



Plymouth quarterback Rodney Hampton, right, celebrates the winning of the Firelands Conference football championship while head coach Dick Roll shows little emotion. The Big Red won their first-ever title with a 13-6 conquest of Edison at Norwalk's Whitney Field Friday night.



(Register photo — CHRIS CLARK)

Edison head coach Jim Whittington, right, consoles Kurt Ostheimer following the loss to Plymouth in the Firelands Conference title game.

It's hard to repeat on gridiron

By ED FOX
Staff Writer

Members of the football coaching fraternity in the Firelands Conference are finding out what their basketball counterparts have known for a long time...it's hard to beat a team twice in a season.

Edison's Jim Whittington was quick to agree after watching his team lose to Plymouth, 13-6, in the Firelands Conference championship game.

"It sure is hard to beat a team twice," noted Whittington who had watched his team down Plymouth in the regular season, 39-6.

For Plymouth, the 1983 season marked a complete turnaround. Last season, the Big Red won just two of ten games. This year, they finished 10-1.

"It's been a fantastic season. These seniors have never shown emotion in practice but they sure did tonight. We showed the film of the U.S. hockey team winning the gold medal (1980 Olympics) earlier in the week and it made believers out of everyone. We knew we were the underdog but the kids knew they could win it," said Plymouth mentor Dick Roll.

"We felt we had to get some breaks. And, we did. But, we also had (Richard) Cunningham in the lineup and he made a big difference not only on offense but defense, too. Also, Bill McVey and Chad McGinniss were doing an excellent job up front, leading the way for Richard."

Cunningham finished as the game's top rusher with 88 yards in 25 carries.

Whittington was quick to agree that Cunningham was a key factor in the outcome.

"He (Cunningham) was amazing. We were there on defense and he was still getting three and four yards a crack," noted Whittington.

Also, Whittington pointed to a pair of penalties in the second half which proved significant.

"We had moved the ball well on the ground in the first half. And, we came up running the ball well in the third quarter. But, we got stopped by a clipping penalty after making one first down and a holding call kept us from getting a first down early in the fourth quarter. The yards were not coming that easy and we simply stopped ourselves."

The Chargers were penalized just four times for 50 yards. Meanwhile, Plymouth had eight for 46.

"When they scored the tying touchdown, we were in a goalline defense and they just beat us deep with the pass," added Whittington.

Plymouth senior quarterback Rodney Hampton explained how the tying score came about.

"We had been running isolated action with Cunningham leading the way for McKenzie. I noticed that Edison's cornerbacks and defensive backs had been coming up for support to stop the running play and we called for the pass at the right time.

"If we had missed, we still were just facing a fourth and inches situation. But, (Tom) Baker had a couple of steps on his man and was able to gather the ball in. But, Bakes has been making the big play and has been our deep threat all season."

Running backs Cunningham and Mike McKenzie, the latter gaining 40 yards in 15 carries helped the Big Red outgain Edison on the ground, 105-100.

"Our line surge was excellent," noted McKenzie.

Cunningham added, "we weren't satisfied to just get here, we wanted to go out winners."

Thus, a fitting climax to Plymouth's cinderella season.

Big Red avenges regular season loss to Edison

Plymouth crowned Firelands champion

By ED FOX
Staff Writer

NORWALK — Plymouth saved the best for last, scoring twice in the final quarter for a 13-6 win over Edison in the second annual Firelands Conference championship game.

It was the first grid title ever for the Big Red, who were able to avenge a 39-6 loss to perennial power Edison which had won the past four FC titles and six of the last eight.

Friday's game, at Whitney Field, marked the second year in which the conference champion was decided at the conclusion of the regular season with the winner of the North Division meeting the South winner.

And, both times the conference champion has avenged a regular season loss. Last year, Edison turned back Ashland

Crestview by a 12-0 score after dropping the regular season meeting, 21-7.

Edison, which finished 9-2, scored early after taking advantage of excellent field position offered to them after a high snap from center foiled a Plymouth punt attempt and the Chargers took over at the Big Red 33.

The high snap from center went over punter Darren Branham's head and he was tackled for a 13-yard loss by Chris Mize.

And, it took the Chargers just four plays to reach paydirt with Jeff Springer going the final 11 with 4:53 showing on the clock.

The touchdown run came following a penalty, which moved the ball half the distance to the goal as Plymouth had too many players on the field.

Edison was unable to convert the PAT attempt.

However, a 6-0 lead appeared comfortable at the time since field conditions were not good with the field being snow covered and slippery.

Plymouth, which finished 10-1, threatened briefly on the ensuing possession.

The Big Red began from their

own 47 following a 22-yard kickoff return by Mike McKenzie.

Seven plays later, they punted the ball from the Edison 39.

