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Detroit Catholic Central 21, Canton 14

Division 1: Catholic Central defense preserves victory over Canton

Tom Markowski/ The Detroit News

Novi— Mike Schultz's tackle on fourth down stopped Canton running Kevin Buford a yard short of a first down with 2:39 left and Detroit Catholic Central held on to defeat Canton 21-14 in a Division 1 district final on Saturday at C.C.

C.C. (10-1) will host Ann Arbor [Pioneer](#) (9-2) in a region final next Saturday at 1 p.m.

Canton (8-3) faced a fourth-and-4 from the C.C. 16 and Buford took the handoff from Kyle Adams and swept around right end. Buford seemed to have an opening then made a cut inside. That's where Schultz, an outside linebacker, and a couple of his teammates were waiting.

"I saw the running back go to the far side of the field," Schultz said. "I saw someone had him and I just hit him to keep him from going forward. I hit him high."

These teams met in a regional final in 2009 and C.C. won 31-24 in overtime. For awhile it looked like this [game](#) was headed to overtime, too.

"You think about players in that situation, not so much play [calls](#)," Canton coach Tim Baechler said of the fourth down call. "I'd give it to him again."

Canton led 14-7 at halftime as Zac Merillat (13 carries, 144 yards) ran 42 yards through the middle of the C.C. defense for a touchdown and Buford scored on a 1-yard run on fourth down on the final play of the half.

C.C.'s touchdown came on a 10-yard run by David Houle.

C.C. coach Tom Mach was not pleased with his team's play in the first half. It wasn't the effort that got his gruff up, it was the mistakes. C.C. was called for offensive interference on one drive that forced a punt and a fumble led to Canton's second touchdown.

"We had to stop shooting ourselves in the foot," Mach said. "It's hard to play 48 minutes great all the time. We played well in the Catholic League final against (Orchard Lake) St. Mary's (21-7 victory) and last week (56-6 over Northville). We couldn't get anything going early today."

Quarterback Kyle Cooper, who missed on his two attempts in the first half, got the offense untracked as he threw a 61-yard touchdown pass to Jon Malone to tie the game at 14-14 with 5:19 left in the third.

On C.C.'s next series it faced a fourth-and-8 from Canton's 25 and Mach went to a play he's been using for 25 years or more. C.C. sent a back in motion to the right and Cooper passed to tight end Matt Doneth in the left flat on a drag pattern. Doneth was all alone and the play covered 20 yards to the Canton 5. Two plays later Houle (19 carries, 76 yards) scored on a 2-yard dive with 8:34 left in the game,

Baechler said it was a missed assignment.

"They've been going to man-to-man all game," Mach said. "So we ran our man-to-man play. We motion away from him and he got open."

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