

Chiefs dominate young 'Cats, clinch KLAA South

Canton spoils Plymouth's homecoming, 34-23

Oct. 12, 2013 |



Canton's Chase Winningham (No. 4) eludes Plymouth tackler Connor Stella (No. 32) en route to a touchdown Friday night. / BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Written by [Tim Smith](#) Staff Writer



Hauling in a pass for Plymouth is Matt Busch (No. 21). At right for Canton is Dan Kilgore (No. 27). / BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

For more than 31 of 48 minutes of Friday night's football game, Canton's offense was on the field with the Chiefs moving the chains in workmanlike fashion.

And although the host Plymouth Wildcats took the lead on a couple of occasions in their homecoming game, they just weren't able to mount enough of a comeback, falling 34-23 in a KLAAs South Division football matchup.

The victory gave Canton (7-0, 5-0) the division championship for the first time since 2010, while Plymouth dropped to 5-2, 3-2.

"They were on fire, they were moving bodies left and right," Canton senior running back Westen Price (13 carries, 73 yards, one TD) said about the offensive line's yeoman efforts. "It was awesome. We kept their offense off the field, which is a good part of the game plan."

Chiefs head coach Tim Baechler praised the O-line, but added that the running backs "blocked well, too, and ran the ball hard. They controlled the game for us and that's their job. They know first downs turn into touchdowns."

Canton outgained Plymouth 356-201, including a disparity of 327-78 in rushing yards.

"They were smart, they schemed to try to get to our perimeter, to our young kids," Plymouth head coach Mike Sawchuk said. "I'm sure they watch a lot of film and they try to bounce everything to our young kids."

"They pretty much scrapped about 80 percent of their straight-T. I guess that's a compliment to us."

Early fireworks

The Chiefs set the tone early, with Price running 24 yards for a touchdown with 5:23 remaining in the first quarter. Plymouth did block Andrew Loehnis' extra-point attempt.

That perhaps sparked the Wildcats on the ensuing kickoff.

Sophomore Cameron Stella corralled the kickoff deep in Plymouth's zone and scampered 95 yards down the right sideline for a touchdown.

Following the point after by Viet Nguyen, the Wildcats were up 7-6 and the jam-packed home side of the Plymouth-Canton Educational Park varsity turf field was delirious.

But back came the workmanlike Chiefs, taking the ball 59 yards in 12 rushing plays, regaining the lead (13-7) on the second snap of the second quarter.

Junior running back Charles Turfe (25 carries, 109 yards, two TDs) stutter-stepped his way through the line and into the end zone for a 1-yard score.

On the previous play, Turfe broke around the left edge for a 13-yard gain, taking the ball down to near the goal line.

Undaunted, however, Plymouth took a page out of the Canton playbook.

The Wildcats moved the ball 68 yards in 12 plays, with senior tailback DJ Rossell (18 carries, 87 yards, one TD) book-ending the drive with 16-yard runs.

On the scoring play, with 6:08 to go in the first half, Rossell scooted around left end and crossed the goal line with a headfirst dive. Putting Plymouth up 14-13 was Nguyen with his extra point.

Good response

Once again, back came the Chiefs, on an 80-yard march that chewed up another four minutes and opened up a 20-14 halftime lead.

Scoring on a 1-yard run was Turfe, one play following a stellar 35-yard carry by junior quarterback Greg Williams. Nailing the extra point was Andrew Loehnis.

Helping Canton's drive were successive runs of 14 and 13 yards by senior Chase Winningham (nine carries, 85 yards, one TD).

"We went right back down and scored, which was huge," Baechler said.

Plymouth sliced the deficit to 20-17 early in the third on a 42-yard field goal by Nguyen. The key play of that series was a 40-yard pass from senior quarterback A.J. Convertino (8-of-10 passing, 123 yards, one TD) to senior wide receiver Matt Busch.

Canton answered again, this time on Winningham's 27-yard score to make it 27-17 with 25 seconds to go in the third. He took a quick handoff from Williams and ripped through the line.

After the Wildcats were stuffed on a fourth-down play near midfield, the Chiefs tacked on another TD. Scoring on a 1-yard plunge was Williams, with a 28-yard pass to senior Jake Boucher the big moment of that drive.

“We got that big stop on fourth down and went down and scored again,” Baechler said. “Hey, that was the key to the game. Our defense made just enough stops and forced them into a field goal and we got that big stop on fourth down.

“That was the key. And our offense being dominant. It was huge.”

Plymouth finished the scoring when Convertino completed a 26-yard TD pass to Busch.

But by then, all that was left to do for the Chiefs was run out the clock and celebrate the division-clinching victory.

“We’re very proud,” Baechler said. “We haven’t won the division since 2010 and we’re glad to be up there again and have an opportunity to play for the league championship next week. We’re extremely excited.”

Following the game, Canton fans mobbed the players on the field to celebrate the division title. While the Chiefs hoisted their helmets, the glum Wildcats watched from the other end of the field.

“I said remember that, remember that right there,” Sawchuk said.

“How does that make you feel? Maybe it will motivate them. We’ll be all right, we don’t have anything to hang our heads about.”