

Chiefs overpower Chargers, 51-7

Evan Paputa, Correspondent 12:15 a.m. EDT October 1, 2016



The rout was on, the rain was merciless, and the story was all but written as the Canton Chiefs led Livonia Churchill 44-7 with just three minutes left in the fourth quarter of Friday night's KLAA South Division game.

That's when 5-foot-8, 150-pound Canton senior running back Cam Dixon got his first carry of his career.

Dixon took a hand-off from quarterback Joel Foster and powered in from five yards out to put an exclamation point on the 51-7 triumph over the host Chargers on their Homecoming Night.

Following the touchdown, the entire Canton sideline erupted in cheers for Dixon.

"He's our scout team running back. He has a great attitude and we all love that kid. We have so much respect for him," Canton head coach Tim Baechler said. "They (Chiefs) get it."

Dixon's touchdown put a cap on a night of rainy football that saw the Chiefs (4-2) jump out to an early 31-7 halftime lead thanks in large part to the running of Markus Sanders.

Sanders scored on a 65-yard touchdown run in the first quarter to put the Chiefs up 14-0 and a 29-yarder late in the second quarter.

Julian Thornton (11 carries for 40 yards) and Reid McDonnell (18 carries for 118 yards) also scored rushing touchdowns for Canton in the first half.

Ben Tubaro added a field goal with three seconds left in the second half to give Canton a 31-7 halftime advantage.

"We ran hard, took care of the ball. Very physical, our offensive line was physical. Our backs, running, faking, and blocking were physical. Very excited, we're starting to play a little bit," Baechler said.

Sanders rattled off chunks of yardage all game long, accumulating 224 rushing yards and two touchdowns.

Churchill's (4-2) lone score of the game came on a 24-yard Evan Cummins touchdown run with 3:21 left in the first half.

Canton's offense tends to get the majority of attention, but the defense played as good as Baechler could have imagined, allowing just 176 total yards and only six first downs.

"That's a great team and we gave up seven points, are you kidding me? It's not my fault it rained... That's just the way that it is," Baechler said.

Defensively, Canton was led in tackles by Lou Baechler with eight. Senior defensive lineman, Jake Warner, anchored the d-line that was able to pressure Cummins all night.

"We just decided to stay tough. We came out, hit them hard and they shut down from there. We had momentum all game," Warner said.

With rain falling all night, the Canton running game thrived while the Churchill spread struggled to pick up momentum.

"I thought, as far as us, I thought we had an advantage. We're mostly a run team and we shut down their pass. They had a lot of good plays that they beat us and then we got lucky on a few of them," Warner said.

For Churchill, falling behind to Canton's staple power running game put them behind the eight-ball in the first quarter.

After Thornton's touchdown, Churchill drove 62 yards to the Canton 18-yard line, but the drive stalled on a 4th-and-7 play. Cummins (5-of-14 for 82 yards) stood in the pocket, but his pass sailed through the hands of Michael Hill in the end zone.

"We started out playing pretty well in the first quarter, but lost a little momentum when we dropped the fourth down in the end zone," Churchill head coach Bill DeFillippo said.

Injuries proved to be part of the struggle for the Chargers on the night. Spearheaded by Jamal Allen playing limited snaps on offense and none on offense, the Chargers were without multiple "key players," according to DeFillippo.

“We’re just so banged up right now. It was rough for us heading into the game, we had about eight or nine guys that are not even dressed that are key players for us. It’s a really tough road to beat Canton when you’re banged up big time,” DeFillippo said.

Churchill plays travels to play cross-town rival Franklin (4-2) next Friday at 7:00 p.m.

“We’ll regroup; one game’s not gonna make the year. We got to get ready to play a pretty good Franklin team next week,” DeFillippo said.

Canton travels to play at Wayne Memorial (1-5) next Friday at 7:00 p.m.