

## 5 takeaways from the Brighton-Canton football game



### **FINAL SCORE: Canton 35, Brighton 10**

#### **It's do or die for Brighton in Week 9**

After nearly beating a Belleville team with 10 potential Division I football recruits in its season opener at Michigan Stadium and then trampling Livingston County rival Hartland in Week 2, the Bulldogs seemed set to run away with the KLAA Black Division title, especially with Canton losing. Yet, somehow, the Bulldogs have found themselves playing for their postseason lives in Week 9.

The opponent will be from the KLAA Gold, although as of print time the records and standings have not been fully determined. However, it looks like that opponent will be either Grand Blanc, Livonia Franklin or Plymouth. Plymouth would be the most winnable matchup.

On the other hand, Grand Blanc and Livonia Franklin are tough draws. For Brighton, it's the first time in three years under coach Brian Lemons that the team finds itself in this must-win situation in the regular-season finale.

The last time Brighton was in this scenario was 2014, when it lost, 19-13, to South Lyon.

### **There is no stopping the Chiefs**

Canton is the No. 6-ranked team in Division 1, according to the Detroit Free Press.

And that might be too low.

The Chiefs looked every bit the D1 state title contender that they are expected to be in two weeks when the playoffs begin. Brighton entered the game seeking its fifth win while also giving up just 16 points per game. With the Bulldogs desperately needing the victory, one wondered if they could combat the Chiefs and pull off the upset.

It was evident from the start Canton wouldn't let that happen.

The Chiefs' offense jolted Brighton, putting up 21 unanswered points to open the game. Brighton would regroup defensively and hold them there until the fourth, but the Chiefs' defense proved equally impressive in the early going, holding Brighton to just three points in the opening 24 minutes.

### **Canton's streak of scoring at least 40 points is over**

The Bulldogs probably won't care all that much, but they had more success defensively than any team has this season outside of Muskegon Mona Shores in Week 1. Following Canton's only loss, it had posted at least 40 points in all six of their games since.

Brighton at least ended that streak.

Of course, the Bulldogs seek more than moral victories, and giving up 35 for a team that hopes season-in and season-out to be contending for division, conference and state championships won't really be very uplifting.

But Canton possesses a historically good offense, and hadn't put up six straight games of 40 or more points in 13 years. That's both impressive and surprising, seeing as each season they have a loaded offense that eclipses the 400 total point mark. In fact, even when the Chiefs posted a school record of 502 points in 2005 they didn't accomplish that feat.

### **Canton's unique rushing style helped find the seams in Brighton's run defense**

If Brighton was going to dish Canton its second loss, it had to slow Canton's ground game.

No one expected the Bulldogs to completely shut it down, as that has proven pretty much impossible in this season and most others. But entering

the contest holding opposing teams to 110 rushing yards per game — and its two best opponents so far, Belleville and Livonia Stevenson, to 65 and 60 yards, respectively — the Bulldogs at least appeared to have the formula.

Instead, as it turned out, it was Canton that again had the formula on how to decipher an opposing team's defense and still find success with its ground attack. The Chiefs rushed for five touchdowns and 296 yards on the night, including three first-half running TDs and two more in the fourth quarter.

### **Turnovers for Brighton proved costly**

Brighton needed to pretty much be perfect to knock off the Chiefs. They especially needed to win the turnover battle. They weren't able to, as Canton forced two turnovers — both interceptions — and did not allow Brighton any takeaways on the night.

The Chiefs were also impressive on third and fourth downs, converting 11-of-13 attempts to give them an 85-percent success rate. The Bulldogs, by comparison, only converted 4-of-10, while also being held to just 99 yards of total offense on the night.

The one TD came courtesy of a Will Jontz rush in the third quarter. Jontz was Brighton's leading rusher with 29 yards on 15 attempts.