

Too many penalties derail Chiefs at Lancaster

14 miscues costly as Chieftains fall to Gales, 35-13

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

LANCASTER — If the Logan Chieftains can take just one lesson out of Friday night's season-opening football loss to the Lancaster Golden Gales, it's a pretty simple one: don't make mistakes in general... and don't commit 14 penalties in particular.

The Chiefs were flagged 14 times for 139 yards — one of which gave the Gales a second-chance touchdown to take the lead and another that cost the Purple & White a 58-yard touchdown pass at what would have been a most opportune time — as Lancaster prevailed 35-13 at Fulton Field.

“Way too many mistakes,” Logan coach Kelly Wolfe said afterward. “Fourteen penalties... and we didn't take advantage of the opportunities we had. We had two or three good drives where we got (deep in Lancaster territory) and got nothing to show for it. You just can't make mistakes against a team like that.”

The Chiefs controlled the clock (27:53 to 20:07 in offensive possession time), ran 18 more offensive plays (62-44) and collected more first downs (18-14), but Lancaster amassed all 421 of its yards on the ground and gradually wore down the smaller Chiefs, who had a lot of athletes playing on both sides of the line of scrimmage.

“We hung with them and had everybody ready to go tonight,” Wolfe said. “We got a little tired in the second quarter — we had guys in (defensive) position, but we were bouncing off of them (whereas) in the first quarter we weren't. We had guys (in position) and making the plays.

“We got a little tired in the second quarter and they busted a couple big runs on us,” he added. “We just didn't capitalize enough when we had chances.”

The Chiefs defense held the Gales on Lancaster's first two offensive series and Logan sophomore Jack Music — starting at quarterback in place of senior Kelly Long, who was held out of the first series for disciplinary reasons — guided the Chiefs from their own 37 to the Lancaster 15 before the Chiefs relinquished the ball on downs.

Long then came on late in the first quarter to lead a solid six-play, 38-yard scoring drive. Deep in Lancaster territory, Long bobbled a high snap from center then cut to his left to find a wide-open lane to the end zone for an 8-yard scoring run for a 7-0 edge one minute into the second stanza.

Then, the Chiefs seemingly got a huge break when fullback Luke Roberts — bound for Ohio State next season as a linebacker — busted a 28-yard scoring run, only to have it called back due to a penalty.

But the Chiefs shot themselves in their collective feet when a third-down personal foul penalty kept the Lancaster drive alive long enough for Roberts to break another TD run, this one for 32 yards.

On the ensuing extra-point kick, Logan was called for an illegal participation miscue that moved the ball half the distance to the goal. Lancaster then decided to go for two and Roberts easily bowled his way into the end zone for an 8-7 lead, beginning a Gales run of 35 unanswered points.

After Logan was forced to punt on its ensuing drive, a 38-yard run on a quick-hitter by Russ King put the Gales in scoring position inside the Logan 10. King scored two plays later on a one-yard plunge to make it 15-7.

Logan then drove to the Lancaster 27, only to see the advance slowed by a holding penalty (12 yards), a motion penalty (five yards) and a 13-yard loss on a center snap that sailed over Long's head.

Still, the Chiefs managed a first down. On third-and-45, halfback Cory McCarty rambled 39 yards to set up fourth-and-six, and Long hit receiver Isaac Lindsey with a seven-yard pass for a first down at the Gale 21.

But still another penalty hurt the drive and Logan eventually gave the ball up on downs at the Lancaster 23 in the half's waning seconds.

The Chiefs drove to the Lancaster 38 on the opening series of the second half, only to be thwarted by a 13-yard holding penalty. Not long afterward, the Gales' Ethan Bond broke an inside handoff 79 yards to paydirt for a 22-7 Lancaster lead.

One more Logan costly miscue kept the Chiefs from getting closer late in the third period.

A pair of Lancaster penalties resulted in Logan first downs that kept a drive alive long enough for Long to hit Lindsey in stride in the end zone with a beautiful 58-yard scoring pass... only to have it called back on still another holding penalty.

Then, to add insult to injury, another holding infraction and an intentional grounding call forced Logan into a second-and-47 situation. Lancaster's Ethan Jones picked off a deep pass from Long to end the threat two plays later.

"It was 15-7 at halftime and we came out and had a drive going there, and also had a touchdown called back that could have made it 22-14... so we were right there," Wolfe said. "You just can't have that many mistakes. You have to make the most of the opportunities when you are the underdog, and we just didn't."

The Gales then broke the game open with fourth-quarter scoring runs by King (two yards) and Andrew Shisler (53 yards) before Logan's Branson Sheets scored a consolation TD on an 18-yard run with under 50 seconds to play.

“We moved the ball well on offense (308 total yards) and I thought our receivers blocked well because we obviously wanted to dump it out on the edge and use our receivers to block,” Wolfe said. “I thought we did well with that.”

Lancaster coach Rob Carpenter wasn’t unhappy that the Chiefs chose to go with a short aerial offense.

“They did a good job with their passing game,” said Carpenter, a former star running back in the National Football League. “I’m just glad they didn’t throw deep more. That was a concern. As long as they were throwing short, that was okay. (Covering) deep throws may not be something we do real well.

“Logan came out with a really good game plan and executed pretty well,” he added. “They junked it up on the defensive line and were running guys through, and we were missing assignments with things we hadn’t seen before. They got ahead of us and forced us to re-evaluate.”

And it’s not bad when you can turn to an OSU-bound linebacker in such a situation.

“We moved some running backs around and we put Luke (Roberts) back there,” Carpenter revealed. “We didn’t want to over-use him, because he plays a lot of linebacker, but he’s a power guy. Once he got us going, then all of our backs kind of picked up the pace. We have a bunch of good backs we can rotate.”

No argument there. Ten different ballcarriers accounted for Lancaster’s 421 ground yards, with Bond picking up 92, King 85 and Shisler 75. Roberts added 48 yards on just five official carries.

“They wore us down and they adjusted,” Wolfe said. “Give them credit; they figured out some things we were doing defensively with our front five and you could see they were changing their running plays. They weren’t running them in the same lanes and they were making adjustments.

“They hit that fullback quick-hitter up the middle a couple times,” he added. “That’s what they do so well.”

Carpenter agreed.

“I think we wore Logan down,” he said. “I know they play a lot of guys both ways. They got tired at the end, but they played hard and had a great game plan. Our offensive line and our defensive line wore them down.

“It was a typical Logan-Lancaster game... it’s not your typical week-one game,” he added. “This is more of a heated rivalry now, and both sides get deeply emotional about it.”

The Chiefs can take some good things from this defeat as they prepare for next Friday’s home opener against Pickerington North, which routed perennial state power Columbus Watterson 38-3 in its opener Friday night.

“We gave up (too many) big plays again, and we have to eliminate those,” Wolfe said. “But the kids want to keep working. Our kids played with enthusiasm and matched them hit-for-hit out there.

“There are a lot of positives that come from tonight... but defensively we just can’t give up that many points,” he concluded.

Bigger, stronger Panthers overpower Chiefs

Pickerington North returns kickoff, punt and interception for touchdowns in 42-14 win

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

LOGAN — As observers and Logan football fans watched the Chieftains and Pickerington North Panthers run through their pre-game paces Friday evening in Logan Chieftain Stadium, the words coming out of their mouths had to be pretty much the same.

Said of the Panthers: “Boy, they're huge.”

Said of the Chieftains: “Boy, they're not.” Not by comparison, anyway.

And the ensuing clash not only of size but of skill players was pretty much one-sided as the Panthers returned a kickoff, a punt and an interception for touchdowns in dealing the Chiefs a 42-14 setback.

“What do you say? That's an impressive football team,” Logan coach Kelly Wolfe said of the Panthers. “They have a lot of skill over there. We know going in we're going to be the smallest team on the field a lot (this season). We were (tonight), by far. They were huge... and they were definitely bigger than Lancaster.”

The Chiefs, now 0-2 on the season, opened with a 35-13 loss at Lancaster last week. Pickerington North is 2-0, having beaten defending state Division III champion Columbus Watterson 38-3 last Friday.

Pickerington North and a couple of its terrific skill-position players struck first when quarterback Zach Olszewski hit junior running back Godwin Igwebuike, a transfer from crosstown rival Pickerington Central, with a swing pass to the right sideline on the game's opening play.

Igwebuike turned the simple play into a 55-yard catch-and-run, eventually setting up a 1-yard scoring run by Olszewski just 80 seconds into the game.

But the Chiefs countered with some lightning of their own when quarterback Kelly Long connected with fellow senior Isaac Lindsey on a 67-yard bomb, with only a shoestring tackle by PN's Dylan Weigel saving a touchdown.

