

South Lyon 17, Canton 7: Big stops help Lions claim KLAA title

Wright Wilson 11:42 p.m. EDT October 17, 2014



(Photo: Julian H. Gonzalez, Detroit Free Press)

Canton took the opening kickoff at South Lyon and marched downfield as if it owned the place, running 13 plays and traveling 68½ yards.

In order to get that last half-yard, Chiefs quarterback Greg Williams tried to sneak across the goal line on fourth down.

As if.

The Lions' defensive front came up, blocked Williams' path and wrestled him to the ground. And that was typical of the big defensive plays put up Friday night by the Lions, who earned their first Kensington Lakes Athletic Association championship, 17-7, by protecting their home turf.

"That set the tone right there that we can play with them," coach Mark Thomas said. "We knew we could, but the defense did a great job, stuffed them right there, and then we got out of it. But the defense set the tone."

Said Canton coach Tim Baechler: “That absolutely was a momentum-changer, and obviously points are at a premium here. That was not a good call. We’re not used to scoring seven points, I’ll tell you that much.”

Lions defenders seemed to be making signature plays all night — especially in the fourth quarter when they broke a 7-7 tie. Jeffrey Gill recovered a Chiefs’ fumble, while Eric Hantz and Tim McPhee intercepted passes. Even kicker Vince Candela made a touchdown-saving tackle.

Those were typical of the momentum-builders that allowed South Lyon to pull out the win. On Canton’s first possession of the final quarter, the Lions’ defense forced a four-and-out, and a shanked punt that netted only 4 yards gave South Lyon (7-1, 4-1 KLAA Central) the ball at the Chiefs’ 36.

On the next snap, Anton Skupin faked a handoff to Nico Woods, who went into the line and took most of the Canton defense with him. But Skupin rolled right, hit a seam and rambled into the end zone for the go-ahead score.

South Lyon struck first in the second quarter when Skupin hit Daniel Millar on an out pattern into the left side of the end zone from 20 yards away. Canton (6-2, 5-0 KLAA South) answered four minutes later on a 5-yard run by Brian Newton.

Candela added a 37-yard field goal with two minutes to play for South Lyon, which earned its first league title since 2006 when the Lions were wrapping up their days in the Kensington Valley Conference.

“We haven’t got one of these in a couple years,” Skupin said. “We’re really bringing back South Lyon football, that rock ‘em, sock ‘em, Pontiac Trail-and-11 Mile hard-hitting football, and it just feels great to get a team win out here.”

<http://www.freep.com/story/sports/high-school/2014/10/17/south-lyon-canton/17480143/>