

Canton closer to playoffs after 40-28 win over Stevenson



It's tough enough to slow down Canton's multi-pronged running attack, but host Livonia Stevenson found out Friday night what the Chiefs can do when they throw the football.

Canton senior quarterback Connor Engel threw three touchdown passes in the second quarter, including two to senior Colin Troup. That sparked a 26-point surge, opening up a 33-14 halftime advantage. The Chiefs never looked back, winning 40-28 to spoil Stevenson's "Senior Night."

Troup had another stellar game, with 235 all-purpose yards (100 rushing, 135 receiving) while junior tailback Steven Walker tallied 153 yards rushing in 19 carries and two TDs as Canton moved to the cusp of another state playoff berth at 5-1 overall.

“The key to this game was the offensive line, they really stepped up,” Troup said. “They helped me, Steve, Luke (Jouppi), they just helped us really follow through the holes and score touchdowns. Really it’s all thanks to them, the big guys.”

Canton outgained Stevenson by a 484-339 margin and allowed just 15 first-down conversions by the Spartans.

The KLAA Black Division showdown was 7-7 after the first quarter, and the Spartans were driving deep into Canton territory to open the second frame. But Stevenson quarterback Parker Graham just missed hitting Devin Dunn in the end zone on a fourth down play, turning the ball over to the Chiefs.

On Canton's next offensive play, Engel threw a ball to Troup and he took it to the house for an 82-yard touchdown. That put the Chiefs ahead to stay, although the Spartans did show some life in the second half when they scored the game's final two touchdowns.

Graham and Dunn (three receptions, 93 yards) hooked up for a second TD, a 17-yarder, late in the third quarter. Canton penalties helped the Spartans complete a 95-yard drive in the fourth, but the Spartans also showed some big-play capability.

After Graham found Dunn for a 47-yard pass play, the quarterback burst through the middle for a 30-yard touchdown run. Stevenson tacked on a two-point conversion to make it 40-28 with five minutes left, but that was all the scoring.

“They just played tough the entire game, they brought it to us,” Graham said. “We started figuring it out and get our game plan going in the second half. Just wish we would have gotten it going sooner.”

Stevenson head coach Randy Micallef, whose team dropped to 4-2, gave the Chiefs credit for throwing some wrinkles into their usual game.

“They’re a good football team,” Micallef said. “They did some things defensively, a couple different alignments and moving guys around, that gave us some trouble at times.”

“We adjusted and ran some plays that I think we were successful on, but it was just a matter of making sure we were in the right spots.”



(Photo: Bill Bresler | hometownlife.com)

Following are several takeaways from the contest:

Mix and match

Canton’s outstanding offense usually is powered by the running game, but against Stevenson, quarterback Engel showed there is another side to the attack. In the second quarter, during a 26-yard surge by the Chiefs, Engel threw three TDs, including two to Troup (82, 31 yards) and a 12-yard strike to Walker.

Engel only completed four of six passes for the night, but he made them count.

“Their defense wasn’t really set up for it, and our guys made some plays and I got it to them,” Engel said.

Who threw that?

The Spartans stopped the Chiefs in the game’s first drive, but when the offense came onto the field it was senior George Ferguson behind center (instead of at wide receiver).

The lefthanded throwing Ferguson connected over the middle on a pass to senior Joshua Page for a nifty 70-yard catch-and-run into the end zone, to

briefly put the Spartans up 7-0. The usual starting QB, Graham, came out for the next series, however.

Ill advised

After Canton upped its lead to 27-14 on a 31-yard pass from Engel to Troup, with a minute remaining in the first half, the Spartans tried to force things. Graham's pass into the left flat was picked off by Canton's Nick Polydoros, who returned the ball to the 1-yard line.

Punching it in on the next snap was junior running back Luke Jouppi (8-40) and just like that it was a 33-14 contest with just 34 seconds left until intermission.

"We had a rough last couple minutes of the first half there, we gave up a touchdown and then threw the pick-6 and it ended up being the difference in the game when you look at the final score," Micallef said. "In the second half we played better, we executed better, we got a couple stops defensively and a turnover. So that helped."



Joshua Page (24) makes the catch, trailed by Noah Brown (2). (Photo: Bill Bresler | hometownlife.com)