

Stadium Stop  
Week #4  
by *Scott Goodheart*  
**Abilene Cowboys 17 @ Concordia Panthers 16**



Entrance to Harold M. Clark Stadium.

View from the top of the bleachers.

The city of Concordia goes back to 1871, where it was a thriving economic community of North Central Kansas. If you look at a map, Concordia serves as a center of distribution for several communities around the area including: Scandia, Belleville, and Minneapolis naming a few. The town is located on the Republic River in the Smoky Hills. The town is very hilly once getting into the center of town. Thank goodness there were paw prints on 11<sup>th</sup> street or I may not have found my way to the football field.

Concordia also has some buildings which are an architectural phenomenon's. Between the Brown Grand Theatre and the Nazareth Convent and Academy which really catches your eye as you drive through town. Both of these buildings are National Register of Historic Places and suggest anyone who gets a chance to drive through to take in those historic buildings. Once I got to the field, I noticed the school which has some neat characteristics to it from an architectural standpoint.

Concordia could be named the Concordia Champions because they have had a lot of championships throughout their years. As far as championships for the Lady Panthers there were several so I apologize in advance if I missed any I had a hard time rounding up this information). Lady Panthers can range back to 1976 when volleyball was a fairly new sport to the state racked up 10 state championships. The Lady Panther Track program made a run winning 5-straight track championships from 2005 to 2009. The Lady Panther basketball squad would accomplish their only state basketball title in 2009. The Concordia Panther Football team would have a great season winning the Kansas State 4A Championship over Holton 42-21 in 1999. As you enter

Harold M. Clark Stadium from the northeast gate is there is a large panther statue with the championship team pictured below it.

The Panther Athletics of Concordia High isn't the only successful school in town; Cloud County Community College has found itself in the act of winning too. In 2001, Cloud County Women's Basketball would find themselves at the top of the NJCAA Division I level being crowned at National Champions.

As you enter into Harold M. Clark Stadium, it has a large gate with the ticket booth. The field is down in a pit where the grandstand is built into the side of the hill. The area of the fenced field is roughly a square block. It's a huge layout! There is so much open area for if you don't feel like sitting in the stands no problem, there is a fence to stand up against. How most people at smaller schools will use the running track as their own area for watching the game, well at Concordia there is a long fence line about chest high making it the perfect leaning post to watch the game, I tried every spot to stand and just didn't work, it was full from the end zone to the grandstand. Harold M. Clark Stadium even offers a friendly setting if you don't care to go into the gate. To the south there is the golf course with winding hills where the country club members can be found lined up in their country clubs taking in the game, to the north there are some vacant buildings, where a few younger alumni can be found sitting on the roof (almost as if you were at Wrigley Field). No Panther Gear? No problem. The Concordia Booster Club would have a booth set up near the grandstand having shirts, hoodies, chair backs, and hats naming a few of the merchandise available. I didn't get a chance to grab a bite to eat at the concession stand, due to a great game and the lines were long, but that says one thing, it must be some good grub available.

I haven't talked about games too often in recent weeks, but this game I've watched and it ranks up with one of the best I've been able to see. Concordia's offense dominated in the first half, having the ground pound completely dominant taking the lead and the momentum into intermission.

Halftime was great to see a dance squad and the Pride of Concordia Marching Band entertain the impressive homecoming crowd. As I stood on the track, I was swarmed by children like bees surrounding a hive. Each kid was given a red, black, or white balloon and made a huge tunnel for the Panthers to enter the field. All at once, the balloons were released to show a great scene, but that would be one of the last one's for Panther faithful.

Concordia continued to have a good game plan to have clock management and continue on the ground game. Abilene was thinking otherwise. The Cowboys would find their switch and flip it using their "Pistol" style offense and passing game would start to click. A long pass play from Wilson to Sexton accelerating the Cowboy offense. The Panthers would get a chance to put together a winning drive as they got the ball with about 8 minutes left. The Panthers would stick with their plan of running attack offense. There came a point where the a huge gasp from both sides took a depth breathe as a 4<sup>th</sup> and 2 took place. The Panthers ran a dive to their fullback converting on the 1<sup>st</sup> down by a couple inches. The clock was on their side as Concordia continued to march the ball down the field. Another 4<sup>th</sup> down conversion took place and yet again the Cowboys couldn't stop the Panthers. Finally with the clock being on Abilene's side they would pull together a stop on the 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt of the Panthers on fourth down giving Abilene the league victory. Amazing ball game!

The North Central Kansas League layout has been in a solid foundation for several years. The original league was started in 1928. The league consisted of Beloit, Clay Center, Concordia, Junction City, and Manhattan. Then for about five years a few other teams would be added which were: Belleville, Lincoln, Marysville, and Minneapolis. The Panthers are the one team who has been through the league since it first started in 1928. (May we should have some Division I universities should ask Concordia for some pointers on being consistent in a conference). The Panthers have served the longest time in the NCKL for 82 years, having 13 total league championships in football. The only team to have more titles than Concordia is Marysville racking up an impressive 26. Since 1982, the North Central Kansas League consists of Abilene, Chapman, Clay Center, Concordia, Marysville, and Wamego. This league has produced some great athletic teams and athletes, but also some famous people throughout the United States. Here's some other notable names in the NCKL:

Abilene- Dwight D. Eisenhower, served as 34<sup>th</sup> president; brought interstate system to U.S.

Chapman- Joseph Henry Engle, astronaut

Clay Center- Nicole Oldhe, former K-State basketball player

Marysville- Kendra Wrecker, former K-State basketball player

Wamego- Travis Metcalf/Birth place of Walter Chrysler

Concordia has had numerous notable people from Concordia anywhere from former football and baseball players, to movie directors and actresses, and state congressmen. The person which sticks out the most to me is Charles Blosser, whom was a former business man which put up the Brown Grand Theatre in Concordia. This is one of several beautiful architectural structures in the city. You remember that song by Garth Brooks, Friends in Low Places? Well here's a fun fact, Brooks' guitarist is from Concordia, who is Jim Garver. Then the part in the song that talks about going down to the Oasis? Well that was one time a bar in Concordia.

Concordia is unique town which looks to be thriving, but has hope for growth. The location is ideal being close to Salina and Manhattan, and if that's not what you want it won't take long to jump on the interstate or highway and get there.



This is what you see as you enter the field, this was dedicated from the 1999 State Champion Football squad.



CHS Booster Club has plenty of "swag" for everyone.



Locals can be found in their carts watching the game from the golf course.



The Panther Defense controls Abilene's offense early in the contest.