Early in the second period, both teams were unsuccessful while trying to convert on fourth down.

Edison, facing a fourth-and-two at the Plymouth 45, tried Kurt Ostheimer up the middle with no success. In fact, he lost a yard as the Big Red took over at their own 46 with just under six minutes left before halftime.

With Cunningham and McKenzie handling a bulk of the ball-carrying duties, the Big Red moved for a pair of first downs and got as close as the Edison 31.

However, Plymouth quarterback Rodney Hampton was sacked for an eight-yard loss by Ron Dabrowski and the drive ended at the Edison 43 with just seconds remaining before intermission.

Midway through the third quarter, Plymouth took over at its own 19 following a 20-yard punt by Ostheimer.

And, the South Division winner proceeded to hold on to the ball for the next eight minutes while driving downfield for the tying score.

On three occasions, they were able to convert fourth down situations into first downs to keep the drive alive.

But, possibly the most important conversion came midway through the 15-play, 81-yard drive.

The Big Red were faced with a fourth-and-eight at their own 35. However, the Chargers were guilty of roughing the kicker on the punt attempt and the drive remained alive with a first-and-10 at midfield.

Another first down moved the ball to the Edison 36. Then, McKenzie picked up seven yards around the left side and Cunningham bulled up the middle for two more.

That set the stage for a third-and-inches at the Edison 27.

With Edison anticipating a running play, Hampton went up top and found Tom Baker wide open behind the secondary for a 27-yard scoring pass. The PAT

attempt failed and the two teams were suddenly deadlocked at 6-6 with 9:52 left to play.

The Chargers were forced to give up the ball on their ensuing possession.

And, Plymouth took over at the Chargers' 44 following the punt.

Again, the Big Red came up with the big play when it was needed and were able to convert three third down situations into first downs to keep the drive alive.

And, the result was a one-yard plunge over the right side of the line for a touchdown by McKenzie with 2:07 left in the game. Also, he kicked the PAT for a 13-6 lead.

Edison, however, battled back following the kickoff.

A 31-yard pass from Jim Hall to Steve Geres was the key play for the resurging Chargers as they moved close to the goalline. However, the drive ended at the Plymouth nine-yard-line following a five-yard pass completion from Joe Taylor to Ostheimer.

And, the Big Red was happy to run the final remaining seconds off the clock to insure the winning of their first-ever grid championship.

Division IV

Bishop Ready 22, West Jefferson 13

GROVEPORT, Ohio (UPI) — Columbus Bishop Ready defeated West Jefferson, defending Division IV state champions, 22-13 at Groveport Stadium Friday night in a Division IV semi-final high school playoff game.

Bishop Ready used a powerful ground attack in the second half to break a 7-7 halftime tie. Tailback Jewel Jackson rushed for 201 yards in 25 carries to key the ball-control attack.

The winners are coached by Paul Nestor, formerly the jack-of-all-trades, including football coach and athletic director, at New London.

Jackson scored two touchdowns on runs of 33 and 13 yards.

Coal Grove Dawson 32, Belpre 13

IRONTON, Ohio (UPI) — Senior tailback Joe Ross rushed for 247 yards and two touchdowns as the Coal Grove Dawson-Bryant Hornets beat Belpre 32-13 in Division IV Region 15 state high school football playoffs Friday night.

Coal Grove jumped out to a 12-0 advantage and never trailed, leading 18-6 at halftime as Ross ran one yard and 81 yards for scores.

Coal Grove, now 11-0, had 410 offensive yards while holding Belpre, 10-1, to 237.

Orrville 15, St. Thomas 8

CANTON, Ohio (UPI) — Orrville capitalized on three first-half fumbles and used a ball-control offense to eat up much of the clock in downing Louisville St. Thomas Aquinas 15-8 in Division IV Region 13 Ohio high school football playoffs Friday night.

The Red Riders, 8-3, scored their first touchdown in the opening quarter on a one-yard run by quarterback Tom Bolyard following an Aquinas fumble on its own 25.

STATISTICS

	PLY	EDIS
First Downs (total)	8	6
by rushing	6	6
by passing	2	0
by penalty	0	0
Rushes (total)	46	35
net yards rushing	105	100
passes attempted	7	8
passes completed	3	3
had intercepted	0	0
net yards passing	38	39
Total Plays	53	43
Total Net Yards Gained	143	139
Fumbles (number)	3	1
ball lost	1	0
Penalties (number)	8	4
yards penalized	46	50

SCORE BY QUARTERS

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Plymouth	0	0	13	13
Edison	6	0	0	6

Scoring: ED — Jeff Springer, 11 run (Kick failed)
PLY — Tom Baker, 27 pass from Rodney Hampton (Kick failed)
PLY — Mike McKenzie, 1 run (McKenzie kick)

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