

# Chiefs make most out of road trip

Evan Paputa, Correspondent 11:23 a.m. EDT August 29, 2014

*Canton's season-opening road trip worthwhile thanks to grind-it-out victory over Holland West Ottawa.*



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Holland West Ottawa had spent countless hours this offseason envisioning the day in late August when the Canton Chiefs would come to town.

The Panthers kept last season's opening loss at Canton in their memory banks and wanted to return the favor with a home victory — they even painted "Beat Canton" on a rock in the concourse.

However, the Chiefs' vaunted power run game strangled the Panthers 31-21 on Thursday night. Canton gained 285 of 357 total yards on the ground.

Those tough earned yards were a mini-snapshot of what the offensive line had been working on all offseason, according to Canton offensive line coach, Bob Williams. "They did just about what I expected them to do," Williams said. "They're set, but I have to polish what's there."

Sophomore Marcus Sanders was the only Canton running back to gain over 100 yards, but several other Chiefs made considerable contributions. Chuck Turfe carried 18 times for 61 yards and two touchdowns.

Senior Jake Pagel scored a touchdown on Canton's second play from scrimmage on a 43-yard scamper only 56 seconds into the game. His night ended early due to an injury on his next carry.

Junior Jakob Wickens was next in line with seven carries for 41 yards.

"It was a great win," Turfe said. "Last year we came out with a 28-21 victory. They drove three hours and now we drove three hours. It was a big win, I'm proud of the team."

Turfe made his name on defense too and forced a West Ottawa fumble on the first play of their next drive. He stripped senior running back David Rich before he could reach the line of scrimmage.

On the ensuing drive, Turfe put the Chiefs up 14-0 on a 4-yard rushing touchdown with 6:04 left in the first quarter.

"We got a chance to schedule non-conference teams and we wanted to play one of the best teams in the state," West Ottawa head coach Rory Zegunas said. "We didn't execute. Any time you turn the ball over like we did, it's gonna kill you."

### **Defensive gems**

Canton senior cornerback Robert Guajardo picked off West Ottawa senior quarterback Caleb McNitt twice inside the Chiefs' own 25-yard line.

The first came with 2:34 to play in the third quarter on a deep throw mid-way through a potential 75-yard Panther drive.

The next interception proved to be the nail in the coffin as Guajardo picked off McNitt at the Chief goal-line with 3:18 to play in the fourth quarter and the Chiefs leading 31-21.

"The pass game we wanted to take away the deep ball and tackle on the short stuff," said Guajardo, who tallied five tackles. Junior defensive lineman Tommy Evely also co-led the Chiefs in tackles with five.

After the Chiefs broke out early, West Ottawa countered Canton's 14-0 lead on a 14-yard McNitt rushing touchdown with 1:57 left in the first quarter.

Canton then added a 33-yard field goal by senior Andrew Loehnis with 8:08 to play in the second quarter.

But West Ottawa answered with a 20-yard McNitt touchdown pass to senior Braden Carl with 3:24 to play in the first half.

Canton capped the half with a 1-yard rushing touchdown by Turfe putting the Chiefs up 24-14 with one second remaining.

Canton struck first in the third quarter (after holding the Panthers to one first down on the opening possession) on a 4-yard Sanders touchdown.

West Ottawa senior Christian Rodino kept Panther hope alive with a 4-yard rushing touchdown with 6:54 to play in the fourth quarter, but a failed onside kick and eventual interception in the endzone by McNitt helped seal the Canton victory.

Canton's defense held West Ottawa to 1-of-7 on third down attempts.

Getting off the field on third downs was a point of emphasis entering the season- according to Turfe and he was pleased with the performance in game one.

"The proudest moment the way our defense played. A lot of juniors stepped up: (safety Micah) Rinke, (linebacker Jacob) Stefan and (safety Jared) Stephens all played big for us tonight," Turfe said.