three on the WP 38. Two more running plays moved the ball to the SC 35. On the next play Kayton scored one last time to open up a 10-point Bronco lead, 26-16.

With most of the fourth quarter in front of it, Sioux County used a questionable illegal helmet contact penalty to move to the WP 8. With the roar of angry Bronco fans in the background, Wauneta-Palisade forced fourth-and-goal. Sioux County completed the pass on the Bronco one-yard line but turned the ball over on downs.

Forced to start again at its own one, Wauneta-Palisade pounded its way out of its end zone to the 38-yard line where Kayton's fumble gave the ball back to Sioux County.

A pass interference penalty moved the ball to the WP 26. Two incomplete passes and a sack by McGraw brought up a fourth down with 2:19 left.

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Sioux County fumbled the fourth down snap, but still completed the pass though short of the first down.

Looking to finish off the Warriors, Wauneta-Palisade turned the ball over once more on another Kayton fumble.

Wauneta-Palisade's defense, solid all night, refused to budge. The Warriors couldn't complete a pass and McGraw and Davis combined for a sack. With 11 seconds left, the Broncos took over on downs and knelt to end the game.

The Broncos gave up only 43 yards in the second half. Dunn, who came into the game averaging 178 yards per game, was held to 97 in the contest. Gray totaled 83 yards.

"Our defense was outstanding again this week," said co-coach Randy Geier.

Coach Joseph Frecks added, "I am very proud of the way the defense attacked and flowed to the football."

Many of the Warrior runs were met with multiple Bronco tacklers.

"The kids gave a great effort, just as they have done all year," said Frecks. "It makes it much easier to play defense when the offense gives you an early lead."

Kayton rushed 25 times for 208 yards. McGraw ran 13 times for 44 yards.

Through the air, Kayton and Maris combined to complete four of eight passes for 99 yards. Sioux County completed six of 19 for 47 yards.

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“Hayden and Weylin had nice catches for TDs. Conner and Jake threw the ball well and everyone did a good job of blocking,” said Geier.

The coaches were overwhelmed with the incredible crowd.

“We were very fortunate to work with such outstanding student/athletes this season,” Geier and Frecks said.

The pair wanted to give a big thank you to everyone who supported the football team this year.