

Last-second touchdowns lift Hawks past Argenta-Oreana

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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ARGENTA - On the brink of a gut-wrenching exit to their season, the Carrollton Hawks were not about to go out quietly. In a high-scoring, roller-coaster game between the Argenta-Oreana Bombers, Carrollton just needed one more chance.

After letting go of a 13-point lead with less than three minutes to play in the game, the Hawks drove 56 yards in under two minutes to take the lead back for good.

An acrobatic catch by sophomore wide receiver Grant Pohlman helped Carrollton get into the red zone. That's when quarterback, Hunter Flowers plowed into the end zone for a three-yard touchdown to give Carrollton a 35-28 lead over the Bombers with 47 seconds left in the game. Two plays later, Garrett Settles, and Lucas Settles sacked Argenta-Oreana quarterback, Josh Williams causing a fumble that was scooped and scored by sophomore defensive tackle Ethan Moore for a 26-yard touchdown that put away the Bombers for good.

"Props to Grant for catching that jump-ball and props to the linemen for the runs we were doing," Hunter Flowers said. "The holes opened up and we were getting six, seven yards every time because it was there. (Argenta-Oreana) sat back a little bit, and that's when we punched it in on them."

Carrollton defeated Argenta-Oreana 48-35 in the second round of the Class 1A playoffs on Saturday afternoon at Argenta-Oreana High School.

The Hawks move to 9-2 and advance to the quarterfinals where they will travel to play the Athens Warriors who beat Camp Point Central 24-6. Argenta-Oreana, the two-seed in the south bracket, who saw their season end to a WIVC school for the second year in a row (Camp Point 2018 semifinals) ends the year at 9-2.

"You wanna talk about a game of momentum it was back and forth between two great football teams out here playing today," Carrollton head coach Nick Flowers said. "I told the boys in the second half to leave it all out on the field and have no regrets. The momentum swung there, and still, we came back and got it done there at the end."

In the fourth quarter, the momentum swung around like a Six Flags SkyScreamer.

With 8:54 left in the game, Flowers scored on a 1-yard run making it 26-21 Carrollton. The Hawks then got a massive break on the ensuing kickoff when Harley Angel stripped the ball from Braxton Ulrey and was recovered by freshman Matt Beierman at the Bombers 18-yard line. Two plays later, Flowers connected with Kyle Leonard for a 14-yard touchdown pass. Within 56 seconds, the Hawks scored 14 points and led 34-21 with just under eight minutes to play and seemingly in control.

"We've been passing all game, and then in the fourth quarter, we found out what side they were weak on and exploited that," Hunter Flowers said.

But Argenta-Oreana wouldn't zip up.

Williams scored one of his three rushing touchdowns with 5:24 to go on a 37-yard run down the sidelines. That trimmed the Hawks lead to 34-28.

After failing numerous times to recover onside kicks throughout the day, the Bombers perfectly executed on the following kickoff and had the ball in Hawks territory again. However, Carrollton was able to turn the Bombers over on downs with 3:26 to play and in the driver's seat again.

Yet, two plays later, Flowers threw his fifth interception of the year to Dirk Buhlig at the Carrollton 37-yard line. Two plays later, Williams broke away from two tackles and ran down the sidelines again for a 33-yard touchdown run to tie the game. The point after touchdown put Argenta-Oreana back on top again 35-34 capping a miraculous comeback in less than six minutes.

"It was heartbreaking, but we all knew that we had plenty of time on the clock and that we could drive the ball down and score," Ethan Moore said.

"What a player (Williams) is," Nick Flowers said. We were in position to make some plays in the first half, but he kept breaking tackles, and he runs well. We kept saying we got to keep getting guys to the point of attack and wrap him up. They had a nice outside /inside run game. They mixed it up well."

The Hawks got to pad the score late on with a scoop and score by Moore, the first touchdown of his career. Moore, Ethan Harrelson, Willie Gilmore, Cade McAdams, and Myka Bryson all had their hands full in the trenches on both sides of the ball.

"I feel like our right side of the (offensive) line really pulled it together," Moore said. "Our left side is good, but our right side got that one side power to where Hunter could get outside."

After Carrollton forced a three-and-out on A-O's first drive, Flowers connected with Matt Retherford on the Hawks first play from scrimmage for a 40-yard touchdown pass. That gave Carrollton an early 8-0 lead.

The Bombers answered back to make it 8-7 with a one-yard touchdown run by Brock Lyerly, who was in for Williams at the time who was nursing an ankle injury. However, Pohlman on the ensuing kickoff returned a squib kick 71-yards for a touchdown and took the Carrollton lead to 14-7. After the Bombers recovered a fumble at midfield, Williams rushed for a 15-yard touchdown to knot things up at 14 apiece.

With 5:24 to play in the first half on a fourth down, Leonard made a tremendous over-the-shoulder diving nine-yard touchdown catch in the back of the end zone. The sophomore caught two touchdowns as part of his big day.

"I was trying to find windows for Hunter to make throws, and I knew he could make them. I just had to get open for him, and I did that," Leonard said. When something bad happened, we picked each other up and went onto the next play. We believed in each other and got the win."

Carrollton led by six, but three minutes later, Makail Stanley stretched his way to a four-yard touchdown run to give the Bombers a 21-20 lead at halftime.

The Hawks are the first seven-seed in the south bracket since Arcola in 2007 to advance to the quarterfinals. This is also the fourth time in six years Carrollton has gotten as far as the quarterfinals in postseason play.

"It's amazing, especially since we're so young and inexperienced at the varsity level," Moore said. It's awesome!"







