

Roxana puts together best game of season Friday with 31-6 win over Staunton

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
October 15 2016 2:59 AM





ROXANA — It hasn't been the easiest of seasons for **Roxana high's football team**, but on Friday night at Charlie Raich Field, the Shells put together one of their most complete performances of the 2016 campaign.

A dominant rushing game, led by **juniors Joey Johnson Wyatt Kirkpatrick and Michael Cherry**, along with a good overall defensive performance, helped lead the

Shells to a 31-6 win over **Staunton**. It was Roxana's second win of the season heading into next week's season finale.,



“It was nice to win,” a happy **Roxana coach Pat Keith** said. “It’s been a tough year, and so I’m happy for the kids to get a win tonight, and hopefully, prepare and get a win in the last week, but it’s nice to get a win.”

“These guys work hard,” Keith continued, “We’re still young, but we’re getting better, so it’s nice to get a win at home for sure.”

Keith felt that his side played well on both sides of the ball.

“I thought we played pretty good offensively,” he said, “A little disappointed we had we had a couple of penalties that killed a drive, but overall, I thought our offense played better tonight. Hats off to our defense, too; I thought our defense played really well tonight, we got an interception and a safety tonight, and all in all, I’m happy, everyone’s healthy, so that’s a good thing. It’s great for Southwestern next week.”

After a three and out on the opening possession, the Shells defense helped set the tone by forcing the Bulldogs backwards after Staunton had marched deep into the Roxana end. After a holding penalty, a pair of quarterback sacks and an incomplete pass forced a punting situation on fourth and long, and on the next drive, Roxana went to work.

Kirkpatrick and Johnson took turns grinding out yardage on a 94-yard, nine-play drive that culminated with Johnson scampering around end for a 16 -yard touchdown run for the initial score. A two-point conversion run was good and it was 8-0, Shells with 1:33 left in the opening term. The drive took 4:11 to complete, a harbinger of things to come

On Staunton's next possession, the defense bottled up quarterback Tyler Grandidier and his offense, the longest play being a 10-yard run by Ethan Mullinix. The Bulldogs were forced to punt, and Shells quarterback Marcus Hartnett and his offense went back to work.

Johnson gained 29 on the second play of the drive on an end around, then picked up another 10 later in the drive. Kirkpatrick picked up five and Cherry nine near the end of the drive to set up the Shells on the Staunton two, and Hartnett finished the drive with a two-yard sneak up the middle with 6:58 left in the second. A two point pass was incomplete, but the Shells had driven 80 yards in nine plays to take a 14-0 lead. It took 4:41 to complete the drive.

After a Staunton three and out, it looked like the Shells would increase their advantage driving to the Bulldog 20. But a untimely holding penalty cost Roxana 10 yards, and the drive fizzled from there as Staunton held on fourth down. Hartnett intercepted a pass on the next possession to preserve the Shells 14-0 cushion at halftime.

The first Roxana possession of the second half was perhaps their best. Kirkpatrick ran for 18 up the middle, then Hartnett hit Cherry three plays later with a 15-yard pass play, with a roughing the passer call adding 15 more. The Shells went back to the ground game with Hartnett and Cherry making key runs before Johnson ran the ball over from the one for the touchdown. Nathan Wallace added on a two-point conversion around end to give Roxana a 22-0 lead with 4:02 left in the third. The drive took 73 yards in 13 plays, but more importantly, took 6:13 off the clock.

The Bulldogs next possession produced their only score of the night. Mullinix gained 32 yards on the first two plays of the drive, while Grandidier completed a pass to Cody Castaldi good for 14. A personal foul penalty against Roxana after a short gain by Eric Hasquin put the ball on the Shell seven, where four plays later, Grandidier scooted around right end for four yards and a touchdown with 11:05 left in the final term. A two-point run failed, cutting the Roxana lead to 22-6.

Cherry took the ensuing kickoff back to the Bulldog 42 on a nice runback, but Roxana couldn't do anything with the ball, and a very good punt by Riley Ripper pinned Staunton back on its own five. Three plays later, Grandidier was sacked in the end zone for a safety that upped the advantage to 24-6.

Another great punt pinned the Bulldogs back on its one, and after Roxana stopped a fake punt play on fourth down on the Staunton five, it only took the Shells two plays and 49 seconds to score. Kirkpatrick went three yards up the middle for the final touchdown. Ripper kicked the convert for the final 31-6 score.

The Shells finish up their season next Friday at home against rival Piasa Southwestern, and Keith is looking forward to the final game.

“It’s big for both teams, and especially for the seniors, their last home game,” Keith said, “and so, it’s an opportunity to win their last home game. Southwestern is a handful, and we want to have a good week of practice and see how it goes from there.”



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)