

Hawks rally to take T'birds in playoff opener

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Dearborn Edsel Ford made its point in the first half Saturday. Then, Farmington Harrison made some points of its own.

After getting an early shock from the visiting Thunderbirds, the heavily-favored Hawks rallied to score 53 unanswered points and whip Edsel Ford in a Class A regional football game, 56-21.

It seemed a great upset was in the making when the unranked T'birds struck for a 14-0 lead in the first quarter and extended it to 21-3 in the second.

Those were the first points Harrison (10-0) has allowed in the first quarter and marked the first time it has been on the trailing end of the score this year.

"They came up and made big plays; they got us off our guard," said Harrison senior Zack Cornwell, who accounted for 24 points. "Usually, we're the ones making plays and taking control."

"Once we knew (Edsel Ford) came to play, we sucked it up and played like we have all year. We knew there was a lot of game left. This team never quits."

In equaling their highest point total of the season, the Hawks had plenty of offensive stars. Junior Mike Hoad scored 14

points, junior Ricky Bryant 12 and senior Chris Ghanann six.

Senior quarterback Jared Hopkins completed 12 of 21 passes for 288 yards and three touchdowns.

Cornwell rushed for 114 yards, including two first-half touchdowns, on just six carries, kicked field goals of 38 and 34 yards and booted six extra points.

Hoad caught touchdown passes of 49 and 34 yards in the second half, and he also caught a two-point conversion pass from junior David Peaci to get Harrison within 21-18 late in the first half. Hoad also led the defense with nine tackles.

Bryant was on the receiving end of a 37-yard TD toss in the first half, and he returned a punt 50 yards for Harrison's final score. Bryant caught five passes for 128 yards.

"They stunned us at first, but we just kept fighting and fighting," Cornwell said. "This is a blue-collar team. It's not one player who did it; it was all the plays put together."

The Hawks lost fumbles at the Edsel 4-yard line and their own 35, and the T'birds converted both into first-quarter touchdowns.

Edsel Ford quarterback Justin Machak had a field day in the first half, connecting on nine of 15 passes for 245 yards and

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three touchdowns.

Harrison had the T'birds pinned at their 1 after the first fumble, but Machak's 60-yard pass to Ray LaVasseur got Edsel out of the hole, and a 32-yarder to Edward Zacker set up Machak's 4-yard TD toss to Kevin Zureki.

The T'birds (7-3) needed just three plays to score again following the second fumble. Machak found Randy Foster in the end zone for a 9-yard TD pass and a 14-0 lead with 2:12 remaining in the first period.

It didn't get much better for the Hawks when they had to settle for Cornwell's first field goal.

Then, it got worse when Machak connected with Zureki for a 99-yard TD pass and a 21-3 margin less than two minutes into the second quarter.

"We didn't come here to wake them up," Edsel Ford coach Jack Bridges said. "That's how we play."

"Obviously, we had to do something. We're not going to sit there and pound them. We had to pass the ball and rely on our speed and, for a while, we made it interesting."

Harrison started its comeback on its next possession when Cornwell ran 45 yards for a score

and kicked the PAT.

"When we scored to make it 21-10, that revived us a bit, and we finally got a couple stops," Herrington said.

"I was confident we could score up to 21 points, but I wasn't sure our secondary could stop them. We hadn't stopped anybody yet."

"They had a good game plan but, in the end, the better athletes took over."

Including the field goal, Harrison scored on its last four possessions of the half to take a 25-21 lead at the intermission.

After overthrowing a wide-open Bryant on third down, Hopkins threw the same pass to Bryant on fourth down for a TD, and Peaci's conversion pass to Hoad narrowed the gap to 21-18.

Cornwell, who also caught two passes for 43 yards, made his second TD run, covering 59 yards, and the Hawks had the lead with 1:07 left in the half.

"We were in our two-minute offense, and (assistant coach) Steve (Dollaway) said 'Run the buck trap. They don't have any backers in there; it'll go all the way.' He was right; Cornwell made a heckuva run," Herrington said.

The second half was all Harrison. The Hawks scored the first four times they had the ball and erased any doubt about the outcome. Harrison led 49-21 at the

end of the third quarter.

The Hawks shut down Machak and Ford's offense entirely. The T'birds had 11 first downs in the first half, none in the second. Machak was 0-for-8 with two interceptions in the second half.

Harrison senior Kareem Smart returned one of the picks for a third-quarter TD, but it was nullified by a clipping penalty. Bryant and senior Jason Sharp also had interceptions, and senior Matt Struble recovered a fumble.

"We widened the (defensive) ends, instead of bringing them straight down, to contain the quarterback," Herrington said. "And we started covering better. (Machak) was rolling out and had all day (in the first half), and the secondary couldn't stay on the receivers."

After rolling up 322 total yards in the first half, the T'birds were limited to 12 rushing yards in the second.

Harrison had 339 yards in the first half and 531 for the day. Ghanann had a 6-yard TD run, and senior Joe Takla added 49 yards on five carries. Hoad caught three passes for 89 yards.

"There's no shame in losing to a good team," Bridges said. "They're a patient team with good athletes. That's why they're ranked No. 1."

