

Canton holds off rally to stun No. 1 Belleville



Belleville — Colin Troup played the game of his life Friday night to help Canton upset No. 1 Belleville 28-25 in a Division 1 district championship game.

Troup, a 6-foot, 185-pound senior, rushed for 167 yards on 24 carries and a TD to lead Canton's ground attack which operates out of the tight T-formation.

Canton (9-2) piled up 291 yards on the ground and forced three turnovers — two interceptions and a fumble — against a Belleville (10-1) team loaded with Division 1 talent.

Still, Troup's biggest play could have been a 35-yard kickoff return to give Canton the ball at Belleville's 45 in the fourth quarter after Belleville pulled within 21-19 with a pair of big scoring strikes from freshman Christian Dhue-Reid to Jalen Williams (52 yards) and Jalen Wallace (43 yards).

"Coach Baechler told me to hit the hole hard (on the kickoff return)," Troup said. "He told me to trust in my teammates and that's what I did, hit the hole 100 percent and they did a great job."

Canton took advantage of Troup's long return when Connor Engel found Lou Baechler — who has played the last several games with a broken arm — for a 4-yard TD pass on fourth down with 5:28 remaining.

"They called my number on the pass, great call by the coaches," Lou Baechler said. "I went in there and all of their DBs are going somewhere -- 'Bama, (Michigan) State, everything, great team. I went on my route and was open and Connor threw a heck of a pass, right on my stomach and I caught it. I just kind of used my body."

"It was a great throw and he found the soft spot and there's no other kid on this team I trust more," Canton coach Tim Baechler said. "He's got a lot of confidence."

Belleville wasn't finished. Dhue-Reid found four-star junior Julian Barnett for a 46-yard pass to the Canton 14, then found Michigan State-bound Davion Williams for a 7-yard TD on fourth down to pull within 28-25 — the PAT was blocked by Troup — with 3:18 left. However, Belleville failed to recover the onside kick.

Dhue-Reid (10-for-23, 216 yards, 3 TDs, INT) and Belleville tested Canton's pass defense early, throwing the ball on its first six plays, only to have its red zone opportunity on its first series end when Dhue-Reid's third- and fourth-down passes fell incomplete.

Canton gave Belleville a short field to work with after failing to convert a fourth-down pass from its 47 and Dhue-Reid found Barnett for completions of 19 and 15 yards to the Canton 10 before senior defensive back Robert Laird ended the threat with an interception in the end zone.

Then, Canton turned the momentum when Troup broke loose for a 79-yard run on the next play to set up Steven Walker's 1-yard TD run late in the opening quarter.

Belleville finally did score on its third red-zone chance, taking advantage of a recovered onside kick at midfield, then having Khalid Crawford end the drive with a 4-yard run in the opening minute of the second quarter.

Canton answered with an impressive 13-play, 65-yard drive with Troup picking up eight to the Belleville 14 on third and 1, leading to his own 1-yard TD run to open up a 14-6 cushion.

It looked like Belleville would have a chance to cut the deficit when Dhue-Reid found Jalen Williams for a 58-yard TD pass with just under four minutes left in the half, but a holding penalty wiped out the score.