

# Bulldogs Fall to Flyers in State Semi-Finals

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont, Sports Editor

LIMA – Marion Local entered Friday night's Division VII State Semi-Final with Columbus Grove riding a 62 game winning streak.

Even with all their success, the Flyers take no team lightly. That showed Friday night as the Flyers stopped the Bulldogs first drive with an interception then came up with more first quarter turnovers that all turned into points for Marion Local.

With the early lead, Marion Local was able to do what they wanted in a 41-6 win over the Bulldogs on a cold and windy night at Lima Spartan Stadium.

“Literally, this is just one game at a time,” Marion Local head coach Tim Goodwin said. “We just have great kids, we push them hard and they respond. Every week is a new challenge and a new team, we just have fun with it.”

With the win, the top ranked Flyers, 15-0, return to the Division VII State Championship game this Friday at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton against Jeromesville-Hillsdale, 14-1, at 10:30 a.m. Columbus Grove, the second ranked team in Division VII, saw an excellent season end at 14-1.

“They are good,” Columbus Grove head coach Andy Schafer said. “We made some mistakes that are uncharacteristic of us, and may not have cost us the game, but swung the momentum. Momentum, obviously, is always a big part of football, but with a game of this magnitude when you lose the momentum it hurts. This is going to sting for a while.”

Columbus Grove received the opening kickoff and went driving before the Flyer defense had them facing a fourth down and two at the Marion Local 38. On fourth down, the Flyers were able to intercept a Kyle Hopkins pass.

Marion Local turned the turnover into six points as Victor Hoelscher caught a 17 yard touchdown pass

from Justin Knouff just six minutes into the game. With the extra point, the Flyers had a 7-0 lead.

On the ensuing kickoff, a Bulldog player was unable to handle a short kick that Marion Local recovered at the Grove 38. One play later, Parker Hess was in the endzone as he worked his way through the Grove defense for a 38 yard scoring run.

On the Bulldogs next possession, they drove to the Flyer 20 yard line before an interception ended the drive. Marion Local went on a nine play drive, recovering a fumble of their own, as Ethan Heitkamp scored on a three yard run two minutes into the second quarter for 20-0 led after a missed extra point.

“They caught all the breaks,” Schafer said. “Not all of them, but....I think our kids, for the most part, fought to the end and showed they are resilient kids and that's certainly what I will talk to them about, but they are a good team.”

Goodwin felt his defenses early success was a key for his team as they didn't let the Bulldogs regain any momentum after the Flyers took an early lead.

“We, obviously, got some big stops after they had some success,” Goodwin said. “We have done that against some good teams over the years so that wasn't a huge surprise. We have a great senior class that has played a lot of snaps. They are not only talented, but they have the reps to react to the stimulus. We got some breaks in the kicking game under some tough conditions with the wind and cold.”

After having two drives stopped by turnovers, the Bulldogs finished a drive as Trenton Barraza scored on a five yard run with 3:44 left in the second quarter.

Marion Local quickly answered back after starting a drive at their own 44 after a personal foul penalty on the Bulldogs. The Flyers needed just four plays

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to score as Hess scored on a 30 yard run for a 27-6 lead.

After an exchange of turnovers, the Bulldogs were driving late in the first half before running out of time.

Marion Local added a score in each of the third and fourth quarters as Hess scored on a two yard run in the third quarter and a 47 yard run in the fourth quarter. Hess finished the game with 248 yards on 24 carries and the four touchdowns.

Trenton Barraza rushed for 114 for the Bulldogs on 31 carries with a score. Barraza finished his Bulldog career with a school record 6,360 yards on 844 carries and he scored 72 touchdowns.

Hopkins was 11 of 22 passing for 141 yards and Gavin Barraza caught two passes for 62 yards. Trenton Barraza had three catches for 15 yards in the game, while Brady Basinger had two catches for 22 yards and Trevon Baxter had two catches for 28 yards.

“This doesn’t take away from the season we had,” Schafer said. “We compared ourselves to the 2003 team and I was blown away by how close they are. We were really, really close, unfortunately, it didn’t go our way.”