Three plays later, however, Long connected with Lindsey again, this time with a perfectly-thrown pass just inside the right-sideline corner pylon, for an 11-yard scoring strike and a 7-7 deadlock just 3:22 into the game.

But that's when special-teams play came to the forefront.

Igwebuike took the ensuing kickoff on his own 16-yard line, found a lane, cut down the right sideline and back against the grain with barely a finger laid on him for an 84-yard kickoff return.

“We kicked the ball to their best player (Igwebuike) and that's the last guy we wanted to have it,” Wolfe said afterward. “He should not have touched the ball. Special teams are big. We worked hard and got momentum on our side, and you just can't have mental breakdowns like that.”

It indeed proved to be a back-breaker for the Chieftains. Pickerington North, which won the battle of field position the rest of the second half, scored on every first-half possession except for two, on which they missed field goals of 23 and 30 yards.

“They gave us some chances to hang around in the first half. They really did,” Wolfe said. “Our defense kept scrapping, but they could have put us away a lot earlier than they did. They had two chances to score and missed two field goals. It was still 14-7 and we were still fighting.”

They were fighting, all right, but they were also wearing down at the collective hands of the bigger, more physical Panthers (who won a game in Logan for the first time in five tries) who didn't have nearly as many players playing on both sides of the ball.

Backed up against the shadow of their own goal line early in the second quarter, the Chiefs were forced to punt and Tabeal Radney returned it 40 yards to paydirt — the first punt-return touchdown against the Chiefs in 10 years and the first-ever varsity punt return for a score in Logan Chieftain Stadium's four-season history. That made it 21-7.

Then, after forcing the Chiefs to punt, Igwebuike broke a 25-yard run to begin a quick scoring drive that culminated on a 26-yard scoring pass from Olszewski to Jake Butt with 8:34 left in the half.

Pickerington North then drove 65 yards on 12 plays to make it 35-7 on a 2-yard scoring aerial from Olszewski to Alan Hunt with 2:06 left in the half. That was the halftime score.

Logan took full advantage of a miscue by the Panthers in the third quarter when Caleb Branson recovered a muffed Pickerington North punt at the PN 3-yard line. It took Logan four plays, but Cory McCarty scored on a 1-yard run with 7:04 remaining.

The Chiefs never threatened again. Pickerington North put the game away when Radney stepped in front of Long's intended receiver and ran an interception back 29 yards for a score with 7:52 to play in the game.

“That's the only score they had in the second half, the pick-six. And we scored. The second half was 7-7,” Wolfe said, “but it is what it is.”

What it was, was Pickerington North was well in command.

The Chiefs, who were held to minus-5 yards rushing in the first half, wound up with 186 yards of offense, including 158 yards passing by Long, who completed 11-of-24 passes, six of them going to Lindsey for 101 yards.

But Pickerington North, while running 14 fewer plays, gained 358 yards, including 200 on the ground, and had nine plays of 18 yards or better in addition to the kickoff, punt and interceptions that were returned for touchdowns.

In other words, the Chiefs were once again victimized by big plays.

“We gotta regroup for next week (at Reynoldsburg),” Wolfe said. “On the positive side, talking to (Pickerington North coach Tom Phillips), they got one kid from Reynoldsburg's team and Pickerington Central got five kids from Reynoldsburg's team” from last year.

Reynoldsburg beat the Chiefs 47-7 last season. The Chiefs are hoping to make amends for that next Friday night.

Raiders dominate Chiefs for second-straight season

Logan off to 0-3 start after 30-6 setback at Reynoldsburg

By Craig Dunn

Logan Daily News

REYNOLDSBURG — For a second-straight year, the Logan Chieftains finished 0-3 in season-opening non-conference play against Ohio Capital Conference Ohio Division foes.

And for a second straight season, it was the Reynoldsburg Raiders who dominated game three of that OCC trifecta, this time dealing the Purple & White a 30-6 setback Friday at Reynoldsburg High School in a game that wasn't as close as the score would even remotely indicate.

Reynoldsburg (2-1), which pounded the Chiefs 47-7 last fall in Logan Chieftain Stadium, used a dominating defense to hold the Chiefs to a grand total of one first down and five total yards of offense in piling up a 24-0 halftime lead.

“They're another good OCC team,” said Logan coach Kelly Wolfe. “It was their home opener; they were fired up and we came out a little flat. And once they got up, it was tough for us to recover.”

The score could have been much, much worse. Reynoldsburg scored on two of its first three offensive series, and only a diving interception by Kelly Long at the Logan 12-yard line kept the Raiders from chalking another six-pointer.

Reynoldsburg missed three extra points (two of them hit the uprights), had a field goal blocked, and had two second-quarter touchdowns returns — a 69-yard free kick return Mykel Traylor-Bennett and a 45-yard punt return by Jimmy McKeon — nullified.

Traylor-Bennett, who later brought back a punt 48 yards for a score in the second half (the second half turned out to be a 6-6 draw), had his called back as the result of a Reynoldsburg holding penalty. McKeon's return was whistled dead at the Logan 17-yard line when his helmet came off... by rule, resulting in an immediate stoppage of play.

But what was most discouraging for Wolfe and the Chiefs was the mistakes and the loss of composure in several different ways... something very unlike a Logan football team.

“I can't make any excuses. They whipped us,” Wolfe said. “The thing that was more disheartening to me was the chaos — (the) times we only had 10 guys (on the field) — and” the loss of composure.

“That says we're going in opposite directions and we're not in here together, (not) focused on what's going on,” he added.

In all fairness to the Chieftains, however, they've been out-manned playing Lancaster, Pickerington North and Reynoldsburg, three very large Division I schools, to open the 2010 and 2011 seasons.

As a result, it's really difficult to get a good read on how good the 2011 Chiefs are simply due to the talented teams that have lined up across from them the first three weeks.

“Offensively we were struggling,” Wolfe said. Reynoldsburg's “defensive game plan was pretty good; they kept us off-balance (and) they were changing their defense almost play by play. On first down they would run one defense and on second down they would run another defense.”

The Chiefs never crossed the midfield stripe until late in the third quarter, during their lone touchdown drive of the night, capped by a Cory McCarty 6-yard run with 10:53 remaining in the game.

Logan had seven offensive possessions in the first half that started, on average, on its own 20-yard line. Four of those possessions wound up with punts, one ended with a bad snap from center that Reynoldsburg recovered at the Logan 22, one wound up on a safety when Long was sacked the end zone, and the last one concluded when the first half mercifully came to an end.

By comparison, Reynoldsburg's average starting position in the first half was the Logan 40-yard line.

A freshman who wasn't even on the roster, Jordan Jones, capped off the Raiders' opening drive with a nifty 10-yard touchdown run around left end, finishing off an opening possession on which Reynoldsburg broke off four-straight double-digit runs from scrimmage, the first two by 225-pound junior Kumar Collins, a bowling ball of a running back, for a combined 30 yards. That drive set the tone for the evening.

After Long thwarted the Raiders' second drive, Reynoldsburg took advantage of a short field after recovering Logan's bad snap from center to go 22 yards on just six plays, capped off by De'Von Bollinger's 1-yard scoring run.

The Chiefs were fortunate Reynoldsburg scored only 12 points in the second quarter — on a touchdown, field goal, safety and extra point kick — and that they were only down 24-0 at the intermission.

But the good thing now is that OCC play is behind the Chiefs and Southeastern Ohio Athletic League play is straight ahead, beginning with a home game next Friday against defending champion (and 3-0) Jackson in Logan Chieftain Stadium.

And the Chiefs, who were beaten up physically in game three against Reynoldsburg last season — from which they never fully recovered — seem to be okay physically this year heading into the Jackson showdown.

“It's us and big red (Jackson) now in our house,” Wolfe said. “You have to be excited to start the league. I'm excited. I still think we're a better team than what we've shown.”

“When you're playing up (against bigger schools) every week, and when it's a struggle every week, you just really don't know what you're capable of,” he added. “Our big thing as coaches is that we have to keep our kids' confidence up (and) keep believing in them.”

How good the 2011 Chiefs turn out to be is a question still to be answered, of course, but Wolfe thinks the Chiefs will come out a different team against Jackson.

“I believe we do have a good football team,” he said. “We've seen it; we've just been beaten around for three weeks (by huge Division I schools). We can't let the kids give up on themselves. That's the big thing this week — to keep them positive.”

Ironmen out-shoot Chieftains again, 49-32

Defending SEOAL champs score 35 unanswered points to take command

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

LOGAN — As that old baseball sage Yogi Berra might have said, Friday night's Jackson-Logan Southeastern Ohio Athletic League football game seemed like *déjà vu* all over again.

Similarities between the Ironmen's 49-32 victory over the Chieftains Friday night in Logan Chieftain Stadium and their 49-28 win over the Purple & White a year ago in Jackson's Alumni Stadium may not have been coincidental, but they sure seemed that way.

