

FOOTBALL

Saline 42, Canton 35: Hornets survive shootout to advance to Division 1 semifinals







Saline celebrates after winning the Division 1 Regional Championship game at Saline High School on Friday, Nov. 14, 2014. Saline defeated Canton, 42-35. Patrick Record | The Ann Arbor News
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Division 1 Regionals: Canton at Saline

By Michael Niziolek | miziole@MLive.com on November 14, 2014 9:15 p.m.

11/14 - 7:00 PM Football	Final
Canton	35
Saline	42

SALINE HEADED TO D1 SEMIFINALS

- **Saline 42, Canton 35: Hornets survive shootout to advance to Division 1 semifinals**
- **Saline's defense overcomes struggles to clinch semifinal spot with late fourth down stop**
- **Saline coach Joe Palka on Josh Jackson: "He delivered the championship trophy for us"**
- **Photo Gallery: Canton at Saline in Division 1 regionals**

SALINE -- **Saline's** offense didn't have a problem matching **Canton** score for score in a back-and-forth Division 1 regional that came right down to the wire Friday night.

The Hornets fell behind 28-14 in the first half, but quarterback **Josh Jackson's** career night helped them storm back, and win the program's first regional title.

Jackson had six total touchdowns on a night where he was 25 for 31 for 313 yard with four passing touchdowns. He added 88 rushing yards and two touchdowns on 14 carries.

Saline's defense allowed 375-plus rushing yards, but came through with a pair of clutch stops in the fourth quarter.

HIGHLIGHTS

* Saline's defense struggled to contain Canton's ground game, but it made a huge stop late in the third quarter.

On a fourth and two at the Hornets' 5-yard line, quarterback Greg Williams tried to get to the outside, but **Chris Terech** wrapped him up right at the first down line. Officials had to measure to see if Williams made it the 2-yards, but he ended up coming up a couple inches short.

* Saline quarterback Josh Jackson kept on dealing out of halftime with a 33-yard touchdown pass to Cameron Cole to start the third quarter.

His fourth touchdown pass gave the Hornets their first lead of the night at 35-28. Cole had three steps on a pair of Canton defensive backs in the end zone.

* Jackson picked Canton's secondary apart in the first half to bring the Hornets back from a 28-14 deficit.

He scored four touchdowns, three passing and one rushing, as he calmly and methodically shredded the defense.

On Saline's opening possession, Jackson went 6 of 8 for 63 yards with a touchdown on an 11-play, 71-yard drive. He ran the ball for 16-yards down to the 6-yard line then hit Chris Mercer for a 6-yard touchdown.

Jackson converted a long third and 20 on the drive with a 29-yard strike at the sidelines to **Jeb Palka**.

It was one of three 70-plus yard scoring drives he orchestrated in the half.

He connected with **Kevin Gross** for a 23-yard touchdown to make it 28-14. Gross ran a wheel route out of the backfield, and had the whole left side of the field open as he caught a soft toss from Jackson for the score with 9:57 left in the second quarter.

It's a play Saline has used with a lot of success this season.

* Saline scored a pair of touchdowns in the final three minutes of the half thanks to a gutsy onside kick call from coach Joe Palka.

Mercer caught his second touchdown of the half to finish off a nine-play, 79-yard drive. He made a diving grab in the end zone to make it 28-21 with 2:05 to go in the half.

After the score, Palka caught Canton sleeping with an onside kick call. **William Breen** bounced the ball straight up the middle of the field 10-yards, and **Stephen Slattery** recovered the kick at the Chiefs' 46-yard line.

Jackson would send the game into halftime tied 28-28 with a 4-yard touchdown run.

LOWLIGHTS

* Canton's offense opened the fourth quarter with a rare pass call to tie the game 35-35, but it wasn't without a little controversy.

Quarterback **Greg Williams** connected with **Nolan Gilo** in the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown.

Gilo had the ball for a brief second before dropping it, but officials quickly signaled a touchdown. There was a brief conference, but the call wasn't reversed. It looked like he maybe made possession of the ball half a step before dropping it.

* Canton went right down the field to open the game behind its deceptive ground game.

The Chiefs rotated carries between their three running backs to go 65 yards on six plays. **Brian Newton** scored on a 33-yard up the middle with 9:54 left in the first quarter.

Newton extended the drive with a 19-yard first down run on a third and five.

* Saline's defense easily had its worst quarter of the season to open regionals. It gave up three touchdowns, and 177 rushing yards in the opening 12 minutes to fall behind 21-7.

Canton running back **Marcus Sanders** had 93 yards with a touchdown on six carries while teammate Newton added 62 yards with a touchdown on six carries. All three of the Chiefs' starting backs scored in the quarter.

The backfield averaged 11 yards per carry to open up a two-touchdown advantage

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