

Mick McCabe: Canton gets their kick turning tables on rival

3:40 AM, Oct. 29, 2011 |
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KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DFP

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DETROIT FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER



Canton kicker Scott Piwowar, who missed an earlier attempt, celebrates his game-winning field goal against Plymouth. / Photos by KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/Detroit Free Press



Ryan Jones can't escape the grasp of Plymouth defender Joshua Dennard in the third quarter.

Only 2 seconds remained, and Canton's Evan Rinke turned psychologist on us.

Friday night's game against archrival Plymouth was tied, and the ball was on Plymouth's 18. Canton junior Scott Piwowar was about to attempt a 35-yard field goal before an overflow crowd on the field the schools share.

"That's what we do every day in practice," Rinke told Piwowar, who also starts for the soccer team. "It's nothing more than an extra point. Don't try to kill it. It's a chip shot. You've got it in your sleep."

During a Plymouth time-out, Piwowar listened, but was focused on just one thing.

"I thought about the ball going through the uprights and that's it," he said. "I didn't think about anything else. I didn't have to worry about anything else because I knew my snapper would get it to my holder and I could get it through the uprights."

Seconds later, Cameron Dillard snapped the ball to Rinke, who placed the ball on the tee. And Piwowar did indeed get the ball through the uprights and ended the game with the biggest field goal of his life to give Canton a 24-21 Division 1 district semifinal victory.

Now that is the way to begin the state playoffs.

A year ago, it was Plymouth that lost to Canton in the regular season and then knocked the Chiefs out of the playoffs.

This time, Canton had blown a nine-point lead in the final 1:08 and lost to Plymouth in Week 7 before turning the tables in the playoffs.

"We thought we outplayed them last time," said Canton coach Tim Baechler. "Last year we didn't. ... Finally, doggone it, we got a break. Our kids deserved it, our coaches deserved this one."

The Chiefs (8-2) now deserve to move on to next week's district final against the winner of today's Northville at Novi Detroit Catholic Central game.

Plymouth's Donte Fox (149 yards, 11 carries) tied the game on a 53-yard run before halftime, and Shaun Austin gave Plymouth a 14-7 lead on a 6-yard run midway through the third quarter.

A 41-yard sprint by Malcolm Hollingsworth and a 1-yard run by Ryan Jones gave Canton a 21-14 lead midway through the fourth quarter before Fox accounted for all 80 yards on four plays to tie it with 4:40 left.

"We do this thing called muscle session every day, where we just do our running plays," said Canton quarterback Kyle Adams. "I told everyone we were going to muscle and pound it down their throats and try to score."

Canton ran the ball 11 of 12 plays to get in position for the attempt by Piwowar, who missed a 33-yard attempt earlier.

What did Adams think Piwowar's chances were?

"Fifty-fifty," he said.

He should have listened to Rinke, because Piwowar did. Which obviously is why he seemed to hug everybody before leaving the field after the biggest game of his life, right?

"This is for now," he said. "But tomorrow we play Pioneer in the regional final for soccer, so it might be another game like this."

He better take Rinke along ... just in case.

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