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Interceptions, defense lead to shutout

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BRADENTON -- Keon Hines isn't the type to hog all the glory for himself.

The former Riverview High football player was quick to point to the defensive line's effort as a major factor in him grabbing two interceptions during the Bradenton Gladiators' home opener on Saturday night.

The minor league football team kept its undefeated season intact after a 23-0 shutout over the Bay Area Warriors at the Manatee PAL Complex.

The victory also pushes the Gladiators (2-0) into sole possession of first place in the Florida Football Alliance's AFC West Division.

Both teams were the lone divisional squads to win last week's season opener.

In jumping all over the visitors, Bradenton won the battle in the trenches, which had a direct link to how many turnovers the Gladiators forced.

Hines was the benefactor in the secondary with two of Bay Area quarterback Derrell Houser's picks.

"I was reading his eyes the whole time, because both times when I got the interceptions I was in cover-three," Hines said.

"So, I had the middle of the field. That's my area, that's my zone. I'm making sure nobody comes across and catches anything in my zone."

The pressure instigated up front gave Houser just a couple of seconds to make a decision, which helped Hines -- who played two years at Wagner College -- the ability to jump the passing lane and come down with the football.

"I was sitting on anything coming across the middle," Hines said. "... You've gotta give all the praise to the D-line, because if the quarterback is sitting there for five to 10 seconds, I might not be able to get those interceptions."

The defensive front allowed just nine rushing yards.

The Warriors tallied 163 total yards against the Gladiators' defense, which also collected a safety and five sacks.

While the defense was clicking, Bradenton's offense made enough plays to put points on the board.

The Gladiators also turned the ball over, but the combination of Jeff Charlton and Nicholas Kirby accounted for one score and set up another.

Charlton, a wide receiver, made a diving 38-yard grab to give Bradenton first-and-goal on its first offensive series.

Kirby's pass was spot-on in the tight window as Charlton was defended tight.

"We were running side-by-side," said Charlton, who finished his Manatee High playing days in 2005. "When I seen the ball, I just kicked it into another gear, and went and got it."

Late in the second quarter, Charlton struck again.

This time, running a perfect slant route and beating the coverage for a 23-yard touchdown.

A two-point conversion pass gave the Gladiators a 17-0 halftime lead.

The Gladiators will look to remain undefeated when they travel to Sarasota against the Millionaires in a divisional matchup on Saturday.

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