Jackson again took a big early lead. Logan again rallied to get within striking distance in the third quarter. And Jackson again pulled away in the fourth quarter.

The Ironmen again had a dominating running game, and Jackson again took advantage of Logan miscues. And the Ironmen again scored 49 points, equalling their all-time best against the Purple & White.

And, more importantly, the Ironmen took a huge step toward defending their 2010 championship. We'll find out in a few weeks if that also falls into the “again” category.

In what wound up being a game of big offensive plays by both teams, the difference — as it so often does — came down to turnovers. The Chiefs (0-4 overall, 0-1 SEOAL) committed five of them, and the Ironmen (4-0, 1-0) cashed in four of them for 28 points.

“(A final score of) 49-32 with five turnovers. You're not going to win that way,” said Logan coach Kelly Wolfe, whose Chiefs are 0-4 for a second-straight season. “Doesn't matter who you're playing, you're going to have a hard time beating anybody with five turnovers.

“Same as (last year),” he added. “I keep saying it, and I know I sound like a broken record, but we fight to get back in the game in the second half. We have to have that fire in us at the beginning of the game. Once you start losing (games), that's something you have to fight, and it's hard to overcome.”

At least the Chiefs scored some points — a lot of them. In fact, 32 points are the most points scored by any Logan football team in a losing effort in school history, this being the 100th official season of Chieftain football. Logan lost a game to Warren 32-31 in 1996.

Jackson entered the game having shut out its first three foes for the first time since 1971. But the Chiefs took advantage of a Drew Ervin fumble on Jackson's first play from scrimmage and quarterback Kelly Long's 57-yard bomb to Isaac Lindsey set up a 1-yard scoring run by Long for the first points scored against the Ironmen in 2011.

But the Ironmen responded. And they responded with a vengeance.

Jackson scored 35 unanswered points, moving up and down the field almost at will and throwing touchdowns on the board on five-straight offensive possessions. They gained 302 yards in the first half alone.

While the Ironmen really hadn't been tested in their first three games, Jackson coach Andy Hall said the Chiefs' early touchdown proved to be a lesson in handling adversity.

“The first offensive play we put the ball on the ground and (Logan) comes out with a big pass,” Hall said. “Their quarterback has a great arm and has good receivers to throw to and made a great play. We blink and we're down 7-0.

“Our offense at that point came down the field and made some nice plays,” he added. Jackson “ran the ball off-tackle with (Ervin and Austin Osborne), Ty McNelly had a couple nice catches and next thing we know it's 7-7. We answered the bell.”

The bell rang several times for both teams. But it rang more often for Jackson, especially in the first half.

Osborne, Jackson's quarterback, threw three touchdown passes and scored on a 39-yard run and Ervin tallied three scores on runs of 3, 50 and 19 yards. Ervin rushed for 157 yards (20 carries) and Osborne for 132 (15 attempts) as Jackson rolled up 437 yards of offense, including 353 on the ground.

But Logan, after almost recovering from that 35-7 hole — Cory McCarty broke a 62-yard scoring run in the final minute of the first half before the Chiefs scored twice in the first five minutes of the third quarter to draw within 35-26 — put together their best offensive night of the season.

They actually out-gained the Ironmen 441-437, with Long throwing for 285 yards and long-distance touchdown passes of 92 and 45 yards to the ever-improving Sean Wotring. McCarty picked up 126 yards on the ground.

“I have so many mixed emotions right now,” Hall said. “We're ecstatic with the win, and to score 49 points against a good football team we're very proud of that. But to give up (32) points... we're a better defense than that. We pride ourselves on speed and being able to tackle in space, and we really took a step back (defensively) tonight.”

Unfortunately, the Logan defense struggled as well. You can add a lot of missed tackles to those five costly turnovers.

“Credit (the Ironmen). They have some studs back there,” Wolfe said. “They ran their offense well. (Osborne) is a patient runner; he got in behind his guys, he waited for the seams to open up and he hit it. And so did (Ervin). Both of those kids are good players. We had some guys (set to make tackles) a couple times and just ran right by them with our heads down or they ran through us.

“A bunch of missed tackles,” he added. “Defensively we played better in the second half and we had the heat on them. But they're a good team; they were patient, they didn't panic and they stuck with their game plan and kept pounding us.”

Not only were there a lot of big plays — the two teams combined to tally six touchdowns on plays between 30 and 92 yards, including five in a row at one point — but there were some long drives, too, three of them being over 90 yards in duration and two more of at least 70 yards.

Jackson came up with an 11-play, 92-yard drive to draw even, tying the score on Ervin's first touchdown run late in the opening quarter, then a 41-yard interception return by McNelly helped set up a 9-yard scoring pass from Osborne to McNelly in the final minute of the opening stanza.

After recovering a Logan fumble, Osborne kept the ball on a keeper, made a great ball-handling fake to fool the Logan defense, and raced 39 yards to paydirt 90 seconds into the second quarter.

Then, following a nice Nick Kost punt that pinned the Ironmen on their own 9, Jackson simply drove 91 yards on nine plays, getting the final 50 when Ervin took a quick hitter up the middle nearly untouched to the end zone.

And the Ironmen weren't done. Another Logan fumble gave Jackson the ball on the Logan 30, and Osborne immediately hooked up with McNelly on a beautiful slant-in touchdown pass to make it 35-7 after Luke Eisnaugle converted the fifth of his seven extra-point kicks.

But just when it looked like the Chiefs were going to run out the clock and lick their wounds at halftime, McCarty took the ball off left tackle and found a hole, racing 62 yards down the left sideline for a touchdown that pulled Logan within 35-13 at the intermission.

As both teams exited the field for their respective locker rooms at the intermission, the Ironmen knew the second half would be no picnic, either.

“You could hear (the Chiefs) talking and you could feel their energy. They were excited (saying) 'we're back in this,' ” Hall said. “It was a three-touchdown game, but there were still two quarters left to play... and with (the Chiefs') offense being so powerful, they can score three touchdowns in a heartbeat.”

And they almost did just that.

At the outset of the second half, Logan forced a Jackson punt — a line-drive by McNelly after he field a low snap from center, a prelude of things to come — which McNelly knocked out of bounds on the Logan 2-yard line.

Two plays later, Long fired a seed to Wotring, slanting off the right sideline toward the middle, and Wotring made a nice catch, bumped a Jackson defender, and found himself in open space. He went the 92-yard distance to complete what was a three-play, 98-yard drive.

Then, on Jackson's ensuing possession, a punt snap from center went over McNelly's head and he fell down trying to recover. Logan's Kenny Simpson picked it up at the Jackson 19 and ran it in, pulling the Chiefs within 35-26 with 7:37 still to play in the third quarter.

“We came out three plays and punt and they come down and score, and we end up punting again and snapped it over Ty's head and they scoop and score,” Hall said. “Now it's a (nine-point) game, and they're right back in the ballgame.”

Well, for a few minutes, anyway.

The Ironmen answered, driving 56 yards on seven plays for a huge touchdown, with Ervin scoring from 19 yards out to regain momentum. Then, after an exchange of three-straight turnovers (two by the Chiefs), Osborne hit a wide-open freshman Reagan Williams with an 11-yard scoring pass — on a fourth-and-8 play — to all but seal Jackson's victory.

“I thought the key to the game was on that next possession we took it down and scored,” Hall said. “But again, give Logan credit. They kept fighting and fighting and came down and scored again.

“It was just a run-and-shoot match — and we don't like getting in games like that because we pride ourselves on tough defense,” he added.

It appeared no lead was safe in this shootout, and the Chiefs followed with a nine-play, 71-yard scoring drive, the last 45 coming on a Long-to-Wotring touchdown pass. But it wasn't enough, and the Chiefs never threatened again.

“We did some positive things tonight,” Wolfe stated. “Sean Wotring continues to improve. He had two touchdowns and we had three touchdown passes tonight. We can't be too hard on ourselves — we did some good things on offense — but you can't win with five turnovers.”

If the Chiefs thought the Ironmen were tough — and they are — now they have to travel to Buchtel for a non-league matchup with powerful Nelsonville-York next Friday night. The unbeaten (4-0) Buckeyes thrashed perennial state power Columbus Ready 47-13 Friday night.

Unbeaten Buckeyes roll past Chiefs, 42-6

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

NELSONVILLE — Several members of the Nelsonville-York Buckeyes' 1981 state championship football team showed up to be honored on the 30th anniversary of their terrific accomplishment Friday night at Boston Field prior to the renewal of the Logan/Nelsonville-York grid rivalry.

While both the old Buckeyes and present-day Buckeyes showed up, however, the Chieftains didn't arrive until the second half.

They were there physically, but the Buckeyes ran around and through them in the first half, piling up a 19-0 lead barely seven minutes into the game and taking a 29-0 halftime advantage en route to a convincing 42-6 non-conference victory.

