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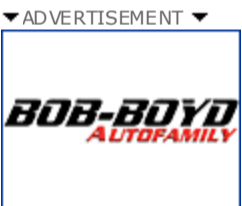
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Coming up big

Decisive plays keep Cruisers at bay; Lancaster wins OCC match-up

By JOE ARNOLD
Sports Writer
jarnold@nncogannett.com

LANCASTER -Big plays. They're the Hummers and Cadillac Escalades of football: Fun to watch, a thrill to ride along in and completely impractical for a team yearning for long drives.

Lancaster's Sean Gorby and Jesse Reed teamed up to carry the Gales when they needed it on Friday, providing two big plays in the game's final two quarters to seal a 35-21 win over Groveport at Fulton Field on Friday.

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Lancaster improved to 4-2 overall and 1-0 in the Ohio Capital Conference, while the Cruisers fell to 4-2 and 0-1.

Groveport, long considered the OCC-Ohio Division's doormat, made believers out of fans, players and coaches at Lancaster. The Cruisers took advantage of countless Lancaster mistakes to rally from deficits of 21-0 and 28-14 to turn a

yawner into a thriller.

Gorby provided the Gales with their first spark of the second half when he intercepted Cruisers' quarterback Aaron McKenzie at midfield and raced to Groveport's 6-yard line. The pick helped erase the memory of Lancaster's first two possessions in the third - a six-play drive that stalled at their 26-yard line and a botched punt return in which returners Nathan Carpenter and Jordan Shull collided and coughed up the ball.

"The play before (the interception), I got jacked right in the eye, so I'm seeing fuzz all in my left eye," Gorby said. "They just threw the ball into cover three, and I jumped right in front of it and picked it off."

Reed scored three plays later from 2 yards out to put the Gales ahead 28-7.

After McKenzie left the game and was transported to an area hospital with an internal injury, the Cruisers found life with back-up Jordan Elmore at quarterback. Groveport scored on a 10-yard run by Le'Veon Bell and then took advantage of an interception by Lancaster's Ryan Cheek.

The Cruisers marched 48 yards in four plays to climb to within 28-21 of the Gales.

"What hurt us is early in the game we didn't take care of some of our responsibilities," Cruisers coach Tim Brown said. "They run that veer option really well. We had some guys that were trying to do two things instead of taking care of their responsibility. We got out of position a few times and had some big runs on us. Once we figured that out, we shut them down a little bit."

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Lancaster's Ryan Morrisy runs the ball during the Golden G game against Groveport Madison High School at Lancaster Friday. E-G photo by Shino Omura

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Jordan Shull, of Lancaster, runs the ball against Groveport on Friday. E-G photo by Shino Omura

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After running 19 more plays than Groveport in the first half, Lancaster's offensive production dropped off in the final two quarters. The Gales' only saving grace proved to be a fourth-quarter run by Reed that set up Lancaster's insurance touchdown. Reed broke loose on a first-and-10 from Lancaster's 34-yard line. He hurdled two players and broke two more tackles on his way to a 63-yard gain and a first-and-goal from Groveport's 3-yard line. Trevor Griffith punched his way through two plays later to ice Lancaster's win.

"We've got playmakers, but it's a 50-50 chance if they're going to make it or not," Gorby said.

"I'd much rather go down there and beat up on (opponents) and not have to worry about those big plays.

"But we got people into some positions, and some games come down to big plays. We made them (Friday)."

Reed led all rushers with 180 yards on 22 carries. He also scored on a 23-yard run in the first half. Ryan Morris had a 14-yard TD run, and Cheek forced McKenzie into a first-half safety.

"In the first half, I was real proud with how we did. We executed well with our passing and kept them off our back," Gales coach Rob Carpenter said. "In the second half, offensively, our team has to learn the game ain't over until there's no lights on on that scoreboard.

"We celebrated too much, and we thought we had the game under control there several times and kind of let up."

STORYCHAT 

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