

Big First Half Leads To Lopsided Shells Playoff Win

by Nathan Tucker, Sports Reporter
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ROXANA - Postseason football returned to Charles Raich Field on the campus of Roxana High School on Saturday as the Shells hosted the Tigers from Paris, Illinois.

The visitors took a two-and-a-half-hour bus ride across the state but ran into a brick wall in Roxana as the Shells dominated their way to a 50-22 victory.

Roxana won the coin toss and deferred to Paris who chose to receive the kick. The Tigers had a solid first drive, marching down inside the red zone, but settled for a field goal attempt that was missed.

If there's a positive to that Paris drive, it kept the high-powered and high-speed Shells offense off the field, albeit briefly.

The Shells needed less than two minutes to score their first touchdown. A long jump ball from senior quarterback Chris Walleck found junior receiver Andruw Ellis, which set up an Ellis run to open the scoring. Roxana tacked on two for good measure to take an 8-0 lead early.

Paris answered back by digging into their playbook, a double pass play found senior runningback Calvin Rigdon for a TD, but a failed extra point kept Roxana ahead in the first quarter.

"I think came out with a really good plan," said Roxana head coach Wade DeVries Saturday. "You can tell they're well coached, they're every year."

Roxana would then assert their dominance for the remainder of the first half. After the visiting Tigers made it 8-6, the Shells would score 42 unanswered.

"I'm proud of the kids," DeVries said. "They came out here and executed our game plan, offense defense, special teams. We were able to take care of business this week."

Roxana switched up their usual strategy and went to the air a bit in the first quarter. Their biggest pass play was a long jump ball play that senior tight end Aidan Briggs came down with and then ran the rest of the way.



On the extra point attempt that made it 15-6 Shells, Roxana kicker Joe Newton broke the Shells single-season points record for a placekicker. He'd continue to add to his total throughout the day, as the reliable Roxana kicker nailed every extra point that came his way. He finished the day with 62 points on the season.

Roxana's next score followed a Mason Crump interception that gave the hosts the ball deep in their own territory. Evan Wells took the first play of the Shells' drive nearly 80 yards for his first touchdown of the day, blasting through the line of scrimmage and leaving Paris defenders in his wake down the sideline.

Roxana led 22-6 after a quarter and didn't slow down. Wells added another long TD run as he continues to set a new benchmark for rushing yards and scores for a Roxana running back. Terrel Graves powered home himself as well and the Shells extended the lead.

On the ensuing Paris drive, QB Drew Rogers would have his pass picked off by senior Shell linebacker James Herring, who ran all the way down to the one-yard line before being stopped just short of a pick-six.

Wanting to make sure Herring got the score, Roxana head coach Wade DeVries kept the linebacker in on offense as a fullback and handed it to Herring for a rushing touchdown. Charles Raich Field went nuts.

“I had to get {Herring} a touchdown at that point, right?” said DeVries. “That kid captains and does everything that we’ve asked defensively. I felt like I owed to him.”

“I was hoping he’d score a pick-six, then he gets a steak dinner,” DeVries said jokingly. “I said ‘We rush for plenty of touchdowns. You don’t get a steak dinner for a rushing touchdown.’”



Wells scored his third touchdown of the half to give Roxana a 50-6 advantage heading to the halftime break. Paris had no answer for the Shells rushing attack, but in fairness neither has anyone else in 2023.

With the result all but decided, Roxana rotated in younger players for the second half. Paris found paydirt in the third quarter when Robert Wells caught a pass from Rogers to get another score on the board for the visitors.

On what was a cold and wet Saturday for postseason high school football, perhaps a slippery football was the cause for a late fourth-quarter safety against Roxana. A long snap on a punt attempt went awry, and out of the endzone, and the score was 50-14 with about a minute remaining.

The Tigers tacked on another touchdown by way of a Skylar Sweet rush, and the game would finish 50-22. A long bus ride home for Paris, but just the start of the postseason road for Wade DeVries and the Roxana Shells.

“We get an opportunity to play again, and that’s the goal,” said DeVries following Saturday’s win. “It’s a whole bunch of little one-week seasons at this point.”

With St. Joseph-Ogden defeating Carlinville, the Shells will host the Spartans of St. Joseph-Ogden in round two at Charles Raich Field next weekend. Scouting for that game begins this week.

“I’ve never seen play,” admitted DeVries postgame. “I know up there, I came from that area, and they have an unbelievable football tradition up there. That league (the Illini Prairie Conference) is the cream of the crop, and that’s who the 3A south has to run through.

“We know what we’re up against, and we’ll get on film on Monday and be ready to get back to work.”

The Shells and the Spartans kick off at Charles Raich Field at 3 p.m. on Saturday, November 4.