The score was indicative of two teams going in different directions midway through the 2011 season. The Buckeyes are 5-0 and flying high; the Chiefs are 0-5 for the first time since 1990.

Logan has started a season 0-6 only once, way back in 1929.

If Friday night's game had been a boxing match, it would have been stopped in the first round because the Chiefs took a beating.

"I told our kids at halftime... we got taken to the shed in the first half. We really did," said Logan coach Kelly Wolfe. "We were taken to the shed in every aspect of the game, and that's what is more disappointing than anything.

"That's a great football team and those (N-Y) kids came to play," he added. "If they come to play like that every week they'll probably go 10-0. They came out and played hard and our kids were not in the game in the first half. I guess that's my fault. It comes back on me."

The Buckeyes quickly showed the Chiefs why they're 5-0. N-Y scored three touchdowns on its first 12 plays from scrimmage.

"We really felt that in order to take momentum completely out of their hands, we had to get a quick start," said Nelsonville-York coach Dave Boston Jr., a member of that 1981 state championship team. "That was real important for us all week in practice, in preparation, to come out strong real quick and finish strong.

Logan is "a big Division II school," he added. "Anytime we get an opportunity to play them and we get them it's a great win for our kids."

It didn't take long for the Buckeyes to get the Chieftains Friday night.

N-Y drove 57 yards on eight plays in less than three minutes to open the game, scoring on a 7-yard mis-direction run by junior wingback Austin North.

The Chiefs then fumbled the ball away on a fourth-and-2 at their own 46-yard line, and three plays later the Buckeyes were in the end zone again, this time courtesy of a 39-yard touchdown run by junior fullback Clint Handa straight up the middle.

About all that went wrong for the Buckeyes early was that they failed on a couple 2-point conversions... but they were in command 12-0 with 5:15 left in the opening period.

The Chiefs then fumbled the ball away on their first play from scrimmage on the ensuing possession, and N-Y immediately capitalized. Quarterback Nathan Dean threw deep to receiver Daniel Kline, who out-jumped a Logan defensive back, caught the ball at the 10-yard line and raced into the end zone to complete a 40-yard touchdown play.

Dean kicked the extra point and it was 19-0 N-Y with 4:51 still to play in the first quarter.

"This team's been a big-play team all year," Boston said. "We have a lot of weapons. Coach (Earich) Dean's done a great job utilizing those weapons. These kids click. They're a very unselfish group. They don't care who scores, they just continue to block for each other and play hard for each other."

Logan did get into Nelsonville-York territory a couple times in the first half with sophomore Jack Music at the controls. He played the first half at quarterback in place of senior starter Kelly Long, who was suspended for the first half for disciplinary reasons.

"(Long) had to be suspended for the first half today," Wolfe said. "That's my code of conduct and I have to stick to my guns."

N-Y didn't let up in the first half. The Buckeyes had a five-play, 59-yard scoring drive capped off by another big play, a 39-yard TD run up the middle by senior tailback Dustin Young, who went the distance with barely a hand being laid on him, with 7:09 left in the half.

Dean then drilled a 37-yard field goal in the final two minutes to lift Nelsonville-York into a 29-0 lead at the break.

Logan then came out and played a decent second half, making a bit of a bid to cut the deficit in half.

A 54-yard run off a fake punt by McCarty set the Chiefs up in scoring position at the outset of the half and McCarty eventually scored Logan's only touchdown on a 1-yard run.

The Chiefs then put together an excellent drive, aided by a couple N-Y penalties, moving from their own 20 to the Buckeye 1-yard line, with Long and Isaac Lindsey hooking up on a 39-yard bomb.

But an illegal procedure penalty, an incomplete pass and a quarterback sack ended the rally and Logan's best chance at getting back into the game.

“We felt that we could take the momentum into the locker room and put things away,” Boston said, “but they come out with a flash in the second half and fake a punt on us and move it down the field (and) got one (TD) in.

“It's always huge anytime you make a big goal-line stand,” he added. “Our defense believes. We haven't given up a lot of points this year anyhow. They play hard when their backs are against the wall. They're ready to jump out and get after you.”

“That really hurt in the second half when we drove down there and didn't get any points,” Wolfe stated. “If we would have gotten a touchdown right there we would have had some momentum going and would have been back in the game.”

Logan has played well in the second half nearly all season against teams who, through Friday night's games, have posted a combined record of 19-5.

“I think I need to give my halftime speech during pregame I guess,” Wolfe said. “There's been no margin for error. We're trying to figure out what buttons to push. I don't what it was tonight. I thought we were ready to play this week.

“I thought we had good practices, and every coach thought we had good practices this week,” he added. “I thought we worked hard and got some things done. And it's just not showing up on the field.”

N-Y then scored a couple late touchdowns to pull away, including a 35-yard scoring pass from Dean to Kline on which Logan defensive back Isaac Schmeltzer batted the ball away only to see it deflect right into Kline's hands for a TD.

“In the second half we looked a lot better, moved the ball and did some good things,” Wolfe said. “It was only 12-6 in the second half, counting that fluky touchdown pass.”

Young, Dean and Kline were the real deal for the Buckeyes. Young rushed for 178 yards on 25 carries, Dean connected on 8-of-15 aerials for 122 yards and two touchdowns, and Kline caught four passes — two for scores — for 92 yards.

McCarty was the Chiefs' main bright spot. Not only did he rush for 118 yards and score the only Logan touchdown, but he was also all over the field making tackles on defense.

The Chiefs travel to Gallipolis next Friday for a Southeastern Ohio Athletic League contest while Nelsonville-York opens Tri-Valley Conference Ohio Division play against visiting Wellston.

Chiefs pick up first win of season, 14-3

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

GALLIPOLIS — That 800-pound gorilla you might have seen running away from Gallia Academy High School's Memorial Field Friday night was the monkey that jumped off the collective backs of the Logan Chieftains.

The Chiefs, facing the possibility of an 0-6 start to a football season for the first time since 1929, rode junior halfback Cory McCarty and their defense to a 14-3 Southeastern Ohio Athletic League victory over the host Blue Devils for their first victory of the season.

"It all comes down to Cory McCarty and our defense," lauded a happy — and relieved — Logan coach Kelly Wolfe after the Purple & White (1-5 overall, 1-1 SEOAL) broke what amounted to a six-game losing streak, including the final game of the 2010 season.

"A lot happened this week (four players quit the team), and I told our kids when we go down there we need to show up with an attitude," he added. "I told them that when I walk around in pre-game, I'm going to be looking in your eyes... and I want to see kids who are ready to play football."

With a surprisingly sparse Logan crowd looking on — likely a combination of the 0-5 start, the rainy, dreary weather and 80-mile trip — the Chiefs were, as Hank Williams Jr. might say, ready for some football.

In their first five losses of the season, the Chiefs only played one good first half and were pretty much out of the running by the time the second half rolled around.

Not Friday night.

"We came out and took it to them," Wolfe said. "We scored quickly, but our defense really took it to them in the first half."

McCarty rushed for 207 yards on 30 carries for the Chieftains, who only had four skill-position players touch the ball on offense all night. He broke a 57-yard touchdown run up the middle with 6:03 remaining in the first half to put the Chiefs ahead.

It was a precarious lead the Purple & White defense protected the rest of the way against a Gallipolis team that very easily could have entered the game 5-0. The Blue Devils (3-3, 0-1) had lost by five points to Athens and by six points to Ironton.

But Friday night, Gallipolis lost three fumbles and several times committed key mistakes or penalties that, along with the Logan defense, kept them off the scoreboard except for a Brandon Taylor 19-yard field goal at the end of the first half.

"We put ourselves in position to get on track, but whether it was a mental mistake or a physical mistake from a penalty to a turnover... just uncharacteristic things from this group of kids,"

Gallipolis coach Mike Eddy said. “We haven’t played that way all year long. I think you have to credit Logan’s emotional play. Coach (Alex) Penrod, being a (Logan) historian the way he is, (the Chiefs) haven’t gone 0-6 in 82 years, so you know coming in they’re going to bring their best.”

Penrod, the Blue Devils’ defensive coordinator, is a Logan High School graduate and a former Chieftain football player.

“They’re not an 0-5 team,” Eddy said of the Chieftains. “They just were in that situation (with a tough schedule). They’re a team that has good athletes.

“We kind of played their game,” he continued. “That seemed to be their Achilles’ heel all year: they would get in a situation to score, or be ready to put a drive together, and they would make a mistake. For whatever reason, the roles were reversed tonight.”

Five times the Blue Devils drove into Logan territory in the first half, only to turn the ball over twice on downs. They also had to deal with Chieftain defensive end Caleb Branson, who was in the Gallipolis backfield most of the night.

