

Peeples' performance garners him POW honors

Kegler, Manlove, Ceasar also recognized by Touchdown Club

By Dennis Brunson

With five starters and a key backup on the sidelines for its game against Conway High School for second place in Region 5-AAAAA, Sumter figured it was going to have to put up a lot of points to come away with a win.

Enter John Peeples.

"I was thinking with everybody we had out, I've got to play a big role," said Peeples, the Gamecocks' junior running back. "I've got to be the big guy for this game."

He was.

Peeples had 29 carries for 198 yards and five touchdowns to go with a 21-yard pass reception in the Gamecocks' 43-29 victory over Conway. Because of his performance, Peeples has been selected as the SAFE Offensive Player of the Week for the Sumter Touchdown Club presented by FTC.

The other three selections for the SAFE Players of the Week are Laurence Manning Academy right guard Bryce Manlove as Lineman of the Week, Manning kick returner Jeffrey Ceasar as Special Teams Player of the Week and Crestwood noseguard Donald Kegler as Defensive Player of the Week.

The foursome will be honored at the club's weekly breakfast meeting on Friday at the Sumter County Recreation and Parks' Jasmine Hall located at 155 Haynsworth Street. Breakfast will start at 7 a.m. with the program beginning at 7:30. The guest speaker will be Taylor Edwards, the director of player personnel for the University of South Carolina's football program.

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

JOHN PEEPLES

SUMTER

RUNNING BACK

JUNIOR

It's not as if Peeples came out of nowhere against Conway. His performance put him over 1,000 yards for the season and he now has 26 touchdowns. However, SHS head coach Mark Barnes said his effort against Conway was a little different.

"He had a special night on a night when we needed him to have special night," Barnes said. "We were beat up on defense and we knew we'd have to play well offensively. He did a great job running the ball and our offensive linemen, tight ends and H backs did a great job blocking for him.

"It's kind of old hat for him," the coach said. "You forget he's just a junior, but he's been involved in so many big games and has performed well. He's a consistent guy who makes winning a whole lot easier."

Peeples said his blockers stepped up in a big way as well.

“The offensive line played really good,” he said. “They played a big game, too, without one of their starters (left guard Jerius Williams, who had Randy Howard start in his place). I was excited for them. I told them, ‘Keep going, keep going.’”

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

DONALD KEGLER

CRESTWOOD

NOSE GUARD

SENIOR

Kegler had six tackles, five of them for a loss, and a quarterback pressure in the Knights' 56-0 win over Lakewood.

He said his success against the Gators was him just following through on what he's been taught.

“I was just trying to keep being physical and stay focused,” the 5-foot-9-inch, 280-pound senior said. “I was just trying to stay low and get off the ball fast.”

Crestwood head coach Roosevelt Nelson said Kegler, who transferred from Lakewood to Crestwood between his sophomore and junior years, said he has taken his play to another level this season.

“He's done a good job all year,” Nelson said of his first-year starter. “I think he plays one of the toughest positions on the field, taking on double teams while trying to get pressure in the backfield. He's done a tremendous job against the run.”

LINEMAN PLAYER OF THE WEEK

BRYCE MANLOVE

LAURENCE MANNING

RIGHT GUARD

SENIOR

Manlove graded out at 85 percent and had three knockdown blocks as the Swampcats ran for 303 yards and had 494 yards of total offense in their 49-23 win over Trinity Collegiate.

Manlove, a 6-2, 240-pound senior, said it was a tremendous effort by the entire LMA offense.

“I just think as a whole, as a team, we had a great game,” he said. “Me getting into the secondary and being able to block on second levels gets you into the end zone.”

Laurence Manning head coach Will Furse said Manlove's performance against Trinity has been par for the course most of the season.

“Bryce is a very physical player,” Furse said. “He dominated at the point of attack and he's been doing that most of the season. He's been really good all season.”

Manlove's father, Ed Manlove, is his position coach. Bryce said that has helped in his development.

“You know, it's been good,” the player said. “We go home and any mistakes I made, we talk about it and get it fixed.”

“I think he might get coached up some after practice,” Furse said. “It's been beneficial to us.”

SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER OF THE WEEK

JEFFREY CEASAR

MANNING

KICK RETURNER

JUNIOR

Ceasar returned a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown in the Monarchs' 48-43 victory over Waccamaw.

He didn't play in Manning's previous game because of a quad injury. He apparently was OK against Waccamaw.

Ceasar said the return was a called play.

"We were set up to block the middle," Ceasar said. "There was supposed to be a gap right down the middle and I ran through the gap. It was wide open."

That was Ceasar's second kickoff return for a touchdown on the season. He's also returned a punt for a score.

"I tell you right now, he loves returning kicks," Manning head coach Reggie Kennedy said. "He and Jamari Wilson (who has returned three kickoffs and a punt for TDs) are like a 2-headed monster. They give us a short field so many times.

"Every time Jeffrey touches the football on a kickoff or punt return, he has a chance to break it. I'm glad they decided to kick it to him."