

Charlestown "Returns to Glory" taking first Sectional title since 1996

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It was perfect football weather last Friday night, a little crisp but not freezing cold, no breeze and nothing but standing room only, literally. The Pirate faithful traveled to Brownstown Central and took over. The small set of bleachers on the visiting side soon was stocked full of Pirate Nation. The only problem, Pirate Nation kept coming. The line of Pirate fans spilled out of the bleachers and along the roped off track. Pirate fans lined both sides of the bleachers in anticipation of a possible Sectional championship.

Charlestown did not take long to take control of their Mid Southern Conference rival Braves of Brownstown as the Pirates scored on every possession of the first half. The Pirates cruised to the 62-10 victory over Brownstown Central to claim the Sectional 23 title. Most of the players on the 2012 Pirate football team was not even born the last time Charlestown enjoyed a Sectional crown. The Sectional championship was the program's first since 1996.

During the Pirate Nation huddle after the ballgame, head coach Jason Hawkins, spoke to the kids about what happened when he interviewed for the head coaching job. He described to the team, parents, coaches and fans when he went to the interview, Coach Hawkins had a t-shirt with him. The Sectional Championships were listed, '89, '93, '96, along with question marks representing the future of Pirate football. "Return to Glory" was printed across the bottom of the shirt. Last Friday night he showed the t-shirt with the question marks. Then, Coach Hawkins, who came to the Pirates in 2006, took off his black Charlestown Football hoodie, and revealed the new shirt. The same design, same Sectional Championship years, the same question marks, the same Return to Glory... but '12 was the last year listed to represent the Pirates' victory over the Braves.

Charlestown won the coin toss and chose to defer to the second half. The Braves took the first possession of the ballgame but the Pirate defense shined. Charlestown's defense forced Brownstown Central to punt the ball away.

It only took the Pirates offense four plays to find the endzone. Charlestown senior quarterback Aaron Daniel hooked up with classmate Tyler Odle for a 51 yard touchdown strike. The extra point attempt by Daniel was blocked by Brownstown Central senior Jay Wehmiller for the early 6-0 Pirate advantage at the 8:09 mark of the opening quarter of play.

Brownstown's next possession began on their 35 yard line. Braves sophomore quarterback Mitchell Scarlett was picked off by Daniel giving the Pirates the ball back on the Brownstown 42 yard line.

The Pirate drive was capped off by Daniel hitting classmate Gage Brafford for the six yard touchdown pass at the 5:44 mark. The extra point attempt by Daniel was good for the 13-0 Charlestown lead.

After the Daniel kick off Brownstown had the ball on their own 27 yard line. The Braves' drive ended on another Scarlett interception as sophomore Jason Houchens picked off the quarterback.

Charlestown took over on the Braves' 48 yard line. The Pirates were facing a fourth and 17

when Daniel connected with classmate Wesley Sexton for a 31 yard touchdown. Wehmiller again blocked the extra point attempt by Daniel. At the 1:57 mark of the first quarter, the Pirates held the 19-0 lead.

The first stanza ended with a Braves punt giving the Pirates the ball on their own 16 yard line to begin the second quarter of play.

Charlestown needed just eight plays to drive 86 yards to the endzone. Daniel zig zagged his way 38 yards to paydirt. Odle busted his way to the endzone for the two point conversion giving Charlestown the 27-0 lead at the 9:40 mark of the first half.

The rushing yardage boosted Daniel's career yards to become the All-Time Leading Rusher in Charlestown High School Football History.

The Pirate defense again stood strong and forced the Braves to punt.

Charlestown would start on their own 19 yard line. The Pirates took 10 plays before Daniel dove in from two yards out for the next Pirate score. The extra point attempt was good by Daniel to give Charlestown the 34-0 lead at the 4:10 mark of the second quarter.

The Braves would turn the ball over on downs on their next possession giving Charlestown the ball back on their own 25 yard line.

