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'Cats still got the magic

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Canton quarterback Kyle Adams (No. 11) gets a couple steps on Plymouth's Kyle McMillan (No. 57) and Stefan Turrentine (No. 19) during Friday's showdown at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park. / Bill Bresler | staff photographer

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[Zoom](#)

Plymouth senior running back Donte Fox (No. 5), who racked up 217 yards on the ground Friday, is pursued by Canton senior defensive back Demetre Lopez (No. 6).

Mike Sawchuk might as well put up a “Comebacks 'R Us” sign over his team's locker room.

The Plymouth varsity [football team](#) snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat once again — just as it did in the 2010 state semifinals against Rockford — with an incredible 31-30 win Friday night over Canton.

It wasn't a perfect game for the Wildcats (7-0 overall, 5-0 in the KLAA Central Division), who were penalized for 80 yards and had three passes intercepted.

“We played brilliant in spots, but we turned the ball over, we had penalties, we blew some coverages,” Sawchuk said. “And they're a tough team to prepare for. But these kids, we keep preaching, the premise of our program is keep doing the right thing, have integrity, work your butt off, don't quit and good things will happen.”

A 10-point Canton lead with 1:01 remaining could not hold up as the Wildcats refused to yield.

On target

Following a touchdown and successful onside kick, Plymouth junior Brenton Zuzo booted a 40-yard field goal with seven seconds left to provide the winning margin and spark a mob scene on the varsity [turf field](#) at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park.

“I was pretty nervous when it came up,” said Zuzo, who also delivered the crucial onside kick moments earlier that eluded a Canton player and was pounced on by [Plymouth's](#) Jamarl Eiland at the Wildcats' 40-yard line with just 20 seconds left. “I was just practicing like I normally practice, just kick my leg straight up through, followed the ball with my leg and kept my head down. And it went it. That's my first make.”

Setting up the field goal was Zuzo's successful onside kick. "I just wanted to keep it from going out of bounds because that would have been bad," he said.

The dramatic ending capped an intense contest played in front of an overflow homecoming crowd of about 4,000 fans.

Plymouth trailed 13-7 at halftime and went up 21-13 during the third quarter after two TDs by hard-[driving](#) senior Donte Fox (21 rushes, 217 yards).

Fox reeled in a 35-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Shaun Austin and followed that up with a 1-yard TD run.

But the Chiefs (5-2, 3-2) kept battling back and scored with 42 seconds to go in the quarter on a 2-yard carry by senior tailback Kevin Buford (17 carries, 79 yards), closing the gap to 21-19.

Sparking that drive was a 56-yard [kickoff return](#) by senior Zac Merillat.

Canton tried to tie the game at 21-21 on a two-point conversion pass, but it was deflected by senior Faris Abraham.

Back in front

In the fourth, however, the Chiefs mounted a 53-yard scoring drive that put them ahead with about seven minutes left.

Despite Buford leaving for several minutes due to severe leg cramps, Canton kept pounding the line of scrimmage and ran the ball down to the Plymouth 15.

Merillat then scored with an up-the-middle run, followed by a two-point conversion pass from quarterback Kyle Adams (7-of-8 passing, 114 yards) to Evan Rinke to give Canton a 27-21 advantage.

The Chiefs got the ball right back with 5:38 to go, when junior Kendall Scott intercepted an Austin pass at Canton's 35.

Things continued to look up for Canton. Merillat and senior running back Ryan Jones (20 rushes, 80 yards) grinded out a march that moved the ball inside the 10-yard line and took several minutes off the clock.

On fourth down, junior Scott Piwowar connected on a 21-yard field goal and the Chiefs were up 30-21 with just 1:01 to go.

No quit

But then the Wildcats pulled a page out of last season's playoff playbook.

Austin threw the ball over the middle to junior wideout Nate Emminger, who broke free of the coverage and bolted down the left side of the gridiron down to the Canton 1-yard line.

“He (Emminger) made a heck of a play,” Austin said. “It was over the middle and that's all they were giving me. But his speed, his dedication to go hard and try to get everything out of it was awesome. It was a fantastic play.”

Then Austin scored on a sneak and junior placekicker Bobby Deeg (who shares kicking duties with Zuzo) nailed the extra point.

Plymouth's special teams corralled the ensuing inside kick and Austin completed passes to Emminger and senior Devin McMillian to give Zuzo his chance to win the game.

Canton's Buford said the team's second straight heartbreaking defeat won't get it down, however.

“They're a really good team, we knew we were going to get a battle,” Buford said. “We just made a couple bad plays and it penalized us. But we're going to regroup and get back at it on Monday.”

Early scoring

Fox also had a huge play in the first quarter to open the night's scoring. He took a handoff, burst through the line and finished off a 56-yard touchdown run with 7:22 left.

Canton tied it up at 7-7 when Adams scored on a sweep around left end from the Plymouth 4-yard line.

On the ensuing series, Austin was intercepted by Canton senior Michael Boes. But the Chiefs fumbled it back two plays later.

Another interception of an Austin pass, this one by Blake Owens, contributed to a 13-yard touchdown run by Jones with 8:40 left in the half. That gave the Chiefs a 13-7 edge that they would take into the halftime break