

Another tough loss for Farmington

BY NEAL ZIPSER
STAFF WRITER

In Lauri Niskanen's football coaching career, he never witnessed as unusual an occurrence as he did early in the fourth quarter Friday.

Trailing 10-7 at Westland John Glenn, the visiting Falcons were set to punt when the snap muffed the ball back to the defense. Glenn took possession of the ball at the Farmington 34-yard line and scored five plays later to take a 17-7 lead, which also proved to be the final score.

"I've never seen that; I'm not sure what happened," Niskanen said. "I'm not sure if the upback was lined up a few inches off or what."

It's been that type of the year for the Falcons, as the loss officially eliminated them from Lakes Division and state playoff contention.

Farmington is 2-4 overall and 1-3 in the division.

The Rockets, on the other hand, are alive and well at 5-1 in the division and 5-1 overall.

FOOTBALL

Glenn looked impressive on both sides of the ball and like a team that had left behind a 21-20 loss to Wallied Lake Central a week earlier.

The Rockets were led by 5-foot-5 senior tailback Jay Jackson, who carried 28 times for 172 yards and scored both touchdowns.

Sophomore Justin Berent quarterbacked a flawless Glenn offense, which completed 304 yards without committing a turnover. He completed eight of 16 passes for 77 yards.

The Glenn defense did its job, holding the Falcons to 153 yards (48 in the second half). Farmington's Jake Sikosky, who entered the game averaging 172 rushing yards, was held to 69 on 21 attempts.

After a scoreless first quarter, Glenn had a six-play, 49-yard scoring drive that Jackson capped with a 18-yard run up the middle. Junior Steve Pelling kicked the extra point.

Farmington countered with an

impressive, 14-play drive that ate up 6:52. Blasky put the Falcons on the board with a 3-yard TD run (his 14th of the year), and senior Jon Hoed added the extra point.

The score remained 7-7 as Pelling missed a 29-yard field goal attempt just prior to halftime.

Glenn took the second-half kickoff and a 10-7 lead on a 21-yard Pelling field goal.

The turning point was the bad snap on the punt that set up Glenn's final score — an 11-yard touchdown run by Jackson.

The Falcons weren't finished as Nick Letra returned the ensuing kickoff to the Glenn 45.

Farmington drove to the Glenn 13, but senior safety Ian Wade ended hopes of a Farmington comeback when he intercepted Tim Streit's pass at the 3.

Though dejected, Niskanen was pleased with his team's effort. "Our kids played their hearts out, and this is the second year in a row we've played them tough," Niskanen said. "Our goal now is to win our final three games and finish 6-4."

Hawks have close call, 22-21

One of the biggest football upsets of the season was averted Saturday when state-ranked Farmington Hills Harrison rallied in the final two minutes to beat Livonia Franklin, 22-21.

Senior tailback Jason Granger, held to his lowest rushing total of the season (99 yards in 27 carries), scored on a 19-yard run with 1:45 remaining to give Harrison the win.

The Hawks (4-0, 5-1) clinched at least a tie for its 13th Western Division title in 14 years.

Franklin (0-4, 1-5) jumped out to a 9-0 first-quarter lead on a 23-yard field goal by Brandon Bell and a 1-yard quarterback sneak by Dave McMullen (set up by Alan Shukarian's fumble recovery).

On the first play of the second period, Granger had a 2-yard TD run, but Franklin moved ahead 15-7 later in the quarter on McMullen's 28-yard scoring pass to Paul Terrell.

A key play occurred in the third quarter when Ed Hight blocked a punt, setting up Granger's 6-yard touchdown run. The Hawks missed the two-point conversion, but went on top 16-15 later in the period on Kyle Vessell's 34-yard field goal.

In the fourth quarter, Franklin sophomore tailback Anthony Grech (119 yards in 27 carries) capped an 80-yard, 13-play drive with a 3-yard TD run, but Grech was stopped a yard shy on the two-point play.

Harrison had 276 total yards. Kevin Hambenek was 14 of 23 for 163 yards, and Ricky Bryant had three catches for 42 yards.

Franklin had a total of 216 yards. McMullen was six of 11 for 76.

Harrison's Jeff Ashoff intercepted a pass to end Franklin's last chance. Steve Shalek led Harrison with seven solo tackles and five assists.

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Stevenson defense stops North, 13-0

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Livonia Stevenson used timely defense and opportunistic offense to defeat host North Farmington 13-0 Saturday.

The victory keeps the Spartans atop the Lakes Division with a 4-0 record and sets up a showdown with Westland John Glenn for the title.

Stevenson (5-1) took advantage of a North miscue to score its first touchdown in the second quarter. The Raiders, 0-4 and 1-5, attempted a fake-punt run at their own 35, but Stevenson stopped it cold.

"We checked out of it, and the (center) didn't hear it; he snapped the ball to the wrong person," North coach Jim O'Leary said. "What are you going to do? Kids make mistakes. We still came back in the second half and had a chance to win."

Stevenson needed six plays to reach the end zone, with Gabe Clark going 15 yards for the

touchdown and Jason Borregard kicking the PAT.

The Spartans had all but five of their 179 total yards on the ground as Clark gained 113 on 22 carries and Todd Ayres added 62 on nine. Dean Bacheller completed one of seven passes.

Stevenson got the ball again at the North 45 and led 13-0 at half-time when Ayres ran 22 yards to set up his 1-yard TD run with 1:24 remaining.

The Raiders controlled the ball for most of the third period and had a TD pass called back when Rich Beal stepped out of bounds and came back into play.

North had a first down at the Stevenson 1 on its second possession, but the Spartans stopped three runs for negative yardage and an end-zone pass was incomplete.

The Raiders had another chance when Beal scooped a fumble at the Stevenson 10, but the Spartans stuffed North again on four straight plays.

"We had three good scoring chances and didn't get anything out of it," O'Leary said. "The kids have played hard the last three weeks and have nothing to show for it, but I'm so proud of them. They might not have a lot of talent, but they have a lot of heart."

Stevenson held the ball for 14 consecutive plays and seemed headed for another score, but the drive ended with the team's third fumble at the North 20.

"You're not going to mistake us for a fine German timepiece," Stevenson coach Tim Gabel said. "What's frustrating is we obviously played hard, because the defense had to hold them out of the end zone a couple times."

"When you're making mistakes, it looks like the coaching staff isn't doing anything. It looks like we haven't practiced."

North had 220 total yards to outgain Stevenson. Brad Rivers was 11 of 27 passing for 124 yards, with a third of that coming on a late drive, and John Leasway rushed 14 times for 72 yards.

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