

# Chiefs weather the storm, topple Patriots

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Under threatening skies, Canton's Ryan Jones (No. 14) and Evan Rinke (No. 18) stand near the locker room wondering if the weather delay would ever end. / BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
BY TIM SMITH



OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

When Friday's football game resumed, Canton's Ryan Jones (No. 14) was rewarded for his patience with a 29-yard touchdown run. In the background for the Chiefs is Kevin Buford (No. 1). / BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Canton head [coach](#) Tim Baechler didn't like the way things started Friday night as for the longest time it didn't look like the Chiefs and [Livonia](#) Franklin were going to finish what they started.

But a 90-minute delay because of four lightning sightings didn't slow down the Chiefs, who improved to 3-0 with a 35-6 victory on Plymouth-Canton [Educational](#) Park's junior varsity grass field.

Baechler laughed when recalling how he and other Canton coaches had to bark at players to get their game face back on when officials finally permitted play to resume (halfway through the first quarter and Canton up 7-0).

"It's a little bit of a maturity thing," Baechler said. "We had to get after them before we had to come out. They weren't ready. But after we got out here they did a great job and took control of the game."

Franklin [head coach](#) Chris Kelbert, whose team fell to 1-2 after the KLAA South Division matchup, said the lengthy stoppage might have hurt his team somewhat.

The Patriots had the ball at Canton's 30 with 5:23 to go in the frame when the first stoppage was called (at 6:49 p.m.).

"We lost a little a bit of momentum," Kelbert said. "We had that drive going right before, got the ball down to the (30). Then we came out and didn't score. I think that kind of put a little bit of doubt in our minds and then they got those 21 points in a row."

#### WAITING IT OUT

After waiting nearly 90 minutes following the four stoppages (under state rules, a half hour must elapse following every time lightning is seen), the Pats moved the ball to the Canton 25 but turned it over on downs.

The Chiefs didn't waste much time adding to their early lead (which was thanks to an 18-yard TD pass from quarterback Kyle Adams to halfback Kevin Buford).

But it was a drive where Adams actually scored twice on carbon-copy delayed runs through the line. The first, a 55-yard run, did not count because play was inadvertently stopped.

Five plays later, Adams did it again. He faked a handoff, waited a split second before bursting through the right side of the line and raced downfield for a 42-yard score with 56 seconds to go in the first.

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“It wasn’t that frustrating,” said Adams, about losing the first touchdown. “We just wanted to come back and I think it fueled our offense because we wanted to come back even more.”

Canton made it 21-0 on a 29-yard TD run by running back Ryan Jones (six rushes, 73 yards) and added another on a short plunge by tailback Zac Merillat just before halftime.

## DEFENSIVE SPARK

Merillat’s score was set up by a dazzling, 56-yard interception return by Michael Boes — who caught the pass from Franklin’s Justin Forrestall at the Canton 35 and then zig-zagged down to the Patriots’ nine.

“That was a huge play,” Baechler said. “It set up a touchdown for us right before half, it was a huge seven points to get, I didn’t think we were going to get any there.”

In the second half, the Patriots answered a challenge from Kelbert to ramp up their play and it paid off — albeit not with a victory.

Over the final two quarters, Franklin’s ground game moved the ball and chewed up minutes off the game clock. The Pats wound up with 222 rushing yardage, their total output for the night.

With 5:49 left in the third, a 35-yard up-the-middle run by junior halfback Jacob Kenney finally put the Patriots on the scoreboard. The TD capped an 11-play, 80-yard drive (all on the ground).

Franklin had another lengthy drive, with running backs Jimmy Marazis (21-56) and Jacob Tennant (28-114) doing yeoman’s work.

This time, however, clutch defensive plays by Olaniyi Owagbemi and John Chadwick forced the Pats to again turn the ball over on downs.

“They (Patriots) did a great job, they put the plow down and it was tough to get them off the field,” Baechler said. “Our defense just made enough stops.”

Two plays later, Chiefs junior halfback Kendall Scott grabbed a short pass in the left flat and sprinted 60 yards into the Franklin end zone for a 68-yard touchdown.

“It’s what they do, and it’s so hard to stop every part of that,” said Kelbert, about Canton’s penchant for big plays. “Everyone thinks it’s a simple offense, but it’s the most complex offense there is out there and you can’t take away everything.

“And they’ll find the one thing you haven’t taken away and they’ll get you.”

The Chiefs tallied 325 yards of offense, including 236 on the ground.

That wasn’t too bad a total given the fact players had to be careful to stay upright and not fumble the ball.

“I was just trying to concentrate on my footing and making sure I didn’t fumble or anything,” Adams said.