We are now two games into the 2010 season and the Kent State defense is turning some heads.

Since Jack Lambert left the Golden Flashes program and began his Hall of Fame career for the Steelers, defense hasn't exactly been Kent's calling card. In fact, its defensive reputation was fairly shredded

Take a look at the three coaching staffs before Doug Martin was hired to right the ship in Kent.

First, from 1991-1993 there was Pete Cordelli. Cordelli came to Kent with a big-time resume, having served as the receivers coach for Lou Holtz at both Notre Dame and Arkansas. And his defense played, well, like it had a receivers coach in charge of it. The Flashes during Cordelli's three-season tenure gave up an average of 28.9 points per game.

Cordelli was shown the door, making way for Jim Corrigall. Corrigall was a great guy. I was fortunate enough to cover the Golden Flashes during Corigall's tenure, and the guy was absolutely hysterical. I fondly remember many afternoons spent in his office, kicking back and listening to him talk. And talk. And talk. He also is one of the greatest football players in Kent history as well as a member of the Canadian Football League Hall of Fame.

As much as it pains me to say this, Corrigall's defense was inept. Actually inept is too mild a word…it was historically inept. It was downright terrible. My intramural flag football team (Jack's Dorks for all you Kent State Intramural Flag Football historians) could have marched up and down the field on Corrigall's defense.

In four seasons under Corrigall, a 44-game span, Kent gave up a whopping 1,651 points. That is 37.5 points per game. And, shockingly, one Kent shutout was included in those 44 games. Just look at the final four conference games of the 1996 season where the Flashes lost by the scores of 51-10, 52-51, 50-6 and 76-27. That's right, Kent gave up 229 points in a four-game stretch. It's difficult to find words to describe how bad this defense was.

After Corrigall left Dean Pees came to Kent. Pees turned things around a bit. In 78 games under Pees the Flashes improved to allowing 33.8 points per game. Yes, that is still awful.

In 2004 current head coach Doug Martin took over the program, and though it has taken some time Martin and defensive coordinator Pete Rekstis seemingly have the Kent defense squared away. The Flashes showed great promise last season. Though Kent finished in the middle of the pack in total defense, sixth in the MAC, Kent topped the conference in red zone defense as well as first down allowed. The Flashes were second in pass efficiency defense and fifth in scoring defense, allowing 22.4 points per game.

This season, with starters returning pretty much across the board, Kent has taken things one step further. Though we are just two games into the season, the numbers show great promise. In its two games, a 41-10 win over Murray State at home and a 26-13 loss to Boston College in Chestnut Hill, the Kent defense has been stingy. It has allowed just six rushing first downs in two games. Kent has allowed a total of just 22 rushing yards (that is not an average, that is 22 yards in two games combined). Opponents have averaged just 0.4 yards per rush against the Flashes and have failed to run for a touchdown.

Kent has been strong on third down, allowing its opponents to convert just eight of 33 third downs (24 percent). The Flashes have eight sacks, have allowed just three touchdowns and their opponents have yet to convert a red zone trip into a touchdown (0-7).

Remember these names because they are all potential all-conference candidates: Senior linebacker Cobrani Mixon leads the team in tackles with 23. He has 12 solo stops, one sack and a tackle for a loss. Senior safety Brian Lainhart (an all-America candidate) has 20 tackles, 14 solos and 1.5 tackles for a loss. Senior linebacker Dorian Wood has 14 stops, including 3.5 tackles for a loss. True freshman Roosevelt Nix has a pair of sacks and has forced two fumbles. Senior defensive end Monte Simmons has a pair of sacks while fellow senior defensive end Quinton Rainey has 2.5 tackles for a loss and has recovered two fumbles.

These are the guys that have Kent in a position to compete for the MAC East title. They are also the reason I am expecting Kent to be competitive on the road at Penn State Saturday. The Nittany Lions start a true freshman quarterback, and he will be going up against a very experienced defense…especially in the secondary. Penn State will try to pound Evan Royster down Kent's throat, but the Flashes can stack the box and make things very interesting.

Ken t is getting 21 points and expect that line to move in Penn State's favor. I don't see Penn State being three touchdowns better than Kent, and it would not surprise me to see the Golden Flashes pull off a major upset. Every season a MAC team shocks the world. This just might be Kent's turn.