“We changed our defense up this week when Michael (Simpson) went down (with a broken collarbone in last week’s game at Nelsonville-York) and made some adjustments,” Wolfe revealed. “We felt we had more linebackers than anything else and put four linebackers out there instead of three.”

Logan even had 4-4 and 6-2 formations.

“I don’t know how many tackles for loss our defense had tonight... it had to be eight or 10,” he added. “Our defensive line had a great game.”

Late in the first half, the Chiefs gave the Blue Devils an opening by shanking a 6-yard punt deep in their own territory, giving GAHS the ball on the Logan 31 with 72 seconds left.

Two first downs later, Gallipolis was at the Logan 10 and quarterback Wade Jarrell connected with Taylor on a swing pass. Taylor was tackled inside the 2-yard line with the clock running out and Gallipolis called its last timeout with 5.2 seconds left.

The Blue Devils attempted a quick pass that Branson batted down, forcing Gallipolis to settle for Taylor’s 19-yard field goal as time expired.

“At that point, points were points for us,” Eddy said. “We had no time-outs left, five seconds on the clock and had one shot. If you run the ball in that situation you’re not going to get any opportunities for points. You have to throw a pass... and the wide receiver was open, but their end (Branson) got up the field and knocked the pass down. We were at least able to come away with some points.

“One score after that and we’re in the lead. That’s how I looked at it,” he added. “We had to get something on the board. The points themselves were more important than how we got them. We’d had opportunities, and there was no reason to believe we wouldn’t get another.”

“At halftime everybody felt we needed to line up and let Cory do what he does,” Wolfe said. “I think it was pretty obvious in the second half. I told Cory at halftime to just run the ball, look for the hole and not put pressure on himself. It wasn’t anything fancy... I must have called the same play 25 or 30 times.”

McCarty accounted for 21 of the Chiefs’ 27 running plays in the second half. Logan couldn’t get its passing game going, completing just 1-of-6 passes in the second half and 2-of-13 for the game.

The Logan defense again came through several times in the second half, stopping Gallipolis on fourth-and-1 at the Logan 40 midway through the third period and forcing a pair of fumbles on the next two series, which were recovered by Garrett Tutwiler and Sean Wotring.

Wotring’s play was the biggest. Early in the fourth quarter, Jarrell hit Taylor with a swing pass in the right flat and Taylor found some running room down the sideline and crossed midfield. But Wotring stripped the ball from Taylor, it popped into the air, and Wotring caught it for a huge turnover.

“You could see as the game went on (the Logan players) were playing with energy, with confidence and believing in themselves,” Wolfe said. “There was a lot of enthusiasm on the sidelines. When Wotring got that strip, you just felt (the monkey) was off their shoulders and we were winning this game. That was a huge play.”

And that, for all intents and purposes, was it for the Blue Devils. After turning the ball over on downs on their own 21-yard line — defensive back Josh Fridley got a hand on a deep pass that bounced out of Cody Russell’s hands — McCarty broke a game-clinching 21-yard TD run off right tackle.

Wolfe said the Chiefs took a different approach to pregame preparation Friday night.

Assistant coach “Pat (Walsh) came to me on Thursday (and said) ‘when we go in after pre-game, before you talk and we come out, they get their pads on, they sit down, it’s dead silent in here, and they do nothing but think about the game and what they have to do to help us win’ ,” Wolfe revealed. “So we made some pre-game adjustments to get our minds right. I think we came out with a better attitude to start the game tonight.”

Make no mistake about it, there was a huge exhale of relief from everyone in Chieftain Nation — players, coaches and fans alike — Friday night in Gallia County.

“I can breathe,” Wolfe said with a relieved laugh. “Now my family will love me again.”

Chiefs fall in double overtime

LOGAN — In retrospect, seeing as how the Warren Warriors had dropped 13 straight football games to the Logan Chieftains, being forced to play a couple overtimes Friday night in Logan Chieftain Stadium to finally get an elusive victory over the Purple & White was well worth waiting a little bit longer.

Senior running back Jeremy Hastie stepped in behind center in place of injured quarterback Dylan Leffingwell and led the Warriors to a thrilling 40-34 double-overtime Southeastern Ohio Athletic League triumph over the Chieftains.

“It's been 13 years — (the extra wait) is worth it,” Warren coach Andy Schob said after the Warriors (4-3 overall, 2-1 SEOAL) snapped that 13-game losing streak at the hands of the Chiefs (1-6, 1-2) in the first overtime game in the four-year history of Logan Chieftain Stadium.

While it was Logan's first-ever double-overtime game since OT was introduced in the late 1980s — and the Chiefs' first OT game since beating Zanesville 20-14 back in 1999 — it was the second such game in as many weeks for the Warriors, who fell 10-7 in two OTs last Friday at Parkersburg South.

“Both teams played a great football game,” Schob said, “but it's great to be on the other end of (a 2OT decision). I'm proud of both teams and I was proud of our kids.”

So was Logan coach Kelly Wolfe, who also went into Friday night's contest without his starting quarterback. Senior Kelly Long was suspended for two games this week for violating the Logan High School code of conduct and the Chiefs went with a sophomore, Jack Music, who indeed played some sweet music behind center.

“This was a heck of a football game tonight,” Wolfe said. “I told (the Logan players) 'you were down 14-0 and you stormed back into this game, you scored three straight touchdowns and went up 21-14.' I told them I was proud of them. To have the game go to double-overtime and down to the last play of the game, you can't ask for a better game to be a part of. That was a great game all the way around.”

Hastie and Music were two of several standout players on both sides of the field on LHS's Homecoming night.

Hastie, taking direct snaps in a three-man backfield, went 6-of-8 passing for 73 yards but, more importantly, ran for 153 yards and a pair of touchdowns and did a great job running the offense.

“Hastie is just a great athlete,” Schob praised. “We talked (of putting Hastie at QB) over the week when we knew Dylan was hurt, and he came in and worked really hard. He played amazing. And to come back from a double-overtime loss and (after) losing two in a row, I was really pleased with the way we responded.

“Last week when Dylan got hurt, in the fourth quarter Hastie came to me and said 'coach, if you need me, put me back there. I can handle it,' ” the Warren coach revealed. “He's never played quarterback before, but he's a great athlete and a competitor. He worked at it before and after practice. I know he was nervous, but he came out with a great performance.”

So did players such as Josh Mays, who finished with only 14 yards rushing on the night but turned three of his eight carries into touchdowns, including both Warren scores in the extra sessions and the game-winning TD in the second overtime.

Music went 11-of-17 passing for 138 yards and two touchdowns, connecting with Sean Wotring and Isaac Lindsey on TD passes, and junior halfback Cory McCarty ran for 200 yards for a second-straight game and scored three touchdowns, including one in overtime to force a second extra session.

“Jack had two touchdown passes and hit Sean on a deep one” late in the second quarter,” Wolfe said. “He did everything we needed him to do tonight. I thought Jack did a great job as a sophomore coming in there.

“We were trying to find different formations to give (McCarty) a chance” to touch the ball, Wolfe added.

Warren scored two touchdowns within 14 seconds late in the opening period. Mays scored on a 3-yard run, then the Chiefs fumbled away the ensuing kickoff and Hastie connected with Jeremy Fivecoait (six receptions for 82 yards) with a 16-yard scoring pass on the very next play.

The Warriors missed a chance to go up 17-0 when Chas Miller had a 33-yard field goal attempt sail wide left, and moments later the Chiefs capitalized with a terrific 9-play, 80-yard scoring drive, keyed by a 26-yard running play on fourth-and-three by Lindsey out of wildcat formation in the Logan backfield.

With under a minute left in the half, Music went deep and Wotring, all 5-foot-7 of him, out-jumped a Warren defensive back, came down with the ball and scampered across the goal line to complete a 25-yard scoring pass with 32.8 seconds left. Wotring also booted the extra point to pull Logan within 14-7 at the intermission.

It was just getting interesting.

McCarty got the bulk of the carries on back-to-back series early in the third stanza, tying the game on a 2-yard run and then, three plays after Josh Fridley picked off a Warren pass, bolting around right end and breaking several tackles on the way to a 34-yard scoring run on a fourth-and-four play to put the Chiefs ahead.

Undaunted, Warren responded with a nine-play, 56-yards drive to score the equalizer on a 5-yard run after connecting with Fivecoait on key 22-yard and 20-yard pass plays. That score came early in the fourth period, and there was still much more to come.

Logan then put together another monster drive, going 88 yards on 11 plays, with Music hooking up with Wotring and Lindsey on drive-extending 9-yard pass plays.

Then, with 6:29 left in regulation, Music connected with Lindsey (five receptions for 63 yards) in the right flat, where Warren was lacking a defender, and Lindsey split a pair of defensive backs and out-raced the rest of the team to the end zone for a 31-yard touchdown.

