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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: Chambersburg shuts out Greencastle-Antrim in opener

CHAMBERSBURG — The growing pains were expected. Still, for nearly three quarters of Friday night's varsity football opener, Greencastle-Antrim found itself locked in a one-score game against Chambersburg at Trojan Stadium.

Trailing just 6-0 and set to take over possession in opponent territory, the Blue Devils committed the game-changing mistake. With Chambersburg backed up in its own end zone, G-A fumbled the ensuing punt, allowing Sean Vessah to scoop and score from 60 yards to essentially deliver the dagger in a 20-0 Chambersburg victory.

Clay Myers added a 40-yard touchdown run midway through the fourth quarter, officially sealing the win for the Trojans. Myers rushed for a total of 133 yards, managing to grind away on the ground during a contest otherwise dominated by defense.

G-A (0-1) sputtered offensively for most of the night, unable to sustain drives against a stout Chambersburg front anchored by Kelton Chastulik and Myles Braxton. The Blue Devils finished with only 181 yards of total offense, showcasing little balance to keep the Trojans honest.

"We have to find a way to get over that hump," Blue Devil head coach Chuck Tinninis said. "We kept plugging away, plugging away, but we have to take that next step and make something happen on offense."

Despite allowing 308 yards to Chambersburg, G-A's defense had an impressive debut, bending but not breaking. Twice in the first half, the Blue Devils stood tall inside their own 10-yard line, forcing a pair of field goals by Trojan kicker Nazeer Taylor.

The ability to keep Chambersburg out of the end zone produced a slim 6-0 differential, which remained until Vessah's recovery score with 31 seconds left in the third quarter.

"Defensively, I thought we hung in there for most of the night," Tinninis said. "We knew they had a big size advantage up front, so we put an extra guy down there and wanted to force them to beat us down the field. As the game went on, I thought their size kind of wore us down a little. That and the fumbled punt was the difference."

Initially, the decisive sequence appeared to actually be favoring the Blue Devils. Starting at their own 24, the Trojans twice committed costly penalties that wiped out huge gains beyond midfield. Continuing to head in the wrong direction, a total of four penalties in a matter of four plays brought up fourth-and-long from the Chambersburg 7.

Taylor was then brought on to punt, seemingly setting up G-A with tremendous field position. Instead, a slight miscommunication led to the fumble, and consequently, a two-score deficit.

"We made a couple mistakes, but even after the punt, our kids didn't fold," Tinninis said. "We just need to keep getting better each week, and that's what we're going to focus on doing."

The Blue Devils did have a nice drive going late in the fourth, highlighted by a 27-yard scramble from Cade McDowell. After moving the ball to the Trojans 31, Chambersburg's Austin Kopp made a leaping interception at the 9 to secure the shutout.

Aside from eclipsing 100 yards on the ground, Myers added three catches for 40 yards in the win while Kammeron Green accounted for 53 of Chambersburg's 249 total rushing yards.

Demetrius Burton led the Blue Devils' run-heavy attack, gaining 57 yards on 11 carries.

Neither side was able to get much going through the air, as Chambersburg had 59 yards passing to G-A's 43.

Roaming the field at safety, Tanner Bain paced the Blue Devils defensively with 13 tackles. The linebacking duo of Hayden Rhoe and Brad Shear also showed a lot of promise, frequently swarming to the ball.

G-A will have an extra day of preparation before returning to action next week, as the Blue Devils travel to Milton Hershey for a rare Saturday afternoon game. Kickoff is set for 1:30 p.m.

Chambersburg hosts Shippensburg Friday night.



PHOTO/ BOB STOLER

Greencastle-Antrim's Tanner Bain carries the ball as Chambersburg's Jack Kunkleman (32) and Kelton Chastulik (53) converge to make the tackle during Friday night's varsity football game at Trojan Stadium.

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