

JOUR 4412

September 5, 2021

September 4 Georgia Tech v. Northern Illinois

ATLANTA – The review of the two-point conversion attempt with 38 seconds left on the game clock was the only thing fans leaving Bobby Dodd Stadium for the first time in 644 days could think about Saturday night.

The call on the field stood and, just like 644 days ago, Yellow Jacket fans were stunned, only this time their opponent was not the fourth ranked Georgia Bulldogs.

Fourth quarter heroics from Northern Illinois Huskies' quarterback Rocky Lombardi and wide receiver Tyrice Ricky on the two-point conversion attempt clinched their win over Georgia Tech 22-21.

Northern Illinois coach Thomas Hammock and his team did not let the shortened 2020 season in which the Huskies went winless keep them down.

"I said we will make this a four-quarter game, we are the tougher team, and we will come out victorious, like we did," Hammock said.

Lombardi, a junior, threw for two touchdowns and 136 yards on 11 completions, including a 39-yard completion to Richie, his longest completion of the night, to start the Huskies game-winning drive.

"He showed us what he's about," said Hammock when asked what he learned about Lombardi. "He's a leader, he's a tremendous warrior on the field, he's an extension of the coaches, and he helped us win that game."

Despite being outgained in yards by Georgia Tech 429-301, Northern Illinois made the most of their opportunities, scoring on three of four drives in which they earned a first down. To

make matters worse for Georgia Tech, their kicker Brent Cimaglia went 0-3 in field goal attempts including a miss from 43 yards.

Northern Illinois' defensive end Michael Kennedy also played a pivotal role, blocking Cimaglia's 60-yard attempt on the final play of the game. Huskies' running back Harrison Waylee also scored a rushing touchdown and ran for 144 yards on the way to the victory.

The win did not come without a cost however, as Huskies' safety Devin Lafayette was taken off the field in an ambulance after a collision with a teammate in the third quarter. There has been no update as to Lafayette's status.

"Sad to see the kid Devin Lafayette get hurt," said Georgia Tech head coach Geoff Collins in the post-game press conference. "Obviously our thoughts and prayers are with him."

Collins, in his third year as head coach is looking to turn his team around after two consecutive seasons of winning only three games each. He was disappointed in the outcome of the game but showed an abundance of care for his players and seemed confident in their ability to bounce back.

"We've built this program to position ourselves to win football games," Collins said. "We've just got to get better and improve."

The Yellow Jackets also suffered more than a loss on their record as freshman quarterback Jeff Sims also came out of the game in the second quarter after injuring his arm trying to recover an unforced fumble. Backup quarterback Jordan Yates filled in admirably, throwing for 135 yards and connecting on his first career touchdown pass to wide receiver Kyric McGowan in the second quarter.

“[I had] to be the next man up,” said Yates when asked what his mentality was like after Sims’ injury. “[I have to] always be ready for whenever my time comes and throw right in and keep running the offense.”

Yates also showed his ability to move the ball on the ground, racking up 27 rushing yards and one rushing touchdown. Georgia Tech’s running back Dontae Smith scored their only other touchdown.

It is still unclear as to whether Sims will be available for next weekend’s game against Kennesaw State.