Logan missed the extra point, and it looked like it might prove costly moments later.

That man Hastie returned the ensuing kickoff 30 yards — Logan freshman kicker Dean Jordan saved a touchdown with a tackle on the Warren sidelines — then Hastie broke a 45-yard run down to the Logan 4. Two plays later, Hastie scored from two yards out to draw Warren even at 27-27.

Miller booted the extra point to apparently put Warren ahead, but the play was blown dead when the Chiefs were called for being offside. Logan was called for still another offside penalty before Miller's PAT attempt sailed wide left and the game remained tied.

With 5:19 left, it looked like overtime was looming on the horizon.

Warren forced a Logan punt and the Chiefs did likewise to the Warriors... and it looked like a perfect end to Homecoming when McCarty brought the kick back 58 yards to paydirt. But Logan was called for an illegal block on the play, nullifying the touchdown.

Still, moments later a 27-yard pass play from Music to Wotring got the Chiefs to the Warren 14, and three plays later the Chiefs called timeout with 40 seconds left to set Wotring up with a potential game-winning 30-yard field goal.

But the Logan holder bobbled the snap from center and was tackled by a host of Warriors, sending the game to OT.

“I just wish we would have got a chance to give Wotring a chance to kick at the end of regulation,” Wolfe stated. “It was a little out of his range, but it was an extra point and 10 yards, a little adrenaline rush, you never know... (maybe) he gets into one.”

Each team gets one possession per overtime, starting from the other team's 20-yard line, and Warren only needed six plays to get its two touchdowns.

Mays put the Warriors ahead on a 5-yard run on Warren's first OT series after Hastie got things started with an 11-yard run. After Miller booted the extra point — the kick hit the left upright and ricocheted through — the Chiefs were called for roughing the kicker, meaning their possession had to start on the Warren 35.

No problem. McCarty went around left end 35 yards to paydirt on the very first play, and Wotring's PAT kick pulled Logan even again at 34-34.

“That overtime touchdown was our stretch play,” Wolfe said. “We just put it in this week, and it worked. Our guards got the block out on the corner.”

Logan had the first possession of the second OT and never threatened, with a deep pass by Music on fourth-and-10 falling incomplete. Warren then won it as Hastie took a pair of keepers for 12 yards before Mays went around right end and busted over the goal line on an 8-yard run.

“They had a good game plan and got the ball into their playmaker's hands as much as they could tonight,” said Wolfe, who wasn't all that surprised the Warriors went with Hastie at QB. “When we found out that (Leffingwell) wasn't going to play, we figured (Hastie) would get some touches. And they stuck to it all the way through the second overtime — they didn't change what they were doing. They just kept pounding and giving him a chance to make plays, and that's what he did.”

Schob and the Warriors were more than happy to get a rare victory in Hocking County, improving their all-time record against the Purple & White to 4-22.

“It's an absolutely great win,” Schob said. “Both teams stepped up, and I hate to see either team lose.”

“Logan's a good football team,” he added. “I don't think any team in our league, except maybe for Jackson, could win many games, if any games, with the schedule they've played. (Logan Chieftain Stadium) is a tough place to play, and we hadn't beaten them in 13 years, so we knew we'd have our hands full. And our kids responded.”

So did the Chiefs who, for a second-straight home game, set a school record. In their last home contest, a 49-32 loss to Jackson three weeks ago, those 32 points set a school mark for the most points scored in a defeat; Friday night's 34 tallies eclipsed that.

Logan is now 4-2 all-time in overtime games — three of them against Warren — and it was the Chiefs' first-ever home loss in an extra session. They're now 3-1 at home in OT and 2-1 all-time against Warren in OT, winning 21-20 in 1991 at Warren and 21-14 in 1998 at Bill Sauer Field.

“It was an exciting game. It really was,” Wolfe said. “You don't know if it's worse to get blown out or lose like this on the last play of the game... but we did a lot of positive things to build on. We'll keep working.”

Pioneers blank Chiefs behind stifling defense, 42-0

Former Logan coach Coate's Jonathan Alder squad remains undefeated on season at 8-0

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

LOGAN — It was both an understatement and a pretty good analogy.

“Defensively, we're pretty good. We can hold water back with our defense,” Jonathan Alder coach Steve Coate said after his Pioneers shut out the Logan Chieftains 42-0 Friday night in Logan Chieftain Stadium.

Pretty good? Probably the best defense the Chiefs have seen in several years.

“They're a great football team. Their defense is everything it was advertised to be,” said Logan coach Kelly Wolfe, whose Chieftain offense was on the opposite end of that JA defense, which has only allowed 49 points all season and has now won five games via shutout.

“They're well-coached and they understand the game,” he continued. “They make their reads and they fly to the ball. It didn't matter if we faked or what we did; they read their keys and they reacted.”

Jonathan Alder (8-0) showed why it's ranked fourth in this week's state Associated Press Division III poll as Coate made a triumphant return to his old stomping grounds.

Coate was Logan's head coach from 1982 to 1984, compiling an 11-18-1 record in his three years at the helm of the Purple & White. He's had much more success at Jonathan Alder, including last night.

However, the undefeated Pioneers got a little more than they bargained for in the first half from a beleaguered Logan defense that entered the game allowing more than 34 points per game, managing just four first downs and 138 total yards. They led 14-0 at the intermission.

But Jonathan Alder's defense was more than up to the task against the Logan offense, limiting the Chieftains (1-7) to just 78 first-half yards and 125 for the game.

And with placekicker Nick Smith booming kickoff after kickoff into the end zone, the Chiefs found themselves starting from the 20-yard line nearly all night. They were never able to win the game of field position, only starting a drive outside the 20 once.

Logan really only had one good scoring chance all night, but it occurred while the score was still close.

Jonathan Alder took the lead to stay midway through the opening period when quarterback Nate Squires found a wide-open Alex Randall on a post pattern for 33 yards and a touchdown.

After an exchange of punts, the Purple & White took over at their own 34 and worked their way to the Jonathan Alder 35, thanks to converting a fourth-and-1 situation when Josh Fridley took a fake-punt direct snap three yards for a first down.

However, Alder's Luke Foster tackled the Chiefs' Cory McCarty on fourth-and-two to thwart the effort, and the Pioneers then set out on getting a score of their own.

The Pioneers had a long touchdown run by Nick Wrightsell called back on a penalty. He got credit for 44 yards deep into Logan territory as the Pioneers were called for a block in the back behind the play.

But the Pioneers simply shrugged it off and punched it in on a seven-play, 63-yard drive, with Wrightsell doing the honors on a 5-yard run with 4:34 left in the half.

“At halftime it was 14-0. I was proud of our kids,” Wolfe said. “Last week (Jonathan Alder's) game (with Washington Court House) was 42-0 at halftime. Obviously the game got out of hand at the end, but it was 14-0 at halftime and I was excited and our kids were excited.

“We hung with one of the best teams in the state,” he added, “but you have to make plays. We needed a couple big things to happen, and it didn't. We didn't make plays.”

And the Pioneers then broke the game open in the second half.

The Chiefs defense, which played so well in the first half, stopped a Jonathan Alder series deep in Logan territory when Paul Wesselhoeft and Jordan Sharb threw Derritt Potts for losses of 12 and eight yards on back-to-back plays.

But, moments later, a 30-yard run by Potts put the Pioneers into position for Tyler Parker to score on a 4-yard run with 5:54 left in the third period. Then, less than three minutes later, 37-yard pass from Squires to Randall led to a 2-yard Squires scoring run and a 28-0 edge.

The Chiefs lost Wesselhoeft, their nose guard, to a leg injury late in the third quarter. He never returned and was on crutches during the Chiefs' post-game huddle.

The Pioneers got a 22-yard TD pass from Squires to Randall less than two minutes into the final quarter, then less than two minutes later Foster picked off a pass and bulled his way 35 yards to paydirt to round out the scoring.

Coate wasn't surprised the Chiefs came out and played so well on defense.

“I saw a pretty good (Logan) team on film,” Coate said of his former team. “They have good strength, they play hard and they're well-coached.

“We also caused some of our problems with our penalties and failed to convert some situations and didn't convert some third downs,” he added. “We lost some of our composure with the penalties, but we got (composure) back.”

The Chiefs' came up with a game plan of trying to drill the ball up the middle, where they felt they had found about the only weakness in the Jonathan Alder defense.

“Watching them on film, we felt like they were weak inside,” Wolfe said. “Not their middle linebacker (Foster). He's a stud. We felt they were weak at nose guard. We saw him get pushed back by two or three teams. So that's why we came out with a brand-new formation for this week... we felt if we lined up and got a push, and (kept giving) the ball to Cory and get four yards, four yards and four yards, we could keep their offense off the field. That was our plan.

