

Line em up: Work ethic sparks Chiefs

Evan Paputa, Correspondent 1:38 p.m. EDT November 1, 2016



Northville found out last Friday night that Canton's offensive line is a force, paving the way for explosive running backs Reid McDonnell, Julian Thornton and Markus Sanders to run through holes and beyond.

Led by McDonnell, who cracked the 200-yard plateau and scored four touchdowns, the Chiefs routed the Mustangs 55-19 in the Division 1 pre-district matchup. Thornton and Sanders also had big games. And now, Canton will try to keep things going this Friday at Saline in the district championship.

Although the running backs get the publicity, props deserve to go to Canton offensive linemen Lou Baechler, David Gunnis, Jake Warner, Max Mulvaney, Michael Maes, Patrick Lenczewski and Chase Meredith were constantly winning the battle at the line of scrimmage all night against Northville.

"I'm very proud of them (offensive line), it's tough," Canton head coach Tim Baechler said. "They line up and they work like dogs in practice. It's no fun until game night.

"But if you're an offensive lineman, you love coming off the ball and smacking and rolling people. That makes practice that much more fun." The running backs are just as complimentary.

"Our O-line set the tone for us tonight by opening up all of those big holes," Thornton said.



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Chiefs ground game pummels Mustangs

Running the way McDonnell, Thornton and Sanders did against Northville can be attributed to dedication in the weight room. Baechler noted that this is his "strongest" team in his 19 years at Canton.

"All of our guys are strong," Baechler said. "This isn't the biggest team we've ever had but it is the strongest team we've ever had, as far as in the weight room. Even our small guys, look how skinny he (Thornton) is, he's stronger than a mother in the weight room."

Baechler said the running backs "block extremely hard and take pride in that. And Markus (Sanders) is just a tough kid to tackle. All three are solid guys and have been playing really well these last eight weeks."

Canton moves onto the district championship next Friday night where they will see a familiar foe, Saline (10-0). The Chiefs and Hornets have met in

the regional final the past two years with each team winning once; Canton won 27-7 last season.

Beating Northville was just the next step in Canton's journey.

"We've got bigger aspirations. This is just another team in our way," Baechler said.