

Chiefs late field goal crushes 'Cats

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Canton running back Ryan Jones (No. 14) looks for yardage as Plymouth's Stefan Turrentine (No. 19) frantically chases him Friday night. At left, Devin McMillian (No. 9) of the Wildcats fends with Chiefs blocker Zac Merillat (No. 21) in an attempt to get to Jones. / JOHN KEMSKI

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Plymouth junior linebacker Stefan Turrentine (No. 19) puts a licking on Canton senior running back Zac Merillat (No. 21) during Friday's Division 1 pre-district game. / JOHN KEMSKI

For a while Friday night, a new “Fox Theatre” was opening at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park thanks to the power running of Plymouth senior Donte Fox.

Fox reeled off two huge gainers, one a 53-yard [touchdown run](#) in the second quarter and a 59-yarder setting up his one-yard TD plunge in the fourth to even the Division 1 pre-district football game against Canton.

But in the end, the Chiefs pulled the red carpet out from under the defending D1 finalists. Junior kicker Scott Piwowar calmly split the uprights from 35 yards as time expired to give Canton a thrilling 24-21 victory.

“Just do everything you do in practice and put it right through the uprights,” said Piwowar, recalling what his holder said to him just before the crucial kick. “And that's exactly what I did.”

Canton head coach Tim Baechler, whose 8-2 squad will play the winner of Saturday's game between Northville and Novi-Detroit Catholic Central, credited his offense for an efficient, 62-yard final [drive](#) that moved the chains down to Plymouth's 18 — right in front of the goal posts.

“It's only the second one he's made, we've only attempted four on the year,” Baechler said. “But it was right down the middle of the field and I'm like ‘You know what, with high school kids today a 35-yarder is nothing.’”

No problem

Just before Piwowar lined up to make his attempt, the Wildcats called a timeout to make the kicker think about things a bit. The strategy, which if successful would have forced overtime, did not work.

“It did nothing,” Piwowar said. “There was nothing I could have thought of that would have shook me off track. It didn't hurt at all.

“If anything it gave me more momentum because it means they have to do everything they can to try to get me off my game.”

After Piwowar's make avenged an earlier missed field goal and capped off the win, Canton fans swarmed the PCEP varsity [turffield](#). Meanwhile, Plymouth players squatted in agony over the abrupt close to the season.

Fox in particular was in anguish as he and the Wildcats (8-2) were denied the opportunity to try for another Ford Field trip.

In 2010, Plymouth knocked out Canton in the district final and that started the team's long run of playoff success.

"I'm very, very, very proud of these kids," Plymouth head coach Mike Sawchuk said. "These kids played their hearts out, and that's two damn good [football teams](#) playing right there.

"Either one of these teams can take it all the way."

Back and forth

From the opening whistle, the pre-district game — taking place just three weeks after a stirring Plymouth comeback earned the Wildcats a 31-30 victory over Canton — proved as good as advertised.

Canton broke the ice with 1:25 left in the first quarter when senior running back Kevin Buford (18 rushes, 69 yards; 115 all-purpose yards) pushed through the line from 1-yard out.

The Chiefs were on the move again with their next possession, with a first down from the Plymouth 7-yard line.

But the drive stalled as Plymouth's defense held firm. On third down, Buford was tackled for a loss by senior Faris Abraham and junior Matt Janke.

Piwowar's subsequent 33-yard field goal attempt was wide to the right.

It then only took two plays for the Wildcats to go 80 yards and make it a 7-7 contest.

Plymouth senior quarterback Shaun Austin (5-10, 74 yards; 12 rushes, 111 yards) broke off a 27-yard run.

Fox (15-150) then went 53 yards for the equalizing touchdown.

Like a tank gaining momentum and picking up speed as it rolls downhill, he slowly bolted forward through a wave of defenders and then accelerated through the middle of the line.

He breezed on an angle into the front-right corner of the end zone.

The game remained 7-7 well into the third quarter, until Plymouth went 80 yards in 15 plays over 7:38 to take a 14-7 edge.

There were several key plays in the march. On a third down play, Austin rolled to his right and connected on a 14-yard pass down the right sideline to Janke. That gave the Wildcats a first down at the Canton 37.

A 38-yard pass from Austin to speedy junior wide-out Nate Emminger set up a first down at the Canton 6-yard line and Austin ran it in on the next snap to make it a 14-7 game.

Answer time

But the Chiefs came right back to tie it, scoring on a 41-yard run up the middle by junior running back Malcolm Hollingsworth (8-64) with 1:22 left in the third.

Senior quarterback Kyle Adams (4-6, 51 yards) found Buford for a clutch 11-yard completion to keep the series alive.

After Plymouth couldn't move the ball, the Chiefs got it back and scored again for a 21-14 advantage.

Buford's 16-yard carry set up a first and goal from the 10-yard line and senior running back Ryan Jones (11-51) hurdled over the line for a 2-yard touchdown run with 6:46 to go.

Back came the Wildcats, however. Fox shot through the line for a 59-yard run that would have been a TD if not for a [diving](#) tackle by senior Zac Merillat at the Canton 21. Three Fox rushes later and it was a 21-21 contest.

Canton got the ball back with 4:39 remaining and then went to work on the winning series.

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