The Salem High School football team used a storm to extinguish the Silver Creek Dragons fire 28-14 at Paul A. Graves Athletic Field last Friday.

Storm Thomas came up with two sacks, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery and Darrell Troncin sacked the Silver Creek quarterback in his own endzone for a two-point safety that helped the Lions erase a 14-7 deficit and lead to their first win of the 2012 season.

“Obviously our defense did a great job,” said Salem Head Coach Mo Moriarity. “We gave up 14 points fast and then they don’t score again.”.

The Dragons’ junior quarterback Brooks Howell unleashed a 57-yard bomb to senior Layne Taylor with less than two minutes off the clock and Trevor Spense kicked the PAT (point after touchdown), for a 7-0 lead.

The Lions, playing a game of anything you can do we can do, scored their first touchdown 1:20 seconds later. Andrew Maudlin, who finished the night with 203 yards on 25 carries, was seemingly stopped for a short gain, but somehow broke out of the pack of defenders and raced 47 yards for a touchdown.

Chris Bravo kicked the PAT and the score was tied at 7-all with 8:40 left in the first quarter.

Silver Creek went back to work and scored again just 1:07 later when Taylor ripped off a 53-yard run of his own.

Spense again kicked the PAT and the Dragons were back in front, 14-7.

Salem answered again, this time scoring on an 8-yard touchdown from Klayton Dougherty to Lane Smith.

Bravo missed the PAT and the Lions trailed 14-13.

The two teams traded a pair of fumbles.

The first came when Silver Creek was marching for another score and Thomas sacked Howell.

The Lions went on the attack and were marching for the go ahead score when a fumble of their own stalled a drive.

Salem again brought pressure, this time from Troncin. He ran down Howell and caused a fumble. The ball was kicked out of the endzone for a two-point safety and Salem led 15-14.

On a safety, the scoring team gets the ball back and Salem took advantage.

Smith returned the kick deep into Silver Creek territory and Maudlin ended the drive when he scored on a one-yard run.

Bravo again kicked the PAT and Salem was in front for good 22-14.

The Lions added one more score, this time off a Dougherty three-yard run.

That score was set up by a 30-yard pass and catch from Dougherty to Pennington.

Bravo missed the PAT, but Salem was in control, 28-14.

The Lions had several opportunities in the second half to put the contest further out of reach but costly penalties kept them from any consistency.

None of the penalties were more costly than an personal foul on Dougherty, who was ejected from the game at the start of the second half.

Moriarity turned the reigns of the Salem offense to sophomore Jordan McNeely, and while he

didn’t lead the team on a scoring drive, he managed the offense.

“You have to give Jordan McNeely a lot of credit,” Moriarity said. “The crazy thing is I had worked him some this week. We had planned on playing him. He gives us a spark and has a burst to him. So it was part of the plan, but I didn’t know he was going to have to play as much as he did. I am glad he got the practice time so he was able to step in and play.”

Indiana High School Athletic Association rules state that if a player is ejected from a contest, he is suspended from the following week, as well.

Moriarity said he is confident in his sophomores ability to lead the team into North Harrison.

“McNeely will be our starter this week and I am OK with that,” he said. “I think Jordan can play. (As for the ejection) I am sure they took a cheap shot on Dougherty, but everyone knows it’s the guy who retaliates who gets caught. If you can’t walk away from stuff like that, you are going to have to watch, because there is no way we can have that. We had two unsportsman-like penalties and I am not going to have that. It will get cleaned up!”

While Troncin and Thomas get much of the credit for their big defensive plays, Moriarity said they happened in part because other players were doing what they were supposed to.

“Storm is very quick and athletic and our guys up front are pretty good,” he said. “We have to do our job. When we play our responsibility and stay in our gaps we can be good. We knew that if we were disciplined and stayed in our gaps against Silver Creek we were going to have players coming from the back-side to make a hit. We did that tonight and made some big plays.”

Salem put the game away thanks to the hard running by Maudlin that allowed the clock to run.

Without looking at game film, Moriarity didn’t want to speak too much about the offensive line play, but said they are growing up.

“You really don’t know who played well up on the line until you see the film,” Moriarity said. “You hope they all did. Obviously we like our right side with Zach Keltner and Jared McNeely. We have two sophomores on the line.

“Trent Pennington made a big play for us in the first half and we had a lot of guys step up and do that for us tonight.”

The Lions (1-1) will now try to build on the momentum gained from Friday when they travel to Ramsey to play North Harrison.

The Cougars are 1-1. They opened the season with a 50-6 win over Crawford County and lost 41-0 last Friday to Corydon Central.