“We told Cory he may have 55 carries,” he added, “and if he gets tired we'd put (Nick) Maniskas in there and do the same thing.”

At times it worked, but the Chiefs either hurt themselves with penalties or fumbling the snap... or the JA defense simply buckled down and swarmed whoever had the ball.

“I didn't have any more plays to call,” Wolfe said. “I ran everything we put in this week against them and ran all of our base stuff. I called everything we've got — and they stuffed everything we had.”

Logan was shut out for the first time since losing 7-0 to Louisville in the 2008 Division II regional semifinals. However, the Chieftain defense played much better than allowing 42 points (actually 35, not counting the Pioneers' pick-six in the fourth period) would indicate.

“Their running back (Potts) had us scared to death,” Wolfe said. “He's fast as lightning. But he didn't hurt us. (Wrightsell) hurt us, and that's what they bring to the table. They have three or four guys. I thought our kids did a good job containing (Potts).

“We made them work for everything,” he added. “I know they had a tougher game tonight than they had the last couple weeks. And Jordan Sharb had his best game of the year tonight at middle linebacker.”

They say you can't go home again... but that wasn't the case for Coate or his wife, Jamie, a Logan High School graduate.

“It's like I said the other day; I knew I had to keep the team focused on the game,” Coate said, “but walking in here and seeing Keith (Myers, his quarterback at Logan), Ron (Janey, an assistant coach on his Logan staff) there to meet us, and seeing (former players) D.J. Conrad and Scott Whalen and just guy after guy, it was pretty special. It was special for us (he and his wife) to come back.”

And he knows his former running back is dealing with some tough times in the shoes he once filled as head coach of the Chieftains.

“I know it's eating at Kelly. I've been there,” Coate said. “You just have to keep plugging away and do the right things.”

The Chiefs have two games remaining — next Friday at home against Portsmouth and the following Friday at Chillicothe — and they still have a lot left to play for.

With Chillicothe pulling off a 15-13 upset last night at Warren, the Chiefs find themselves in a position where they have a legitimate chance to finish second in the Southeastern Ohio Athletic League by winning out.

“I told (the players) I felt like we're making some strides as a football team,” Wolfe said. “We need to finish 2-0 to show we have made some strides as a program and as a team, because I think we have.”

Chieftains drop another 2OT heartbreaker

Portsmouth hands Logan 24-21 loss on Senior Night

By Craig Dunn
Logan Daily News

LOGAN — To say the least, the Logan Chieftains haven't gotten a whole lot of breaks in what's been one of the program's most difficult seasons in many years.

And even when they were presented with — and capitalized upon — one of the biggest breaks you could ever expect to get, they still just couldn't get over the hump.

Portsmouth's Zaide Whitley scored all 24 of his team's points, including a 17-yard field goal to conclude double-overtime, to lift the Trojans to a thrilling — and somewhat surreal — 24-21 Southeastern Ohio Athletic League victory over the host Chieftains Friday night in Logan Chieftain Stadium.

After never having played a double-overtime game since OT was implemented in the late 1980s, the Chiefs played two of them to bookend a three-game homestand... and dropped both of them.

Whitley was a one-man wrecking crew for the Trojans, scoring on an 8-yard run, catching a pair of touchdown passes from quarterback Mason Jordan, kicking three extra points and the aforementioned field goal in a game that Portsmouth (3-6 overall, 2-3 SEOAL) looked to have locked up late in regulation.

With Logan's offense having stagnated — the result of injuries to running backs Cory McCarty and Nick Maniskas — the Trojans led 14-7 and had the ball first and goal on the Logan 1-yard line with under three minutes remaining in regulation. Some points of any kind would no doubt put the game away.

But Logan's defense came through with a terrific goal-line stand and the Trojans could not punch the ball across the goal line for a clinching touchdown on the first two plays.

Then, on third and goal, the Trojans' Duke Edwards fumbled going around right end. Logan's Sean Wotring scooped up the ball at the Portsmouth 10 and, with a Logan Senior Night crowd on its feet screaming at this unbelievable turn of events, set sail for the opposite goal line.

He rambled and weaved his way 85 yards before Jordan saved a touchdown — momentarily, at least — at the Portsmouth 5.

On the Chiefs' first play from scrimmage, sophomore Nick Kost scored almost untouched on a run up the middle — his first varsity touchdown — and Wotring booted the extra point to tie the game 14-14 with 2:25 left.

“The irony of it is, I said 'let's not be heroes here — if we can't punch it in, let's just kick a field goal and go up 17-7 and we'll be fine,'” Portsmouth coach Curt Clifford said afterward. “And as soon as he bounced it outside, I saw the ball on the ground.”

“Honestly, though, it should never have come down to that,” he added. “We’re what, eight inches from a touchdown and we can’t score with first-and-goal? That sits back on the offensive line — we can’t get a push. We have three sophomores on the offensive line, and when you have that, and when you’re playing a physical football team, that’s going to happen.”

The moral of the story for the Trojans?

“I told the guys that if you’re going to learn a lesson from this game,” Clifford said, “get in the weight room.”

“We definitely were down and out for a long time,” said Logan coach Kelly Wolfe. “Give our defense credit — they kept us in the game. Two great goal-line stands, and they kept fighting.

“We had talked all week about the fact that Portsmouth does have mental lapses, that they do have breakdowns, and we thought they were due for one,” he added. “We just needed to be ready to capitalize when it happened — and we did. When they dropped the ball, Sean was ready and made a great scoop.”

Still, the Trojans got one last chance to win in regulation, driving to the Logan 17 in the waning seconds before a 33-yard field goal by Whitley went wide right.

On the first play from scrimmage in overtime, Edwards was thrown for a four-yard loss and didn’t get up. He was taken off the field on a stretcher and flown via medical helicopter to a Columbus hospital for precautionary reasons.

When play resumed about 15 minutes later, Jordan threw an incomplete pass before hitting a wide-open Whitley in the back right corner of the end zone for a 24-yard touchdown to put Portsmouth ahead.

Undaunted, the battered and undermanned Chieftains — playing with a backfield of three sophomores who started the season on the junior varsity team — scored the equalizer four plays later, with Isaac Schmeltzer taking a pitchout 10 yards around left end to paydirt for his first varsity TD.

Wotring kicked the extra point, as did Whitley on the Trojans’ OT touchdown, to knot the score again at 21-21 and send the game to a second extra session.

When the Chiefs lost 40-34 to Warren in double OT two weeks ago, Logan answered a touchdown by Warren in the first overtime and Wolfe thought about going for a 2-point conversion to win it.

The same thought went through his head last night.

“I thought about going for two,” he said, “but (Portsmouth) had been fumbling a lot of snaps and I thought they might make another mistake.”

Logan was unable to move the ball to open the second overtime and, on fourth down, sophomore quarterback Jack Music was intercepted by L.J. Adams to end the drive.

Then, on the second Portsmouth play of the second OT, Jordan scrambled away from a potential sack and found a seam long enough to connect with that man Whitley on the right sideline for 19 yards to the Logan 1-yard line.

Jordan “made a play on third down. We had some decent pressure on him and flushed him,” Wolfe stated. “He made a play. That's what you would expect senior quarterbacks to do for you.”

Again, however, the Logan defense stood tall and the Trojans could not cross the goal line. Jordan was stopped for no gain on a quarterback sneak, then had to fall on a bad snap from center — one of several the Trojans dealt with all night — for a 6-yard loss to the Logan 7.

Following another incomplete pass, Whitley came on to attempt a 22-yard field goal and made the kick to apparently win the game. However. Logan was called for being offside and the ball was moved to the Logan 3.

The Trojans then won the game when Whitley's 17-yard field goal — the holder knelt at the 7-yard line — sailed through the uprights despite the Chiefs' best efforts to block it.

And thus the Chieftains (1-8, 1-3) failed to win a home game in a full season for just the second time in school history, with 1953 being the other. All of Logan's home games in 1978 were canceled with the exception of a 6-6 tie with New Lexington as the result of the LHS teacher's strike in 1978.

The Chiefs have been decimated by injuries and suspensions the latter portion of the season, particularly the last few days.

Lucas Branson broke a bone in his foot on Thursday and watched the game from the sidelines on crutches. McCarty, who rushed for 212 yards and four touchdowns against the Trojans last season, injured a knee early in the second quarter and was on crutches on the sidelines later in the evening. Maniskas, who came in to play in place of McCarty, sustained a neck injury in the third quarter and when the game ended was on the sidelines with his neck in a brace.

Paul Wesselhoeft was not 100 percent physically last night, according to Wolfe, and senior quarterback Kelly Long has been suspended from the team for the rest of the season.

Thus, for most of the second half, the Chiefs had a backfield of Music at QB, Kost at fullback and Schmeltzer at halfback — tenth-graders who started the season on the junior varsity squad.