The Pirates would score with just seconds remaining in the first half. Charlestown's Daniel hooked up with Odle for a 33 yard touchdown catch and run. Daniel's extra point was good giving the Pirates the 41-0 lead with 12.4 seconds left in the first half.

Brownstown Central took a knee to end the half.

The second half began with Charlestown senior running back Seth McCutchen bulldozing his way from eight yards out to the endzone. The extra point attempt was good by Daniel for the 48-0 advantage with 9:13 remaining in the third quarter.

Brownstown Central would find the scoreboard 13 seconds later as Wehmiller hit classmate Hayden Stuckwisch for the 60 yard touchdown pass. Nick Stahl tacked on the extra point attempt for the 48-7 Charlestown advantage with nine minutes left in the quarter.

Both teams traded punts before Charlestown's Daniel scampered 29 yards to the goal line. His extra point attempt split the uprights for the 55-7 advantage at the 4:05 mark of the third stanza.

The Braves' Stahl nailed a 29 yard field goal with just 4.3 seconds remaining in the third quarter for the 55-10 Charlestown lead. The score would prove to be the last for the home standing Braves.

The final score of the ball game came midway through the fourth quarter as sophomore Eli Daniel dove two yards into the endzone. The extra point was good from junior Chris Shanks for the 62-10 advantage with 5:33 remaining in the ballgame.

As the game clock wound to triple zeroes, the Pirates began to celebrate their first Sectional victory in 16 years. Coach Hawkins was surprised by an icy water bath as all of Pirate Nation celebrated the program's fourth Sectional championship.

"Our kids wanted this just as bad as we and the community wanted this," stated Coach Hawkins after the victory. "We threw the ball really well tonight. Wesley and Tyler did an excellent job of receiving the ball."

Hawkins continued, "We do whatever is dictated by the opposing defense. Tonight they tried to stop our run and we threw the ball. This time of year you have to be able to do both."

Coach Hawkins then spoke to his team in the huddle.

"I am so proud of you guys. The sky's the limit for this team. Six years ago when I came here, I had t-shirts made with the years we won the Sectional titles, '89, '93, '96. These six years

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probably didn't seem like that long of a time to you, but for me it felt like a 100 years," Hawkins stated.

Defensive Coordinator Chris Brafford took a moment to talk to his team.

"I played on the '89 team and I am ready for the '89 team to go away. I want the 2012 team to be the new standard of Charlestown football," Brafford stated.

Charlestown was led by Daniel with 165 yards on 19 carries and three touchdowns followed by McCutchen with 127 yards on 22 carries and one touchdown.

Brownstown Central was led by Wehmiller with 30 yards on 10 carries followed by Scarlett with 19 yards on six carries.

Daniel completed 11-of-21 passes for 240 yards and four touchdowns.

Scarlett completed 9-of-15 passes for 80 yards and two interceptions followed by Wehmiller's one pass for 60 yards and one touchdown.

Charlestown's Sexton had five catches for 110 yards and one touchdown while Odle had three catches for 102 yards and two touchdowns.

Brownstown's Stuckwisch had three catches for 76 yards and one touchdown followed by Jacob Wilson with four catches for 40 yards.

Charlestown tallied 403 rushing yards and 252 passing yards for a total of 655 yards.

Brownstown Central recorded 87 rushing yards and 140 passing yards for a total of 227 yards.

The Pirates were greeted when they returned to Charlestown as Pirate Nation awaited them at the Medical Center of Southern Indiana. The Charlestown Police Department along with the Charlestown Volunteer Fire Department escorted the team through the city with lights and sirens blaring down Market Street to Main Street to Monroe Street back to the high school. The line of cars of Pirate Nation extended for a mile to complete the parade to honor the 2012 Sectional Champions.

Charlestown will host the Titans of Gibson Southern (10-2) this Friday night at The Boneyard for the Regional title. Kick off is scheduled for 8 p.m.