

Howell victimized by Steven Walker Show in loss to Canton



Canton's Steven Walker ran for 377 yards and five touchdowns against Howell. Bill Khan, Livingston Daily

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CANTON — Canton defensive end Darius Robinson doesn't need to sell himself too much on the recruiting trail.

He's the state's highest-ranked uncommitted football player in the Class of 2019, holding 20 Division I scholarship offers, including one from Michigan State.

But while he's talking with college coaches to determine his own future, Robinson plans to put in a good word for senior teammate Steven Walker. Words may not be necessary. He can just bring Friday night's game film to his next college visit and push "play."

Walker tore up Howell's defense to the tune of 377 yards and five touchdowns on 19 carries, the vast majority of that damage coming in the first half, as Canton rolled to a 48-29 victory.

In the first half alone, Walker had what would've been a record-setting day at most high schools, running 12 times for 327 yards and four touchdowns. He had six runs of at least 20 yards and three of at least 61 yards.

"That's Steven Walker for you," said Robinson, who plays on the offensive and defensive lines. "I can't wait to see him at the next level. I'm going to do everything I can to help him out. That boy's way too good not to be playing on Saturdays. He's having a great year. He's just got to keep it going. The team's doing well. We block for him and get in the end zone."



Howell's Michael Brauer tries to escape the grasp of Canton's Steven Walker during the Highlanders' 48-29 loss to the Chiefs on Friday, Oct. 5, 2018. (Photo: Timothy Arrick/For the Livingston Daily)

Walker came into the game with a shoulder injury, then injured his wrist during the first half. He got poked in the eye while being tackled with 1:59 left in the game and quickly got off the field to be looked at by Canton's trainer.

"It happens in games like this," Canton coach Andy LaFata said. "I'm sure everyone in the state right now is banged up."

Walker scored on runs of 19, 61, 82 and 6 yards in the first half. He also had an 83-yard run to the Howell 10-yard line. Walker, who was crowned homecoming king at halftime, had a 10-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter.

“I don’t know if we’ve ever given up that many yards to a single back, and we’ve seen some good ones,” Howell coach Aaron Metz said. “Give that kid credit; he ran hard.”

The Highlanders were chasing the scoreboard the entire game, giving up touchdowns on Canton’s first six possessions. The Chiefs scored on seven out of nine possessions, allowing a 73-yard fumble return for a touchdown by Howell defensive back Michael Brauer with 1:02 left in the third quarter and taking a knee from the Highlanders’ 5-yard line to end the game.

Canton had 488 yards on the ground and 98 through the air.

“On film, you don’t see how fast they are, you don’t see how they actually play,” Brauer said. “We came out slow. They came out and hit us in the mouth harder than we did. They just played harder than we did in the first half. We should’ve played like we did in the second half in the first half.”

The final score isn’t indicative of how Canton dominated the game.



Howell's Nathan Eades hauls in a pass in the Highlanders' 48-29 loss to Canton on Friday Oct. 5, 2018. (Photo: Timothy Arrick/For the Livingston Daily)

The Chiefs got out to a 27-0 lead before Nathan Eades broke off a 47-yard touchdown run for Howell with 9:07 left in the second quarter.

Canton (5-2) tacked on two touchdowns in the final 2:12 of the first half, aided by a fumbled kickoff by Howell.

Howell battled back to within 41-22 on a 7-yard touchdown pass from Matt Hornyak to Eades and Brauer's fumble return in the third quarter.

Canton responded with a 10-yard touchdown run by Walker with 8:21 left in the game. Howell concluded the scoring on a 44-yard pass from Hornyak to Christian Nichols with 6:25 remaining.

"We just missed opportunities to keep it close," Metz said. "When you're in a track meet, you've got to keep scoring points."

The loss ended Howell's four-game winning streak and hopes for a KLAA West championship. Had the Highlanders won the battle of second-place teams, they would've been in a position to play for the division title next Friday at home against Brighton.

Howell (4-3) needs to win its next two games to automatically qualify for the state playoffs. The Highlanders have qualified at 5-4 three times.

"We've just got to have a good practice this week," Brauer said. "Like coach Metz said, lick our wounds and just get better next week against Brighton. They're a good team, but we beat them last year and we were underrated." Hornyak was 9-for-17 for 201 yards and two touchdowns. Canton quarterback Ben Stesiak was 6-for-7 for 98 yards and a touchdown pass to Luke Jouppe.