

PREP FOOTBALL: Chargers win 43-40, spoil Canton homecoming



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Canton running back Charles Turfe (No. 28) maintains a step on Livonia Churchill defenders Adam Sheppard (No. 14) and Jacob Sarna (No. 35). / BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

BY TIM SMITH
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Appropriately for a wet night, points were raining down during the first half of Friday's [football](#) game between host Canton and Livonia Churchill.

When play resumed following Canton's homecoming festivities, the shootout slowed down, although the rain didn't. But the [Chargers](#) had more than enough to hold off the Chiefs, 43-40, in a KLAA South Division matchup.

Churchill — winner earlier this year against Plymouth — remains undefeated, 5-0 overall and 3-0 in the KLAA South.

"We talked the last couple days about how both teams are going to make mistakes, we just got to make fewer," said Canton head coach Tim Baechler, whose team dropped to 3-2 overall and 2-1 in the KLAA South. "Both teams are going to make big plays, we just got to make a couple more."

QUICK START

The home crowd, already in a festive mood for homecoming, needed just 15 seconds to cheer.

On the first play of the night from the line of scrimmage, Chiefs senior running back Malcolm Hollingsworth burst through the line and went all the way for an 80-yard touchdown run.

Then Hollingsworth broke free for a 46-yard TD, with just 3:14 elapsed in the contest, to put Canton up 14-0 (following the second of four extra points by Connor Shennan).

Yet the Chargers didn't fold their tent, answering with an 80-yard scoring drive in 10 plays. Capping off the drive was a 19-yard TD pass from quarterback Seth Suida (12-of-31 passing, 194 yards, four TDs) to one-

man wrecking crew Romello Brown — wide open over the middle in the end zone.

Brown (5-10, 246) wore down the Chiefs' D with 204 yards in 26 carries. "He's a heavy guy, but our defense, we worked our butts off to try to stop him," Canton senior lineman Cameron Dillard said. "We did all we could. At the end of the night, I guess it wasn't enough."

According to Churchill head coach John Filiatraut, "The quick 14 (points) certainly was not what we had in mind, but it wasn't a big shock, either. Those guys are good and until you play their offense at their speed, those things are going to happen."

TD SPREE

Before the opening quarter ended, the Chargers reached into their bag of offensive tricks.

Suida handed the pigskin to wideout Jeremy Lewis on a reverse and Lewis fired it downfield to Andrew Abram for a 46-yard score with 1:54 remaining in the quarter. A two-point conversion pass to Hunter Rimatzki actually evened the score at 14-14.

"They're spread offense is crazy," Baechler said. "We gave up two touchdowns on things we've never seen. The stuff we prepared for, we were darn good at."

The teams combined for 36 points in an even crazier second quarter. With 9:36 to play in the half, Canton sophomore quarterback Greg Williams (7-of-15 passing, 178 yards, two TDs) connected with tight end Matt McKoy on a 23-yarder down to the Churchill 29.

On the next play, junior tailback Joe Grinage broke free and scampered all the way into the end zone to give Canton a 20-14 edge.

LEAD CHANGES

A muffed punt by the Chiefs led to a 29-yard field goal by Churchill's Brian Alsobrooks with 5:42 left to make it 20-17 and the Chargers went

up 23-20 on a 53-yard toss from Suida to Robert Foster Jr. (seven receptions, 132 yards and two TDs).

Of course, the way the game went, the Chiefs regained the lead 27-23 just two plays later.

Williams dropped back and hit senior tight end Scott Gring for what turned into a 78-yard catch-and-run TD. Gring (three catches, 130 yards) reeled the pass in around Canton's 40 and took off down the left sideline the rest of the way.

Churchill, outgaining Canton 352-320 in the first half, scored the next two touchdowns within a minute late in the half to open up a 37-27 lead. Abram reached down to snare a low pass from Suida for a 16-yard touchdown. With 10 seconds remaining, Suida found Jacob Staff for a 2-yard scoring strike.

In the second half, the Chargers made it a 40-27 advantage on their first series. Alsobrooks made a 29-yard field goal.

Canton chipped away early in the fourth when sophomore back Charles Turfe crossed the goal line on a 1-yard plunge on a series sparked by Williams's 26-yard throw to Gring.

The momentum didn't last. With 6:03 to play, Churchill scored again on a 25-yard field goal by Alsobrooks.

Canton drew closer once again when Williams hit senior back Kendall Scott for a 16-yard scoring pass, with 4:11 left. Those turned out to be the game's final points.

Filiatraut said it was good to see the way his team withstood Canton's early barrage.

"I was real pleased that we kept our composure, stayed with the plan, came back into the game, took a halftime lead," he said. "That was all really positive for us."

