

# Roxana Dismantles Olympia On The Road - Shells Set To Host State Semifinal Game

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November 11 2023 7:12 PM



STANFORD, Ill. - The Roxana Shells football team hadn't taken the show on the road yet this postseason.

But they proved that they don't need to be at Charles Raich Field in order to win a playoff football game.

No. 3 seeded Roxana traveled north to take on the No. 7-seeded Olympia Spartans in the IHSA Class 3A football quarterfinals in Stanford, a small town just 25 minutes south of Bloomington.

The Shells led the entire way en route to a 56-30 win, clinching a spot in the state semifinals next weekend, their first since 1987. Roxana is now 12-0 on the season.

The Shells kicked off to start the game and Olympia senior running back Nic Olson took the ball up to his 35-yard line. The Spartans didn't make it very far after that.

Roxana junior tight end Jake Newton forced a fumble and senior running back Evan Wells recovered it, giving the Shells the ball at Olympia's 33.

Senior quarterback Chris Wallack put the game's first points on the board with a 24-yard rushing touchdown. Junior kicker Joe Newton converted on the extra point. He was perfect on the day.



This was a common theme Saturday afternoon. The Spartans didn't stop the Shells offense but one time in the fourth quarter. The only other time was a turnover.

Olympia got the ball back at their 21, earning a couple of first downs before punting on fourth and four from their 46.

After a holding penalty against the Shells, they started out from their 11-yard line. Walleck made a couple of short passes followed by a 29-yard blitz from senior running back Terrell Graves.



Roxana was staring at a third and six from the seven-yard line when Wells ran it in to go up 14-0 after the first quarter.

Thanks to a personal foul during Roxana's TD play, the Spartans were penalized and started from their own 10-yard line. They marched to Roxana's 43 with a fresh set of downs as the first quarter came to a close.

Junior Cohen Alexander had a 36-yard run to open the second quarter, setting up a first and goal from the six.

Roxana's defense turned that situation into a fourth and one and then stopped Olympia at the goal line.





"The defense played lights out in the first half," Roxana head coach Wade DeVries said.

On the following drive was the only time Roxana didn't score in the first half. The Shells fumbled it as the Spartans took over at the Shells' 29-yard line.

On the first play, senior fullback Kade Lollar ran it 29 yards to the end zone. The Spartans went for two and were stopped making it 14-6 with 7:08 remaining in the first half.

The Shells showed off their high-tempo offense on the next two drives.

After starting from their 27, Walleck hit junior running back Andrew Ellis with a 60-yard pass and run TD to make it 21-6.



Roxana wasted no time scoring again after sophomore safety Sean Maberry recovered a fumble. The Shells regained control at Olympia's 35 where Wells ran it in on the very first play to make it 28-6.

It was two bang-bang plays to make it a three-possession game.





The Spartans started off at their 22 with four minutes left and marched down the field. They nearly scored as the halftime buzzer sounded but senior wide receiver Chase Litwiller caught it out of bounds.

During that play, Roxana junior safety Zeb Katzamarek went down after delivering a hard hit. At the time he could be seen down on the field holding his shoulder in a lot of discomfort. He didn't return to the game. After the game coach DeVries clarified that it was a severe collar bone injury, one that needed x-rays.

The second half ended up being an absolute slugfest, with teams trading scores just about the rest of the way.

After the Spartans tried an onside kick to open the second half, Roxana senior tight end Aiden Briggs recovered it at his 48-yard line.

After getting the first down, Graves ran it in from 35 yards out to extend the lead to 35-6, their largest lead of the game.

"We knew was going to come back at us," DeVries said. "They're very well coached, very physical, and a really good team."

Olympia indeed answered right back.

Olson brought it up to his 41-yard line but the Spartans would lose some yards setting up a fourth and three at their 49. After a nice reversal play, Alexander ran it down the sideline 51 yards to the house. The Spartans went for two and got it, making it a 35-14 ball game.

Ellis ran in a 63-yard TD before Olson scored from 18 yards away, trading scores to make it 42-22.

Walleck hit Briggs with a 24-yard touchdown to make it 49-22 after three-quarters of play.



Olympia brought the ball out from their 33 and after the kick return play, Roxana junior defensive end Mason Forsythe was slow to get up. He didn't return to the game either, DeVries saying he just rolled his ankle.

To kick open the fourth, the Spartans went for fourth and seven at their 40 and senior running back Blake Youngren converted on the play, plus extra yardage due to another ill-timed Roxana personal foul.

Because of that, and without two key defensive players, Roxana's defense was caught off guard when Lollar ran it in from five yards. Another two-point conversion was good to make it 49-30 with 9:21 left in the game.

The Spartans went for another onside kick but it was recovered by sophomore Max Autery. There was another personal foul on Roxana, bringing them back to their 33-yard line to open the drive.

Litwiller delivered a big hit, stopping the Shells at the line of scrimmage for the first time all game, forcing the punt from Roxana's 46.



Olympia took over at their 33 with 6:52 left in the game but couldn't mount a comeback.

Instead, Roxana senior middle linebacker James Herring forced a fumble before senior defensive end Nick Newton ran it in from about 30 yards out to get to the final of 56-30.

It was another game in which Roxana's D-line stood strong.

"Defense got stops," DeVries said.



"Regardless of how many points we score, it all comes down to stops, especially early on. We felt if we went up early, then might have a hard time getting back on it. Because, they run the ball similar to us, but they're not necessarily utilizing the tempo and getting on the ball as fast."

"The offense was just as efficient, only being stopped at the line of scrimmage once, DeVries saying that "the stop at the end of the game was me being not smart."

Ellis rushed for 72 yards and had two touchdowns. Wells rushed for 126 yards and also had two scores. Walleck went 6-7 on the day and threw for 135 yards and three TDs.

Now, Roxana gets to go back home and host a state semifinal. The Shells will host No. 4 seeded Mt. Carmel (11-1) on Saturday, Nov. 18, time yet to be determined.

DeVries was happy to see a large Roxana crowd make the over two-hour drive to Stanford. Shells fans even had to invade the home stands because they packed the away side.

"Of course," DeVries said. "Wait til next week in Roxana."

