

# 2011 Division 1 State Tournament - Round 1 - Game 7 - Football

**Canton vs. Plymouth - Game Preview & News**



**Canton**

(7-2-0)

10/28/2011 7 p.m.

**Plymouth**

(8-1-0)

Plymouth High School, Canton, MI

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## Metro Detroit Football Spotlight Game PODCAST: Plymouth and Canton are set to meet once again to start football playoffs in a nightmarish district

Jared Purcell | [MLive.com](http://MLive.com), October 26, 2011 7:33 p.m.



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**Plymouth celebrates its win over Detroit Catholic Central in last year's quarterfinals.** - (MLive.com file photo)

It's almost inevitable now. For the fourth year in a row, Plymouth and Canton will face each other in the district round of the Division 1 state tournament on Friday at 7 p.m.

If the game is anything like the first meeting between the two teams, there should be nothing to be disappointed about.

Not exactly.

Plymouth and Canton are in what is being dubbed as the toughest district in the state. The other two teams in the district include second-ranked Detroit Catholic Central and seventh-ranked Northville. Plymouth and Canton are ranked fifth and sixth, respectively.

"It's just the way it is," Canton coach Tim Baechler said. "You try and trust the MHSAA to set it up. They say it's set up geographically, but that's not really true."

With one district comprised of Brighton, Ann Arbor Pioneer, Temperance Bedford and Monroe, perhaps a case can be made. Why four state-ranked teams are pushed into the same district instead of being split up has many scratching heads.

"When you look at the records, you've got three teams at 8-1 and one at 7-2," Plymouth coach Mike Sawchuck said. "It's a shame that two of them are one-and-done."

In fact, Plymouth and Canton are in the only district without a six-win team. A different Division 1 district is comprised of four 6-3 teams.

"It's kind of not fair to some of the kids," Sawchuck said. "We were expecting at least one game before having to play (Canton) – maybe against a 6-3 team."

Despite the circumstances, Baechler and Sawchuck are now focusing on a rematch of one of the most thrilling games this season.

Canton had a 30-21 lead in the final minute of game and watched it all fizzle away as Plymouth scored, recovered an onside kick and then kicked a game-winning field goal – all in the final 20 seconds.

"The two teams played their hearts and souls out" Baechler said. "We made enough breaks to win the game – we just made some mistakes in the end."

Sawchuck is by no means taking that win for granted as he hopes to avoid having to make yet another remarkable comeback this Friday.

"We had four turnovers in that game," Sawchuck said. "Plus we had a running into the kicker and a questionable hit out of bounds that extended their drives ... Our kids didn't quit in that game but we were very lucky to win that game."

Playing a precise and clean game is what Sawchuck is hoping for this time around despite admitting his team hasn't been as disciplined as it needs to be.

"In this game, you're in the playoffs and any little mistake you make can lose a ball game," Sawchuck said. "Everything's got to be tightened up. The offense needs to be tightened up. You can't miss blocking assignments. We've got to be great tacklers and you've got to be coachable or you go home."

One of the things that went right for Plymouth in the last meeting was running back Donte Fox who had 138 yards and two touchdowns. Fox's big frame broke tackles all night against Canton.

"We've worked super hard at tackling," Baechler said. "But we have a tougher time with bigger backs (like Fox). We need to fit and fill on defense. We've got to gang-tackle when we can."

Plymouth also let up four rushing touchdowns to four different players against Canton. The game ultimately came down to Plymouth quarterback Shaun Austin's ability to run an accelerated version of the two minute drill to perfection.

"The kid is just calm, cool and collective," Sawchuck said of Austin. "He's a very intelligent kid. We're lucky to have him back there."

Despite Austin's abilities, Sawchuck is looking to run the ball as much as possible and only going to the pass game when it needs to in order to control the time of possession.

"To beat Canton, you have to keep the offense off the field," Sawchuck said. "We need to run as much as we can."

When it comes down to it, Friday's rematch is going to be decided by which team can execute its game plan better than the first time around. Baechler admits that he is not looking to change much. Instead, he's hoping for better execution – and maybe a few breaks.

"We were prepared last time," Baechler said. "We did get three picks. We just have to make plays."