

?Pirates never quit in Sectional 23 semi-final but fall to Heritage Hills

Written by Michael Ross

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? While many were preparing for the festivities of Halloween. The Pirates of Charlestown were preparing for a rematch of last year's Sectional 23 semi-final round. Last year Heritage Hills traveled to Charlestown and took home the 42-24 victory.

Last week the Pirates traveled to Lincoln City on Halloween night to face off with the Patriots of Heritage Hills. The Patriots boast the No. 3 defense in Class 3A.

The 90 minute ride did not phase the Pirate faithful as the sea of blue was ready for the rematch. The Pirates worked the entire 48 minutes, never quitting and giving 110 percent for their second year head coach Jason Hawkins.

The Pirates fell short on their road to the Sectional championship trophy as Heritage Hills took the 32-6 victory to advance. The Patriots (7-3) will face Edgewood (10-1) this Friday night for the Sectional crown. Edgewood took the 49-7 victory over Brown County for their right to advance to the Sectional championship.

Charlestown finished the season at 7-4 and 5-1 in the Mid Southern Conference. The Pirates shared the conference title with the Lions of Salem.

Both teams started strong on defense as punts were exchanged on their opening possessions.

The Pirates were also forced to punt on their second possession of the ballgame as the Heritage Hills defense proved why they are ranked in the top five in Indiana Class 3A football.

Heritage Hills' second possession of the ballgame took 11 plays to find the endzone. Junior quarterback Cody Schmitt found the goal line from just one yard out. Senior kicker, Seth LaGrange, nailed the extra point for the early 7-0 advantage at the end of the first quarter of play.

The Patriots would add another touchdown in the second quarter before Charlestown would find the endzone.

Late in the first half Charlestown was forced to punt. On the punt return Patriot freshman Ben Hawkins fumbled the ball. Charlestown recovered on the Heritage Hills one yard line.

The very next play Charlestown senior Cameron Metzger dove one yard into the endzone to cut the Heritage Hills lead to nine. Charlestown's Ariel Stephens' extra point attempt sailed wide left. The Patriots held the 15-6 advantage with just 53 seconds remaining in the first half.

Heritage Hills held the same advantage heading into the halftime break.

Charlestown Head Coach Jason Hawkins took the halftime break to encourage his team.

"I told them not to quit. We still had 24 minutes left to go. And I told them we were still in the game," Hawkins stated after the ballgame.

The Patriots received the second half kick off to open the last 24 minutes of play.

Heritage Hills used a 13 play drive to extend their lead to 16. Senior runningback Kraig Gogel found the endzone from two yards out. LaGrange again split the uprights for the 22-6 lead with 8:43 remaining in the third quarter.

Charlestown's first possession of the second half was not kind to the Pirates. Charlestown opened the second half with a turnover from a fumble. Heritage Hills recovered the miscue deep in Pirate territory.

Patriot sophomore Ethan Coghill scampered five yards to the endzone at the 7:01 mark of the third period. LaGrange nailed the extra point to push the Heritage Hills lead to 29-6.

The Pirates were forced to a three and out before Heritage Hills closed out the scoring in the ballgame.

The Patriots' LaGrange nailed a 39 yard field goal to finish the scoring in the ballgame.

Heritage Hills took the 32-6 victory to advance in Sectional 23 play.

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"We had a couple of breaks tonight. We were in position to do good things and then we would shoot ourselves in the foot. They're ranked No. 3 in defense in the 3A," Hawkins said.

Hawkins addressed the team and fans during the traditional team huddle after the ballgame.

"You're looking at the team that has won more games in back-to-back seasons since 91-92. You're looking at the team that has won back-to-back conference titles since 88-89. You're looking at a team that plays the entire 48 minutes and doesn't quit. We've won 17 games in two years. We are 17-5. When I came here, I met with the seniors and I had a shirt (stating Return to Glory), these seniors did exactly what I told them to do and they brought Charlestown back to glory," Hawkins stated to his team, coaches and fans.

Hawkins stated in the after game interview, "It's been a great two years. If someone would have told me Hawkins would be 17-5 in his first two years, I'd of said, they'd be lying."

Last Friday night 20 Pirate seniors carefully put on their pads, pulled on their white jerseys with the royal blue Pirates proudly printed across the chest and laced up their cleats for their very last time. Seniors include: Cameron Metzger, Aaron May, Joel Rodriguez, Jerry Cooper, Damon Vest, Sean Johnson, Cody Houser, Eddie Duran, Mike Blackford, Andrew Davis, Andrew Thomas, Jordan White, Garrett Brock, Travis Aquirre, Wes Bowling, Blake Nauert, Cody Williams, Braden Garrett, Travis Molina and Ryan Polus.

"This senior class believed in me as much as I believed in them," Hawkins concluded.