**Big first half leads Knights past Canton**

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Sep 30, 2017

TOWANDA — The Black Knights only needed a half to defeat Canton in their 34-15 win. And that might be to their detriment in the future if they can’t play competitive for a full game.

“In the next four weeks, if we don’t finish the second half, we’re going to get beat by somebody,” Towanda head coach Craig Dawsey said. “We have to get better in the second half. We are asleep in the second half. I’ve got to find the problem. It’s my problem to solve and I’ve got to do something about it.”

The Black Knight defense halted the Warriors after the opening kickoff. The Knights, however, took full advantage of their first possession with the legs of Zane Neubert and the arm of Tanner Kunkle.

On the scoring drive, Neubert ran four times for 13 yards and Kunkle completed three passes. Kunkle first connected with Luke Tama for 16 yards. Then he hit Isaac Pelka for 21 yards with Pelka breaking tackles and stretching out for extra yardage. Kunkle then rolled out, avoiding pass rushers, on the final play of the drive and allowed Pelka to distance himself from a Warrior defender before his 18-yard toss for the score.

Zach Sims added the extra point for a 7-0 lead.

After failing to gain a first down, Canton punted 14-yards and Towanda took over at midfield. Kunkle went right to work again, hitting Luke Tama for eight yards on a deflected pass. Neubert had runs of seven and 22 yards before scoring from 2 yards out for a 13-0 lead.

As the rains came, the game became sloppy. Even with Michael Smithers connecting with Timmy Ward twice for a combined 16 yards, the Warriors failed to produce a first down due to three false starts and an illegal substitution.

Neither team moved the ball during the heavy downpour, but at the end of the second quarter with the rains lightening, Kunkle when to work again. He dropped a beautiful over-the-shoulder down the pipe to Dalton Potter for a 45-yard gain. Then he hit Tama on a slant for 18 yards before finding Pelka in the end zone from 20 yards out.

Kunkle then flipped the ball to Pekla in the end zone again for the two-point conversion and a 21-0 lead.

With just over a minute left, the Black Knights took possession again stymieing the Warriors’ offense and guess who still a little bit left in his arm? Kunkle.

Kunkle tossed a 10-yard pass to Tama and called his own number twice for 23 yards. After a Canton personal foul, Kunkle tossed a 13-yard jump ball that Tama snared for a score.

Sims added the PAT for a 28-0 halftime lead.

Kunkle finished a brilliant first half going 10-of-13 for 194 yards and three touchdowns.

Both teams came out sluggish in a penalty-filled second half.

“Unbelievalby penalized,” Dawsey added. “It’s all on film, so I hope we can get that taken care of as well.”

The teams failed to move the ball until the start of the fourth quarter when the Warriors recovered a Neubert fumble on their own 43-yard line.

Smithers immediately burned the Knights’ secondary with a bullet to Ward, who dotted the I’s on the sideline for a 19-yard gain. Then, despite having four false start penalties, the Warriors found themselves in the red zone aided by two pass interference calls and a roughing the passer penalty.

Smithers ran for 9 yards and then hit Camden Smith for 4 yards with 6:57 left in the game. Smithers then connected with Levi Gaiotti for the two-point conversion.

Canton attempted an onside kick, but was assessed with a penalty for an illegal kick. On a second attempt, Griffin Sites recovered for Towanda on the Warriors’ 45 yard line.

Neubert rushed for 7 yards before Kunkle connected with Tama, his go-to guy, for 14 yards. After a holding penalty, Kunkle tossed one up for Tama to go after. Tama skied over a Warrior defender and came down with the ball in the end zone for a 33-yard score.

On final possession, Canton, fighting to the end, gave the ball to Cody Williams three times for 19 yards. An interference call brought the ball to the 8 where Williams ran it in. Curtis Lammy added the extra point for the 34-15 final tally.

Kunkle finished the game going 12-of-17 for 240 yards and four touchdowns. Tama added eight receptions for 136 yards and two touchdowns. Neubert carried the rock 18 times for 91 yards.

“I’m proud of the kids,” Dawsey said. “It was a win, but it was just a sloppy second half for us.”