

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

South survives late rally for win

By Keith Barnes
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Penn-Trafford quarterback Tyler Huether was nearly perfect for the North team throughout the latter part of the third quarter in the Foothills Football Classic on Saturday at Norwin High School.

What he did before his hot streak, however, helped put his team in a hole and ensure victory for the South.

On the North's first possession of the second half, Heuther was sacked, fumbled and had the ball returned 45 yards for a touchdown by West Mifflin defensive end Cordaro Nesby for the deciding score in the South's 28-20 victory.

"Stuff happens, and you can't take it back now," Heuther said. "We've only been practicing for a week, but it's just an all-star game and I had fun and both teams played a great game."

Heuther wasn't alone in struggling against a solid effort from a South team that opened up a 28-6 advantage after Nesby's score.

With the South leading, 7-6, and the North stuck at its own 10, Burrell's Tyler Henderson cut to the outside and had a lot of daylight ahead of him. But before he could break away for a huge gain, he was caught from behind and had the ball knocked out by McKeesport's Anthony Becoate.

Southmoreland's Nick Mains recovered the ball at the North 17, and Norwin's T.J. Salopek converted on the next play. The Mercyhurst recruit hooked up with Thomas Jefferson receiver Heath Brickner for the second time in the game to put the South on top, 14-6, with 5:02 remaining in the first half.

Brickner was named the game's most valuable player after catching four catches for 108 yards and the two scores despite the fact that the five quarterbacks for both teams struggled in the first half, when they were a combined 13 of 37 for 162 yards.

"It was tough at first because everybody was hyped up for the game and everything was a step faster, but once we got the timing down, it went pretty good," Salopek said. "We worked real well at practice, but like I said, the speed was different in the game, but we worked it out."

Immediately after the ensuing kickoff, North quarterback Gino Rometo set up in shotgun at his own 34 and watched the snap sail over his head. Instead of

falling on the ball, however, he tried to pick it up and instead allowed Becoate to recover at the 11.

Four plays later, McKeesport quarterback Dan Kopolovich rolled right on a naked bootleg for a 4-yard touchdown and a 21-6 advantage at the intermission.

Those late points were a stark contrast to a game that, in the early going, appeared as though it could end up a scoreless tie. Neither offense was in sync, as starting quarterbacks Salopek and Huether were unable to connect with their receivers.

Both teams only had seven practices to get ready for the game, and it showed in the timing between the quarterbacks and their receivers. Heuther finished the first quarter 5 of 15 for 32 yards, while Salopek missed his first four attempts before connecting with Brickner on a 27-yard touchdown pass to put the South ahead, 7-0, with 7:57 to play in the first quarter.

Rometo finally brought some consistency to the position on his first full second-quarter drive when he completed three straight passes including a 45-yard touchdown strike to Gateway's Brandon Livesy but, in addition to being unable to recover the bad snap, he threw an interception on the next North play from scrimmage, but he certainly had sympathy from the other signal callers.

"I'm so used to going in every series and switching every other series was difficult," Kopolovich said. "You warm up and get cold, warm back up and get cold and it was difficult."

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