

Bulldogs Come Up Short to Redskins in State Semi-Finals

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont, Sports Editor

TROY – Columbus Grove and St. Henry staged a defensive battle during their Division VII football State Semi-Final contest. The difference in the contest were a pair of first quarter touchdown passes by the Redskins.

With the lead, the Redskin defense stood tall when the Bulldog offense was able to threaten to overcome their deficit on their way to a 13-10 win at Troy Memorial Stadium Friday evening.

With the win, St. Henry, 13-1, advances to the Division VII State Championship game, for the first time since 2006, Saturday against Hillsdale at 10:30 at Canton. Columbus Grove saw its season end at 10-4 as they were playing their fourth straight State-Semi Final.

“Give credit to Columbus Grove for a great game. I’m just so damn proud of my kids. Holy smokes, we are going back to State for the first time in 19 years,” St. Henry head coach Josh Werling said. “I could not be prouder of that group.”

“You see that (Werling said of the Redskin fans in attendance). They have been so great all fall. Our volleyball team had a great run going to play in the State tournament, they were there. This community is behind these guys 100% and I’m just a proud football coach.”

Defense ruled the night as the Redskins limited the Bulldogs to 191 yards of offense, while St. Henry rolled up 266 yards, 144 of it coming through the air.

“They are extremely athletic,” coach Werling said. “Coach Craig and the defensive staff had our guys ready to roll.”

The difference in the game were two long pass plays by St. Henry in the opening quarter, which accounted for all of their points.

After the Bulldogs punted on their first possession, the Redskins needed just three plays to take the lead as Landon Schwartz hauled in a long pass from quarterback Charlie Werling, then evaded two Grove defenders for a 6-0 lead with 8:40 left in the opening quarter. The extra point try was blocked by the Bulldogs.

Columbus Grove attempted to answer back as they put together an 11 play drive that had them at the Redskin 11 yard line. After two incomplete passes, Evan Verhoff came on to kick a 28 yard field goal for the Bulldogs to make it a 6-3 game with 4:16 left in the first quarter.

St. Henry answered right back as they went 66 yards in eight plays as Werling found Austin Zimmerman in the left corner of the endzone with a 29 yard touchdown pass. Zimmerman hauled in the pass despite the efforts of two Bulldog defenders trying to knock the ball away. With the extra point, the Redskins had a 13-3 lead with 33 seconds left in the first quarter.

“We knew we had to do something different against St. Henry, they are a different style offense than what we have really seen and we are traditional, a 4-3, cover 2,” Columbus Grove coach Andy Schafer said. “I’m pretty suborn on that. Against St. Henry we switched to a 5-2, played some cover 3. We did the best we could to prepare them for that, it’s just a little different.”

“We said that if we forced St. Henry to throw, we had a chance and that’s basically what we did. We forced them to throw early, they had those two big plays unfortunately and I wish we could have them back. Those certainly cost us a portion of the game. Hats off to our kids they really played with emotion, played with heart, with fire.”

After scoring on their first two possessions, the Redskin offense never saw the endzone again as the

Bulldogs Come Up Short to Redskins in State Semi-Finals

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont, Sports Editor

Bulldog defense gave up some yards, but held firm when they needed to.

In the second quarter, the Bulldogs had a chance to cut into the Redskin lead after recovering a fumble at the St. Henry 22. A pass and two runs left the Bulldogs facing fourth and one at the 13. On fourth down, the Redskin defense stuffed a run by Trevon Baxter to get the ball back at their own 13 yard line.

Columbus Grove's defense forced a quick three and out and a short punt by the Redskins. They had the ball at the St. Henry 40 yard line.

It took Grove only two plays to score as Trevon Baxter hauled in a Landon Best pass on the left sideline, then was able to keep his balance and run into the endzone for a 38 yard touchdown pass with a minute left in the first half. With the extra point, the score was 13-10 going into halftime.

The second half was a defensive display by both teams as there were no points scored. Both teams had opportunities to possibly add to their point total, but were unable to finish drives.

With the lead, the Redskins changed their offensive strategy at halftime preferring to run the ball using mainly quarterback Charlie Werling as their primary runner. Werling finished the game with 25 rushing attempts for 103 yards, with the majority (19) of those rushing attempts coming in the second half.

"That's been our identify all year, our Q run game," coach Werling said. "When it's that kind of time in the ball game, we lean on who we are and not reinvent ourselves and the kids responded. Our conversation at halftime was let's run the dang ball and if they don't score we win. It was that simple and our defense responded."

Columbus Grove had two drives into St Henry territory in the second half, but were unable to capitalize on either one.

"It's hard," Schafer said. "They are a big, physical team, they are primarily seniors. I was talking to their coach before the game and how many guys they have graduating. It's difficult, it's like hitting a stone wall. I thought our offensive coordinator did a good job trying to create mismatches and get our stuff going. We hang our hat on the jet sweep, that's no secret, but we did some inserting try to run between the tackles to keep them off guard and it helped a little bit."

The Bulldogs had one final chance as they turned the Redskins over on downs at their own 19 with 1:16 left. After a two yard run on first down, St. Henry's defense came through with a sack before two incomplete passes ended the possession for the Bulldogs.

"A lot of people counted us out," Schafer said. "I knew this team was special a long, long time ago. It took them a while but they certainly proved it."