

'Stangs sting Chiefs for conference title

Northville offense romps in 42-30 triumph

Oct. 19, 2013 |  Written by [Tim Smith](#) Staff Writer



Canton defender Jalen Cochran (No. 81) closes in on Northville quarterback Joe Hewlett (No. 7) during Friday's game. / ANN ESPINOZA



Northville receiver Sean Conway (No. 88) lunges for extra yardage while Canton defender Daniel Kilgore (No. 27) tries to stop him. / ANN ESPINOZA

Things got off to a shaky start Friday night for the Canton Chiefs, with a costly penalty and fumble virtually handing Northville an early touchdown.

The Mustangs took it from there to win 42-30 in the KLAA Kensington Conference football title showdown at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park.

Led by Northville senior quarterback Joe Hewlett and his favorite wide receiver — senior Sean Conway, back after missing a few games due to injury — the Mustangs prevailed to win the conference championship for the first time.

Hewlett completed 18 of 23 passes for 252 yards, with Conway grabbing nine for 122 yards and two TDs.

Northville led 21-15 at halftime and broke the game wide open with 21 points in the third.

The defeat spoiled an outstanding game by Canton senior running back Westen Price, who scored on touchdown runs of 22, 65 and 85 yards and tallied 262 yards overall on 20 carries.

Won't be forgotten

“I don’t know whether we played well or not,” Northville head coach Matt Ladach said. “But I know we played hard and tonight wasn’t a fluke. We put it on them pretty good, we feel really, really proud of that.

“But the reality is it’s very likely we’re going to be in a district with these guys, and Canton looks at this and they’re not going to forget this night. We could very easily see them in two weeks or three weeks.”

Both teams will enter the final week of the regular season sporting 7-1 records.

According to Chiefs’ senior James Hall, who was one of the players trying in vain to stop Northville’s constant offensive pressure, watching an opponent seize the conference title on their turf was a bitter pill to swallow.

“It’s tough, but it’s a wake-up call,” Hall said. “We’ll just go back to the drawing board and work really hard next week.”

Hall admitted that Northville is “a big team, but that’s no excuse for us. We might be small, but hey, we can’t get outphysicalled and that’s what happened.”

Great protection

Gripping the game ball along a fence as Northville fans pounded his shoulder pads for a game well done, Hewlett said the impressive win was due to hard work, preparation — and having the 6-3, 197-pound Conway back in the lineup.

“It’s just unbelievable,” said Hewlett, who added to Canton’s misery by running 14 times for 142 yards and three scores. “The protection all night was great, they opened up great running lanes for us and having Conway back, first week back in a few weeks, we really missed him.

“He’s one of our top receivers and it’s awesome to have him back. He’s such a reliable target to throw to.”

Canton did gain 400 rushing yards in 51 attempts, led by Price, junior Chuck Turfe (12-64, one TD) and senior Chase Winningham (7-53).

Northville, however totaled 470 yards of offense.

The contest perhaps turned right from the get-go as Canton wasted an opportunity to grab some early momentum.

Hall returned five kickoffs for 74 yards overall, but a penalty nullified his big gainer on the opening boot.

Adding insult to injury, the Chiefs fumbled the ball over to Northville’s David Moorman inside the Canton 30.

Northville converted a few plays later when senior Patrick Hannah scored from the 1-yard line with 9:24 remaining in the first.

Quick response

The Chiefs bounced back to even the game at 7-7 with under two minutes to play in the frame when Price drove through the middle of the line for a 17-yard TD.

Winningham helped spark the 87-yard touchdown drive with carries of 17 and 14 yards.

The Mustangs regained the lead early in the second quarter on an 11-yard run by Hewlett and tacked on another TD for good measure with 58 seconds to play in the half for a 21-7 edge.

Hewlett moved his team quickly — the scoring drive took only 30 seconds — with passes of 23, 32 and five yards to Conway.

Undaunted, the Chiefs showed some fight when Price took a handoff from junior quarterback Greg Williams and romped 64 yards for a touchdown.

Williams then completed a 2-point conversion pass to Turfe to make it a 21-15 game at halftime.

Any thoughts the Chiefs might have had of making a game out of it were dashed when the Mustangs needed just 1:30 to open the third quarter with a touchdown.

Hewlett broke away from tacklers and took it down the right side of the field for a 58-yard score and a 28-15 lead.

After Canton had a three-and-out series, the Mustangs opened up a 35-15 spread with 8:59 remaining in the third.

Following a 42-yard pass from Hewlett to senior Evan Wieland, the quarterback carried it into the end zone from seven yards out.

Hewlett hurdled a Canton defender at the goal line to put an exclamation point on the play.

Late redemption

Before the third ended, Hewlett completed a 10-yard pass to Conway in the back of the end zone and it was 42-15.

Canton scored twice late in the fourth to make the outcome more respectable.

With 2:56 remaining, Turfe tallied a 3-yard TD run to finish an 80-yard-drive that took 14 plays.

Then, with just 30 seconds on the clock and Canton stuck at Northville's 15-yard line, Price took the first-down handoff and went the distance.

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