

Greater Lowell's defense dominates

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DANVERS — Greater Lowell Tech head coach Shane Abrams admits that his football team is still very much trying to find its rhythm on the offensive side of the ball.

But while that remains a work in progress, the Gryphons' defense is looking like a well-oiled machine.

That was on full display on Friday night as GLT visited Essex Tech and romped its way to a 30-0 victory. The Gryphons forced four Essex Tech turnovers, blocked a punt and held the host Hawks to just three first downs.

Greater Lowell improved to 2-1 and recorded its second shutout of the young season.

"We were pretty confident in the preseason — in the scrimmages that we had — that our defense was way ahead of schedule," said Abrams. "We had some returning starters, but we just had some team speed. I think our team speed on defense was evident early on.

"I'm extremely happy. That's a big victory for us, and they're hard to come by."

Fittingly, it was the defense that got the Gryphons on the board first. Senior David Mallahan picked off a Jake Dumont pass and raced 27 yards to the end zone for the pick-6. A Cole Blades extra point made it 7-0 with 4:19 left in the second quarter and Greater Lowell had all the scoring it needed.

After the defense held the Hawks to a three-and-out on the ensuing possession, Greater Lowell took advantage of starting its own drive on the Essex Tech 49-yard line. Junior quarterback Jacob Trzcienski connected with senior Isaiah Carrasquillo on a 29-yard completion to get it down to the Hawks' 20. Four plays later, Senior captain Benji Hach (11 rushes, 43 yards) scored the first of his two rushing TDs on a 1-yard run and it was 14-0, which is where it stood at the half.

Junior Gabe Rivera and senior Visai Sok were wreaking havoc on the Essex Tech (1-2) offense all game long, frequently making tackles for loss. Senior King Mondiere also helped the cause.

"The defense bailed us out tonight. It's 0-0 in the second quarter and we get that touchdown," said Abrams. "They've been bailing us out all year so far."

The GLT offense showed some positive signs in the second half. Most notably when Trzcienski found a wide open Ryan Hickey streaking down the sideline for a 53-yard

touchdown pass to cap the Gryphons' first drive of the third quarter and make it a 20-0 ballgame.

Trzecienski split time at quarterback with senior starter Kyle Proulx. Trzecienski threw the ball fairly well, completing 4-of-9 passes for 95 yards. Proulx was just 1-for-7 for 19 yards.

"We're just trying to figure it out," said Abrams. "We had very low numbers offensively in the first two games, so we're just trying to figure out how to generate some offense. We definitely have some skill guys, there's no doubt about it. We just have to find what we're good at."

Greater Lowell blocked the Essex Tech punt after another three-and-out and senior Nik Zeoli fell on it to give the Gryphons the ball at the ET 20-yard line. Greater Lowell converted that into a Blades' 23-yard field goal to make it 23-0 late in the third quarter.

Hach added another 1-yard TD with 10:36 left to play. Blades' PAT made it 30-0 and the remainder of the game was played with running clock.