

# 'GOLD'-LINE STAND LIFTS CANTON OVER CHURCHILL, 40-35

BY ED WRIGHT 1:21 a.m. EDT October 4, 2014



(Photo: Bill Bresler | staff photographer)

Normally, football games that saturate the scoreboard with 75 total points and produce mountains of yardage don't generate rave reviews for either team's defense.

But Friday night's Livonia Churchill-Canton clash was anything but normal.

The Chiefs' defense put on a goal-line clinic in the final minute to stymie the Chargers on four straight plays at the Canton 5 to secure a remarkable 40-35 victory in a game played on the P-CEP's junior varsity grass field.

Canton junior safety Jared Stephens sealed the deal – and the Chargers' fate — by intercepting a fourth-and-goal Brian Alsobrooks pass in the right corner of the end zone with 54 seconds on the clock.

The victory left both teams with 5-1 overall records. Canton improved to 4-0 in the KLAA South Division, while Churchill slipped to 3-1.

"I said a few prayers before the first-down play down there and then I said, 'I'm ready to do this. We're ready to do this,'" Canton defensive tackle Richard Lenczewski said, recounting the goal-line stand. "I am so proud of this team. We had to stop them and we did it."

With the ball situated on the right hash mark, the right-handed Also

brooks rolled to his left on the first three plays from the 5. Tight coverage by the Canton secondary forced him to throw the first two passes into the grass.

On third down, 6-foot-4 Canton linebacker Jalen Cochran came up big when he tipped away a pass in the end zone to set up the all-or-nothing fourth-down play.

Alsobrooks rolled right and lofted a tight spiral into the corner, but Stephens was on the spot to make the pick.

"That was an unbelievable defensive stand," Canton head coach Tim Baechler said. "They have it first-and-goal at the 5, they have a great quarterback, great receivers, we had match-up problems all over the field, but our kids just stepped up.

"I'll tell you what — everybody who was here tonight got their money's worth. This is a game these kids will never forget."

Trailing 35-28, Canton pulled to within one point when Charles Turfe rammed in from the 3 with 6:16 left. Much like they did last week in their 22-21 victory over Westland John Glenn, the Chiefs went for two and the lead, but Turfe was stuffed at the one by a mass of Chargers, led by Aaron Kerr.

After a long Churchill kickoff return was called back by a holding penalty, the Chargers started at their own 21. The first two plays produced 9 yards, but Paul Romain was stopped for no gain on third- and fourth-and-inches attempts to give Canton the ball on the Churchill 31.

Lenczewski said the fourth-and-one play is the kind defensive linemen like him live for.

"We were in a formation we call 'Hawk'," the senior said. "Some people go down toward their knees and the others blitz in the 'A' gap. I blitzed through the 'A' gap, got (Romain's) legs and held on. When I got up, I saw they were behind the line of scrimmage and we went crazy."

Four plays later, Canton senior quarterback Greg Williams connected with senior tight end Nolan Gilo on a third-and-eight TD pass to give the Chiefs a 40-35 advantage with 2:42 to play.

It didn't take long for Churchill to push the ball into Canton's red zone. Alsobrooks hooked up with Tim Dulin on a 42-yard bomb to give the Chargers the ball on the Chiefs' 20. Another Alsobrooks completion to Dulin put the ball on the Canton 5, but that's as far as the Chargers would get thanks to the Chiefs' inspired performance.

"That's a tough offense to play against; you just have to do the little things like make your reads and things like that," Canton junior safety Micah Rinke said. "We weren't perfect tonight; we made mistakes, I know I did. But we came up big when we had to."

Despite playing a less-than-perfect opening 24 minutes, Churchill carried a semi-comfortable 28-14 lead into the half.

"When you turn the ball over three times like we did in the first half, you don't expect to lead by 14," Churchill head coach Bill DeFillippo said. "So I figured if we cleaned things up in the second half, we'd be OK. We just seemed to lose momentum in the fourth quarter and defensively we couldn't get a stop, which is why I went for it there on fourth-and-inches."

Williams had a solid night engineering Canton's offense as he completed 6-of-11 passes for 74 yards in addition to running seven times for 48 yards.

Turfe picked up 94 yards and three TDs on 10 carries. Marcus Sanders (15 carries for 86 yards) and Brian Newton (10 carries, 51 yards) both scored a touchdown for the winners.

Alsobrooks completed 17-of-32 passes for 275 yards. The senior had at least five passes dropped by his usually sure-handed receivers.

Romain ran for 115 yards and two scores on 24 carries.

Steven Szymanski had a night to remember of Churchill. The senior threw a 41-yard TD pass to Dulin on a double-reverse pass play. He also caught seven Alsobrooks aerals for 123 yards.

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