

# 5 things to watch for as Canton hosts Livonia Churchill in the MLive Detroit Game of the Week



Churchill quarterback Brian Alsobrooks verbally committed to Eastern Michigan University in June. (Courtesy)

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## MLIVE DETROIT GAME OF THE WEEK

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On Friday night, first place in the Kensington Lakes Activities Association South Division will be on the line as [Canton](#) (4-1, 3-0) hosts [Livonia Churchill](#) (5-0, 3-0) in the MLive Detroit Game of the Week.

The last three matchups have been decided by seven points or less, with Canton winning the most recent matchup a season ago, 35-28.

All indications point to a fairly high scoring affair as well, with the last three games averaging 66.33 total points scored.

Here are five key things to watch heading into Friday night's 6:30 p.m. matchup:

**1. Chargers blowing up the scoreboard:** Livonia Churchill heads into the matchup with the highest scoring offense in KLAA North, averaging 44 points per game heading in. In fact, Churchill is on pace to pass its entire point total from last season this week if it sticks to that average. The explosive offense has the Charges off to a 5-0 start for the second time in three years but just the sixth time in its 47 seasons.

A strong offensive line has given senior quarterback [Brian Alsobrooks](#) and senior running back [Paul Romain](#) plenty of opportunities to do some damage.

"Brian is our leader and is in his second year as a starter at quarterback and third year on varsity," Churchill coach Bill DeFillippo said. "He knows the offense well ... we've got a pretty good offensive line up front. Our skill guys, including our tailback, Paul Romain, we've had a pretty good year to this point, offensively."

**2. Canton is more worried about itself than Churchill:** Canton coach Tim Baechler will work with a 4-1 record any day but still feels like his team is far from what it should be. Saying that the team is focused on "rebuilding" different aspects of the team because of various reasons.

Baechler believes that the schedule in coming weeks will be only be more challenging and it starts with Churchill. Friday night will be quite a measuring stick game in Baechler's mind.

"We're just really focused on getting better," Baechler said. "We're not where we need to be yet. That's where our focus is. Yeah, we know Livonia Churchill is coming to town and they're a great team ... but it's really about us."

**3. Both teams offering division's top defenses:** So far this season, the defenses have helped play a key role in putting each team in position to win each week. Churchill is giving up 16.4 points per game while Canton is nearly the same with 16.8 points against per game.

Still, DeFillippo admit that nearly half of the points that Churchill has given up this season has come when the backups were playing defense. Led by Aaron Mager at defensive end and linebackers Demarco Mckinney and Aaron Kerr.

"Our starting defense is probably responsible for about eight or nine points a game," DeFillippo said. "They've done a tremendous job. Our front four has played well."

Canton has a stud middle linebacker in [Jake Pagel](#) and safety Jared Stephens.

"Jake Pagel, he's just the quarterback of our defense," Baechler said.

**4. Quarterbacks have earned the right to be leaders for respective teams:** It doesn't take much for DeFillippo or Baechler to put in some good words about their respective quarterbacks. Alsobrooks is in his second year starting for Churchill while Canton quarterback [Greg Williams](#) is in his third year as a starter.

In clutch situations, Williams has been the guy to turn to for Canton.

"Just his clutch throws on third and short or fourth and short, he's just been unbelievably good there," Baechler said.

Alsobrooks is just as needed for Churchill.

"Brian, he's our leader," DeFillippo said. "He enjoys playing in (the offense) and understands defenses really well. He's got a pretty good skill set with the strong arm and all of that. He's done a great job of leading us."

**5. Paul Romain continuing the tradition of formidable running backs at Churchill:** Churchill has had some great talent at running back over the years, including Romello Brown in 2012, who helped lead Churchill to a 10-2 record.

Now that Romain has taken the reigns, he brings his own unique skill set to the team.

"The last three years, we've had pretty good tailbacks," DeFillippo said. "They've all been different. We had Romello Brown (in 2012) who was a big power back. Last year we had

Malik Johnson, who was small and physical but had great speed. Paul is kind of in the middle. He's a 4.5 40-yard dash kid but he's bigger than Malik."