

Rochester cruises to 52-7 win over Civic Memorial in IHSA Class 4A football playoffs

by Jeff Allsman

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ROCHESTER – The **Civic Memorial Eagles** learned one thing quickly Friday night. There are no retro-Rockets in **Rochester**.

Rochester showed off its high-octane offense, built a 45-0 lead and cruised to a 52-7 win over the Eagles in the first round of the Illinois High School Association Class 4A playoffs. Rochester improved to 9-1 on the season. CM ends its season at 5-5.

The Rockets entered the playoffs as the No. 5 seed in the 32-team playoff bracket, averaging more than 50 points per game and 462 yards from scrimmage during the regular season. All eight of their wins were lopsided enough to necessitate a running clock (40-point lead in the second half). They were equally potent on the ground and through the air so their performance against CM was merely routine.

And, it was full speed ahead.

Rochester wasted little time unleashing its potent attack, scoring on its first five possessions, amassing 18 first downs, more than 200 yards from scrimmage (not including a 74-yard punt return for touchdown), and building a 35-0 lead all in the first quarter. At the same time, CM had only managed 14 yards from scrimmage and no first downs. After a nearly 90-minute bus ride up Interstate 55, the Eagles were all but out of the game in 12 minutes.

After Rochester built its lead to 45-0 late in the second quarter, CM finally got on the scoreboard. David Lane returned a Rockets kickoff 62 yards to set up the Eagles only score of the game. Quarterback Brayden Pierce connected with Lane on a 23-yard touchdown pass with 13 seconds left in the first half. Despite the lopsided score, the touchdown meant that Rochester's lead was cut to less than 40 points and the clock would run by regular rule in the second half until more scoring occurred.

But CM miscalculated Rochester's intent.

With only 13 seconds to kill, the Eagles, trying to grab an extra possession and possibly score again before halftime, tried to drive the kickoff into one of the Rockets up men, who fell on the deflection near midfield. It appeared reasonable that Rochester would run out the clock and end the first half. But given the short field, and their penchant for leaving nothing to chance, the Rockets shunned the idea of taking a knee and heading to the locker room with a 45-7 lead. Instead the Rockets did what Rockets naturally do. They went to the air. And three plays later, as time ran out on the first half, quarterback Josh Grant hit Collin Stallworth on a 32-yard touchdown pass to get the lead back to 45 points.

With the running clock, both teams traded possessions throughout the quickly moving second half, but neither added to the scoreboard. Rochester ended with 413 total yards

of offense. CM managed 151. Corey Price led CM's rushing attack with 45 yards, Zach Williams added 35. Pierce was 3 of 18 for 51 yards and the lone touchdown pass caught by Lane who had two catches for 31 yards.