

# Chiefs spoil Pats' birthday party

Last-second 2-pointer stopped, 35-34

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Written by

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Canton running back Kendall Scott (No. 5) looks for an opening Friday night against Livonia Franklin while teammate Malcolm Hollingsworth (No. 10) helps out with a block. / BILL BRESLER  
| STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

What a 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party they threw Friday night at Livonia Franklin, and the [Patriots](#) came within an eyelash of enjoying the best icing on the cake — a thrilling last-second win over Canton.

Canton held on 35-34, but only after making a goal line stop on Franklin's two-point conversion bid that would have sent the homecoming crowd home happy.

“We wanted to win the game and that was our best shot,” Franklin coach Chris Kelbert said.

Canton coach Tim Baechler tipped his cap to Kelbert's squad following the KLAA South Division contest.

“They're big and physical, their backs are physical and we just had a tough time tackling,” Baechler said. “We were a little undersized in a few positions and they took advantage of it. It was like whoever had the ball last.

“But I'm very proud of our kids, they battled through. I feel bad for Chris, he works his butt off. They're a great 2-4 team, if there's such a thing.” Canton scored the eventual winning touchdown with 1:39 remaining, on a 1-yard plunge by running back Kendall Scott (100 combined yards, three TDs).

That wasn't easy, however, as the Patriots' physical defense nearly stonewalled Canton tailback Malcolm Hollingsworth the previous play on a fourth-and-inches just outside the 1-yard line.

Just as they had all night, the Patriots (2-4, 2-2 in the KLAA South) came right back down the field.

Quarterback Austin Tarhanich (7-of-12 passing, 134 yards, two TDs) got the ball at the Franklin 20 with 1:39 left and mounted a penalty-assisted drive that culminated with a 44-yard touchdown pass to junior sensation Joe McRobb.

McRobb's big plays were a thorn in Canton's side all night. He scored four touchdowns — two on the ground and two in the air — and collected 274 all-purpose yards (including 18 rushes for 181 yards). That TD, on a perfect spiral down the right sideline, sent the Franklin faithful into a frenzy.

But the Chiefs stacked up Franklin running back Jimmy Mazaris (23 carries, 123 yards, one TD) just short of the goal line in his bid for a game-winning two-point conversion.

Kelbert, following the game, told his players he was never more proud of them for the way they battled the Chiefs tooth-and-nail.

“We talked all week to make this a game they would never, ever forget in their entire lives and they did,” Kelbert said. “They played hard, to the final play they gave everything they had.”

It was an entertaining game filled with highlight-reel plays from the opening kickoff.

The Chiefs (4-2, 3-1) led 7-0 one play into the game and just like last week against Livonia Churchill it was running back Malcolm Hollingsworth (16 carries, 150 yards) doing the damage — this time with a 75-yard TD run on a sweep around right end.

Franklin got it right back when McRobb, like a [car](#) 🚗 gathering speed merging onto a highway, ran to his left and waited for an opening. When he got it, he shot right through and accelerated down the sideline for a 65-yard score. That made it 7-7, the first of four times the Pats would tie Canton.

Canton regained the lead 14-7 with 7:32 left in the half, when sophomore quarterback Greg Williams (6-of-8 passing, 128 yards, two TDs) converted a fourth-down pass over the middle to a wide-open Scott for a 33-yard touchdown.

“He made some plays tonight in the air,” Baechler said about Williams, who is gaining poise and confidence with every game.

Back came Franklin, tying the game 14-14 on a 42-yard touchdown pass from Tarhanich to McRobb.

Before halftime, again on a fourth-down play, Canton took a 21-14 edge when Williams connected with tight end Matt McKoy on a 10-yard pass over the middle.

“I didn't want to give the ball back,” Baechler said about the key fourth-down plays. “I wasn't convinced our defense could stop them, so we had to control the ball and keep the ball. The pressure was on.”

Setting up that score was a 32-yard punt return by Westen Price.

After Franklin's 50th birthday/homecoming festivities during a lengthy intermission, the Patriots kept the crowd buzzing with another McRobb TD. He burst through the line for a 41-yard run, making it 21-21.

Canton then drove the ball 78 yards in 11 plays for another touchdown with 4:05 left in the third, this time on a 17-yard run by Scott.

The Pats embarked on a long, successful drive of their own for another equalizer.

On the 16th play of an 80-yard drive, hard-running Mazaris bounced off Canton tacklers for a 5-yard score with 8:43 to play.

Then came Canton on what would prove to be the game-winning march with Scott's short plunge. As it turned out, kicker Connor Shennan's seventh extra point of the night turned out to be just enough for the Chiefs to prevail.

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