

# Chiefs build big lead early on, hold off Wildcats for KLAA South crown

Tim Smith, 1:04 a.m. EDT October 11, 2014



(Photo: JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO )

Nothing like a crisp, October evening to listen to the sound of colliding helmets and shoulder pads cracking — especially when they belong to Canton and Plymouth football players.

Such was the case Friday night, when two bitter campus rivals and KLAA South Division opponents got together for their annual game at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park.

There were plenty of big hits on both sides, but Canton got the best of things on the scoreboard with a 30-20 victory. The win gives Canton (6-1 overall, 5-0 in the KLAA South) the division title for the second year in a row.

"These kids just keep stepping in and stepping in. I'm just so proud of them," Canton head coach Tim Baechler said. "They really deserve this. ... We're just going to enjoy this tonight" instead of worrying about next week's crossover against the KLAA Central champion (either South Lyon or Livonia Stevenson).

"I think our defense played great," Baechler said. "We gave up a couple big plays, but they have an excellent quarterback, excellent receivers; there's some height mismatches back there.

"We made some plays and they made some plays. We told the kids that was going to happen. But I thought we did a great job slowing down the run a little bit."

Plymouth head coach Mike Sawchuk, whose team dropped to 5-2 overall and 3-2 in the division, praised his players for not folding the tent after a tough start. Canton led 21-0 on the first play of the second quarter and 27-7 at halftime.

### **Errors costly**

"I think the difference in the ballgame was our mental errors in the first half," Sawchuk said. "We quit on a pass play out here that the kid thought was out of bounds. And then we blew a coverage on a third-and-nine that brought them to the 1-yard line.

"We fumbled the ball back here instead of getting vertical. You take some of those mental errors away and we win. They're a good ballclub and they're always going to play hard, but I'm very proud of my kids."

One of the Canton stalwarts was senior quarterback Greg Williams, also the recipient of numerous crunches.

"It's always a battle," Williams said. "We did get out to a quick start, but those guys battle.

"We don't like them, they don't like us. So it's always a crazy atmosphere and 48 minutes of dog football."

Baechler smiled when asked whether Williams possesses the mentality of a linebacker.

"There was some hitting going on out there," Baechler said. "But he was delivering the blow, too. He was bringing it as well.

"He's a leader, just makes plays, he's been doing it for three years."

Williams (3-of-6 passing for 176 yards and 11 carries for 8 yards running) was tough as nails while guiding the Chiefs to a comfortable margin.

Plymouth could not overcome two interceptions by Canton senior defensive back Victor Villarini and a fumbled kickoff return, which helped the Chiefs mount the early cushion.

"He's had a heck of a last two years at corner," Baechler said about Villarini. "He's outsized back there (5-9), but you got to throw a perfect ball to beat him usually.

"And they hit a couple on him, but he came up with two picks. I'm proud of him."

### **Taking advantage**

Just three plays after Villarini's first interception, the Chiefs broke out 7-0 with 7:52 left in the first, when Williams completed a 75-yard TD strike to senior Robert Guajardo.

The Chiefs doubled that lead to 14-0 three minutes later on a 1-yard plunge by Marcus Sanders, who had a standout game with 140 yards in 22 rushes.

Setting up the score was another big play, a 73-yard pass from Williams to senior Nolan Gilo.

Canton made it 21-0 when senior running back Brian Newton powered through the line for a 1-yard score. That capped a 76-yard drive in seven plays.

A fumbled kickoff by Plymouth contributed to kicker Andrew Loehnis' 34-yard field goal, opening up a 24-0 lead with 9:58 left in the half.

The Wildcats answered, however. Quarterback Deji Adebisi (5-of-12 passing, 177 yards) fired a 26-yard touchdown pass to Victor Abraham with 6:10 remaining.

Loehnis nailed a 20-yard field goal before the intermission to open up a 20-point advantage. A 28-yard pass from Williams to senior Chuck Turfe was the key play of that scoring drive.

Plymouth made things interesting with a pair of touchdowns in the fourth quarter.

Adebisi and sophomore receiver Christian Walls hooked up for a 61-yard TD pass with 11:41 to go in the fourth, slicing Canton's lead to 30-14.

Wrapping up the night's scoring was a 3-yard run by Adebisi, one play after he connected with senior Kalen Dunham on a 45-yard gain.

Although Baechler lamented the offense slowing down in the second half, that wasn't going to take away from the division clincher.

"It feels great, Churchill, Plymouth, John Glenn, we've got a tough division in the South," he said.

"Everybody gets banged up, we beat each other up. For us to just limp through her and get it down, I'm just super-proud of it."

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