

Tough Brighton football defense braces for deceptive Canton run game



BRIGHTON — They studied film, devised a game plan and tried simulating the opposition with their scout team during practice.

But then kickoff came and the bullets started flying.

When the lights came on, things got real for Brighton.

This much became crystal clear: Knowing what Canton would do and stopping it were two entirely different things.

Brighton became yet another victim of Canton's powerful rushing game last season, losing 35-10 while allowing 296 yards on the ground.

Canton has become one of the state's most successful programs of the past two decades, not because it produces a slew of major-college talent, but because the Chiefs do one thing better than anyone else. They run a Wing-T attack which relies on deception. All three running backs carry out

fakes, making it difficult to figure out who has the ball. Sometimes the defense doesn't figure it out until the ball carrier is in the clear on his way to the end zone.

"On film, you can see it all happening," Brighton senior linebacker Jack Krause said. "But in the game, it's so fast and the fakes and stuff going on, you can't really tell. Yeah, it's a little different."

The Bulldogs hope to have a better grasp on how to defend the Chiefs when Canton visits Brighton at 7 p.m. Friday in a battle between the co-leaders in the KLAA West. Both teams are 3-0 in the division, 3-1 overall. Canton has scored at least 400 points in 13 of the last 15 years while making the playoffs 17 of the past 18 seasons. By contrast, the Livingston County scoring record is 393 points by the 1999 Brighton team, which played 12 games.

This year's team averages 37.3 points. While anybody can get the ball in the Chiefs' attack, most of the damage has been done by three-year starter Steven Walker. Walker has 849 yards and nine touchdowns, including back-to-back games against Northville and Plymouth in which he rolled up 614 yards and seven touchdowns.

Canton did nothing last year that surprised Brighton. The Chiefs probably won't have any new wrinkles when they face the Bulldogs Friday. First-year coach Andy Lafata, a former Canton player and assistant coach, has said the playbook has been simplified to only 12 plays.

"It was everything we were expecting and a little bit more," Brighton senior defensive tackle Colby Ford said. "We just have to come out and do our jobs and do it hard."

On the flip side, Canton faces a tough challenge going up against Brighton's defense.



Canton's Steven Walker has run for 849 yards and nine touchdowns in four games.

The Bulldogs have allowed only one offensive touchdown in their last three games. The defense has played seven straight quarters without allowing a touchdown.

“Preparation in practice has been really at a high level,” Brighton coach Brian Lemons said. “The last couple weeks, we’ve been doing a good job of getting our schemes, getting our tendencies and making sure we’re taking it out on the practice field with us.”

Part of what makes Canton so difficult to defend is the uniqueness of its offense.

“Right now, it’s a one-time-a-year thing you have to get prepared for,” Lemons said. “It’s not something the kids see every week. It’s something

that's very hard to duplicate during the week in practice with your scout teams, so you just have to prepare them as much mentally as physically.”