Music threw a nifty 35-yard touchdown pass to Wotring late in the first quarter to account for the Chiefs' first touchdown.

“One of the coaches even said it on the headset: sophomore, sophomore, sophomore in the backfield, coach,” Wolfe said. “Isaac was ready. He struggled early in the season, but he kept working and buckled down and got rewarded for it tonight.

“McCarty was sick on Wednesday and we had Maniskas running at tailback,” he added. “We told Isaac he needed to get some reps at tailback with Nick... just in case. It's funny how that works out sometimes.”

Like the Chieftains, the Trojans have also had their share of struggles this season, but Clifford said his team wasn't too far from breaking through.

“We've lost four games by 28 points — and lost in overtime to Wilmington — and our guys have been right on the cusp,” said Clifford, the dean of SEOAL coaches, currently in his 26th season as Portsmouth head coach. “We've really only been handled twice (by Jackson and Warren). Against Warren, their quarterback could have been blindfolded that night and he was still going to find a receiver, he was that on.

“We've struggled at times this year, but we play hard,” he added. “Our kids play like a bunch of maniacs — but we don't always play smart. That's something we've been harping on with these guys: let's play smart, hard-nosed football. We've got the hard-nosed part down... but, boy, do we make some silly mistakes. Whoa! We've had enough mistakes this season to last me a career.”

Meanwhile, for the Chiefs, it's been a season that seems like it's lasted as long as Clifford's coaching career. And now they have so many walking wounded that it's hard to tell who will be on the field for them in next week's season finale at Chillicothe.

“We'll have to see what happens and see who's even available on Monday,” Wolfe said. “Another double-overtime game. I thought we were out of it, down and out, but you just have to keep fighting. And we did.”

Chieftains' season comes to a disappointing end

Chillicothe takes 22-0 lead, then holds off Logan rally to deal Chieftains 29-19 setback

By Craig Dunn

Logan Daily News

CHILLICOTHE — It would be safe to say the Logan Chieftains' grid finale at Chillicothe High School Friday night was a microcosm of their entire 2011 football season.

The host Cavaliers bolted to a 22-0 lead less than midway through the second quarter before the Chiefs turned two excellent drives into touchdowns to pull within 22-13 late in the third period.

But the Purple & White just couldn't dig their way out of that 22-point hole and succumbed to the Cavaliers 29-19 in their last Southeastern Ohio Athletic League game of the season. It was that kind of a year for the Chieftains.

“It was the same thing,” said Logan coach Kelly Wolfe. “The kids fought and got back into the game. It could have been a blowout.”

In finishing 1-9 on the season — nine being the most single-season losses for a Logan team in Chieftain football history — the Purple & White were outscored 205-55 in the first half, but the difference was just 108-90 in the second half and 23-14 in a pair double-overtime losses.

And in so doing, Logan finished last (1-4) in the SEOAL for the first time since 1984.

The holes were simply too deep.

But if there's a silver lining in a dark 2011 cloud, it's that the Chieftains got plenty of experience for a lot of underclassmen. A lot of them.

“If you take out the receivers (Isaac Lindsey, Sean Wotring and Jordan Sharb) and (Aaron Wolfe) at center, there were a lot of underclassmen out there on offense for us tonight,” Wolfe stated. “Even their coach (Ron Hinton) came over and said 'you've got some good young kids. You're going to be all right.' ”

Each and every one of the Chiefs' 196 rushing yards — their second-best statistical ground performance of the season — was amassed by a sophomore, with Isaac Schmeltzer leading the way with 145 yards on 24 carries and tallying all three touchdowns.

“Isaac was a great surprise,” Wolfe praised. “Isaac did some things well last week and we couldn't ignore that, so the plan was to go the first two series with Nick (Maniskas, another sophomore) and then get Isaac in on the third series. He got in there and we couldn't take him out.

“That's a tribute to him,” he added. “He got off to a slow start (on the season) and he buckled down and worked hard in practice every day and got rewarded for it these last two weeks.”

Schmeltzer scored a touchdown in the first overtime of last week's double-OT loss to Portsmouth.

Logan needed those sophs — Schmeltzer, Maniskas, quarterback Jack Music and fullback Nick Kost — with their leading rusher, junior Cory McCarty, on crutches as the result of a leg injury sustained against the Trojans last week.

Chillicothe (3-7, 2-3), which finishes in a three-way tie for third in the SEOAL with Portsmouth and Warren, scored on its first four possessions and had the Chiefs back on their heels for almost the entire first half.

The Cavs drove 70 yards on nine plays to paydirt on their first possession, taking the lead on a 2-yard scoring run by Tim Beard. Then, after the Chiefs fumbled the ball away deep in their own territory, Chillicothe capitalized with a 35-yard field goal off the foot of Noah Valentine on the first play of the second stanza to make it 9-0.

Logan went three-and-out, then Chillicothe quarterback Ryan Mathis busted a 77-yard touchdown run, escaping some tackles near the line of scrimmage, and just like that it was 15-0 Cavs.

And when Lindsey returned the ensuing kickoff 50 yards into Chillicothe territory, the Chiefs got most of that yardage nullified by a holding penalty behind the play.

Again, it was that kind of season for the Chieftains.

“In the first half we had a fumble and an interception and a long kickoff return brought back on a penalty,” Wolfe said. “We had four guys get great blocks (on the kickoff return) up front — (the penalty) was a good call that needed to be made — but we had guys who got things done on that kickoff. You get one thing working, and then it's something else.”

And so it went for the Chieftains. Jalen Jones picked off a Music pass on Logan's first play from scrimmage and the Cavs again took advantage, with Jones scoring on a 1-yard run with 6:44 left in the half to conclude a five-play, 54-yard drive.

Down 22-0 and almost out, the Chiefs rallied back with a 12-play, 78-yard scoring drive to make a game of it and build some momentum.

Schmeltzer carried six times on the drive, including an 11-yard touchdown run with 1:06 left in the half, as Logan pulled within 22-7 at the intermission. Music also connected with Wotring and Lindsey with 14-yard and 7-yard pass plays, respectively, to pick up first downs.

Lindsey, who caught eight passes on the night, finished his LHS varsity career with 85 receptions, second only to Mason Mays (121) all-time. He passed Eric Cox (82) and Jose Medina (79) on Friday night.

“I’ll tell you what I saw when we put together that great drive right before halftime,” Wolfe said. “I saw some offensive line guys coming together. They came off to the side after we scored and said ‘we can do this.’ I saw some guys coming together and believing in what they were doing up front. That’s a good sign. You don’t see those things all the time. That was good to see, showing some spark and some life.”

And, with the Logan defense holding Chillicothe to just two first downs the entire second half, the Chiefs drew even closer when Schmeltzer scored on an 8-yard run to complete an eight-play, 43-yard drive, aided by a 15-yard Chillicothe personal foul penalty after the Cavs had sacked Music for a 9-yard loss on second down.

Logan went for a 2-point conversion and failed, but the Chiefs were within 22-13.

However, Chillicothe answered with a 58-yard, nine-play scoring drive of its own that proved to be a back-breaker.

A 40-yard pass from Mathis to Adam Bixler — with 15 of those yards deducted for another Chillicothe personal foul — and a 16-yard run by Mathis moved the Cavaliers inside the Logan 10. Three plays later, Mathis scored on a 4-yard run with 10:30 to play for a 29-13 lead.

Not giving up, the Chiefs came back and scored what proved to be their final touchdown of the season at the end of a 69-yard, seven-play drive.

Schmeltzer, who had runs of 11 and 22 yards, took the ball up the middle from the Chillicothe 5-yard line and was momentarily stopped, but bounced it outside and made it to the end zone with 8:13 to play. Logan didn’t convert the 2-point conversion and trailed 29-19.

And when the Cavs fumbled the ball away on their first play from scrimmage after recovering an onside kick, the Chiefs were in business. They drove to the Chillicothe 22 before giving the ball up on downs when a fourth-and-eight pass play from Music to Lindsey fell two yards short.

Logan later turned the ball over on down again at midfield and had a pass intercepted in the final minute.

“You hate to see the seniors go out like this,” said Wolfe. “Those guys have been here for three years. They’ve experienced it as sophomores when we were on top and got to ride that wave and be a part of that great stuff... and they’ve also been through this (a combined 4-16 record) the last two years, and you just hate to see that. They’ve experienced both sides of it. They’ve invested a lot of time in this program.”

And with that, Wolfe prepared to walk into the locker room to face his heartbroken team.

“I feel for the seniors,” he said. “I hate this night (the last game of the season) — no matter how you do it, it’s hard. You’ve been through it, and you know how much they’ve put into it. It’s the most demanding sport there is.

“Yes, we lost a whole bunch of games, and the seniors are going to be crying in there,” he added.
“And I hate it.”