THE LINEUPS

YPSILANTI OFFENSE

C: jun. Justin Blankenship (6-2, 237)
Q: senior Marcus Hatch (6-2, 200)
Q: senior Chris Daley (6-0, 255)
T: junior Andrew Korypno (6-1, 230)
T: junior Shamron Jones (6-0, 296)
E: junior Kevin Hay (6-2, 195)
E: junior Charles Wilson (5-10, 172)
Q: junior Jesse Gaudin (5-10, 175)
F: senior Shane Bradford (6-1, 203)
S: senior Andre Brooks (6-3, 190)
S: senior Patrick Kendrick (6-0, 205)

YPSILANTI DEFENSE

T: junior Jason Atkins (5-9, 212)
T: junior Charles Hall (5-10, 248)
E: senior Marcus Hatch (6-2, 200)
E: junior Frank Gili (6-3, 211)
L: senior Lionel Bryant (6-1, 210)
L: senior Patrick Kendrick (6-0, 205)
L: soph. Jason Robertson (5-10, 170)
C: senior Jason O'Banner (5-8, 170)
C: soph. Scott Robinson (5-10, 185)
S: senior Andre Brooks (6-3, 190)
S: junior Robert Atkins (5-10, 180)

HARRISON OFFENSE

C: senior Brian Lewis (6-1, 250)
Q: junior Brett Foster (6-1, 205)
Q: senior Matt Struble (6-2, 195)
T: senior Mike Fisher (6-3, 255)
T: senior Chris Gadey (6-0, 240)
E: junior Mike Hoad (6-1, 200)
E: junior Ricky Bryant (6-1, 155)
Q: senior Jared Hopkins (6-3, 200)
S: senior Andre Brooks (6-3, 190)
S: senior Chris Ghanann (5-7, 175)
S: senior Tom Salley (5-8, 175)

HARRISON DEFENSE

N: junior Bryan McShee (6-1, 235)
T: senior Mike Fisher (6-3, 255)
T: senior Brian Lewis (6-1, 250)
E: senior Matt Struble (6-2, 195)
E: junior Brett Foster (6-1, 205)
L: senior Matt Walker (6-2, 200)
L: junior Mike Hoad (6-1, 200)
C: senior Kareem Smart (6-0, 165)
C: senior Zack Cornwell (5-10, 180)
H: senior Jason Sharp (5-11, 150)
H: junior Ricky Bryant (6-1, 155)

THE SCORES

FARMINGTON HARRISON (10-0)

1. defeated Oxford, 28-15.
2. def. Walled Lake Central, 48-28.
3. def. Livonia Franklin, 54-6.
4. def. Walled Lake Western, 21-7.
5. def. Plymouth Canton, 41-0.
6. def. Livonia Churchill, 56-7.
7. def. Northville, 35-0.
8. def. Walled Lake Central, 27-6.
9. def. Detroit Country Day, 29-6.
R. def. Dearborn Edsel Ford, 56-21.
Harrison 392 points, opponents 98.

YPSILANTI (9-3)

1. lost to Lansing Eastern, 30-0.
2. defeated Highland Park, 21-20.
3. defeated Redford Union, 28-0.
4. defeated Romulus, 33-12.
5. defeated Melvindale, 35-14.
6. defeated D.H. Croswold, 37-12.
7. defeated Woodhaven, 28-21 (OT).
8. defeated Redford Thurston, 31-8.
9. defeated Wyandotte, 34-6.
R. defeated Dearborn, 14-12.
Ypsilanti 241 points, opponents 125.

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final score and think Edsel Ford scored a lot of points at garbage time, but that's just the opposite of what really happened.

Edsel Ford's passing attack was incredible. Quarterback Justin Machak, not an imposing figure at 5-foot-10 and 160 pounds, shredded an otherwise superb Harrison secondary so effectively in the first half he could've passed (no pun intended) as a Steve Young clone.

"They looked like the San Francisco 49ers, throwing and running all over the place," Herrington said. "We gave up a 99-yard touchdown, and that never happens to us!"

It appeared Herrington might have to wait until next year for his 245th career victory. But the

Harrison coaches are among the best at making halftime adjustments, and the contrast between halves Saturday reflected that.

The Hawks eventually got things turned around, allowing Herrington see a silver lining in the scary beginning.

"It's good for the team, for young people, to have to come back and show how much character they have, and I know this team had character," he said.

"It's the first time we've been behind and the kids came roaring back, but it's certainly not a situation we want to be in."

Your first thought in that situation is the Hawks must have taken the T'birds lightly. That's what everyone thinks, but it's a difficult supposition to make. It's

so subjective.

"I don't think it was so much that they executed was good and they did some things we didn't stop," Herrington said.

What is certain is the Hawks had their mettle and their competitive fire tested. Their overwhelming response has to be a source of encouragement for Hawks fans.

"As soon as they started kicking our butts, we knew we had to do something," senior Jared Hopkins said. "We all thought we were going to beat them, and the first quarter gave us a reality check."

"We told ourselves there's no tomorrow. We played with intensity, and the score showed it."

"I, personally, was a little wor-

ried, but I knew we were going for come back. I had faith in these guys; these players are warriors."

The first of two second-half touchdowns passes to junior tight end Mike Hoad exemplified the team's collective determination. It was a play that is sure to make Dave Turquist's season highlight film.

Several times it looked as if Hoad was going to be dragged to the ground, but he spun away from would-be tacklers and somehow stayed on his feet for a 49-yard touchdown.

As you watched the play, your thoughts alternated like a yo-yo. "Well, he's going down now. No, he's still going! He's down; he's up! He's down; he's up! He never

did go down. 'I just kept running for the end zone,' Hoad said in an understatement.

The bottom line is the Hawks are still in the running for the state title, and three big games remain if they're to win it all.

The next one, Saturday with Ypsilanti at Harrison, has the potential to be a tough game, more difficult than the last one.

My hope is the players will be reading (this newspaper) but not reading too much into the pregame talk.

"Our focus is where we need it to be," senior Zack Cornwell said. "We can say what we want to do in the newspaper, but it's up to us to actually go out and play on the field. Talks means nothing."

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