**Chiefs’ Defense Shines in Shutout of Loyola**

(NCHS’s Defense Clicking in Final Preseason Affair)

The Natchitoches Central Football team shut down the Loyola College Prep Flyers, 14-0, Friday night at Turpin Stadium in the 2023 Natchitoches Regional Medical Center Jamboree in Natchitoches.

The Chiefs, under first-year head coach Jess Curtis, forced the Flyers into a punt on their opening possession. NCHS wasted no time with a 73-yard scoring drive capped off by a 19-yard touchdown reception by senior wide receiver Camrin Davis.

Natchitoches Central, after riding a nearly flawless secondary for the entire night with six passes deflected, nearly added to their lead late in the first half. Quarterback Owen Smith threw a beautiful pass on the half’s final play into the endzone. However, the ball was knocked away by two Loyola defenders at the last second keeping the game at 7-0 at halftime.

In the second half, the legs of Smith and the crisp routing running of Davis kept the Chiefs’ offense in control. Davis, a sophomore, scored on a 2-yard touchdown run midway through the second half to give NCHS a two-possession lead which they wouldn’t relinquish.

“The thing I love about Owen is that the guy fights hard,” said Curtis. “Tonight was his first varsity start and the future is bright for Owen. But the main thing for tonight was to make sure we were balanced and gave Owen a chance to make throws for us and for the team to be able to run the football and we did that tonight.”

As for Smith, he was not shaken in the least by the first opportunity under center.

“I really owe it all to this staff and coach Curtis,” said Smith. “He and all the coaches help me feel like I can do anything when I’m out there and that’s good to feel like your coaches are behind you.”

Smith and the Chiefs will look to build off Friday’s victory as they open the regular season Friday, Sept. 1st on the road against Woodlawn-Shreveport at 7 p.m.