

Division 1 Canton 56, Livonia Churchill 21: Chiefs capture district title behind 646 rushing yards







Churchill's Aaron Kerr carries the ball in the Chargers' Division 1 district final matchup against Canton on Friday, Nov. 7 at Canton High School.

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Photos from the Division 1 district final between Canton and Livonia Churchill on Friday, Nov. 7 at Canton High School. By Patrick Nothaft | pnothaft@mlive.com

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11/07 - 7:00 PM Football	Final
Livonia Churchill	21
Canton	56

CANTON, MI – The game clock was the only thing that could stop the **Canton** football team's offense, as the Chiefs rolled to a 56-21 home win over **Livonia Churchill** in Friday's Division 1 district title matchup.

Canton scored touchdowns on each of its first eight possessions, and the Chiefs offense stalled only when quarterback **Greg Williams** took a knee with 30 seconds left.

"That was the big thing coming in – getting off to a great start and grabbing the momentum right from the get go," Canton coach Tim Baechler said. "We knew we had to jump on them quick and keep the pressure on."

After capturing its first district title since 2009, Canton (9-2) advances to play at Saline (10-1), a **28-22 winner over Monroe**, in the regional finals on Friday, Nov. 14.

Canton tallied 646 rushing yards against Churchill, led by sophomore **Marcus Sanders**, who carried 24 times for 346 yards and three touchdowns. Senior **Brian Newton** added 61 yards and three scores on 15 carries.

The Chiefs held a 35-21 halftime lead after Williams rolled out of the pocket and found tight end Nolan Gilo in the back of the endzone for a 4-yard touchdown with three seconds left in the half.

With no timeouts and just seven seconds remaining before the break, Baechler chose to put the ball in the hands of his senior quarterback before settling for a short field goal attempt.

"Scoring right before half to go up 14 was absolutely huge as far as momentum," Baechler said. "We thought we had time for one more play before we tried a field goal, so we told Greg not to hang on to the ball too long and throw it away if it's not there."

After keeping up with Canton's offense for much of the first half thanks to a pair of rushing touchdowns from Paul Romain, Churchill was unable to find the endzone after the break and couldn't overcome the Chiefs' powerful ground game.

"Canton didn't make a mistake tonight," Churchill coach Bill DeFillippo said. "Their offense was awesome, and we just couldn't get any stops.

"We were in it in the first half, but we dropped a couple of potential touchdowns that could've brought us within a score."

With another mistake-free game next week at Saline, the Chiefs could clinch their first regional title since 2006.

"We're still peaking, and we still don't think we've played our best football," said Williams, who carried five times for 104 yards in addition to his late-second quarter touchdown pass. "That's an amazing feeling going into Round 3 of the playoffs.

"The last two years we haven't been able to get a win in the playoffs.

"This year we have two wins and a district championship, but we still want more."

Churchill finishes the season at 8-3, and the Chargers graduate 28 seniors from a team that went 2-7 just one year ago.

"I'm proud of our kids," DeFillippo said. "We made a lot of changes in the offseason with how we structure our program, and the kids bought in and worked their tails off.

"We knew we had a talented bunch, we just had to take care of some of the non-talent issues.

"They did that, and it's paid off big time. I know tonight is disappointing, but we've had a great season, and I'm extremely proud of our guys."