

Ross recovery lets Indians survive

Written by Tom Fruehling

Wednesday, 24 October 2012 23:42 -

The game. A season. High school careers.

They were all on the line.

And a big lineman, of all players, saved the day for Marion Wednesday night at home by recovering a late-game fumble to preserve a nail-biting, 29-27, Class 3A playoff win over Western Dubuque at Thomas Park.

Trying for a last-ditch drive to take the lead for the fifth and final time, Bobcat quarterback Dylan Kramer hit Riley Pfieler for an 11-yard completion to the Indian 35 with 1:15 to go.

But Marion linebacker Ethan Herren smacked the receiver just after he caught the ball and it bounced to the turf.

"I saw the ball rolling," said Marion tackle Mitch Ross, who was about five yards away from the play. "I knew it was our last chance to win the game. And I wasn't going to let it get away."

So the 6-foot-3, 300-pound senior mustered the moxie to do what he had to do.

"I just dove as far as I could and pounced on the ball," Ross explained. "And I felt on top of the world."

His heroics wouldn't have mattered much if two of his teammates hadn't pulled off some magic of their own just moments before.

Trailing 27-23 with 3 minutes left in the see-saw contest, Marion's Quinn Cannoy fair caught a

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punt at the Indians' 12-yard line.

It was do or die for the Indians (8-2).

On first down from their own 25 and under 2 minutes to, quarterback Trevor Hardman lofted a Hail Mary down the sidelines to Cannoy that was tipped away at the Bobcat 40.

Savvy Marion Coach Tony Perkins called for the very same play, and this time Cannoy caught it over the leaping defender and ran it in for a 75-yard scoring strike to put the Indians back in the lead for good.

"Actually," Perkins pointed out during a raucous post-game celebration. "I wanted Trevor to go to the inside receiver. (Tyler) Gunderson was wide open down the middle.

"But it just shows the confidence Trevor had in Quinn that he'd be able to go up and get the ball. It was a great play."

And it showed the resilience of a battered bunch of players on a team beset by injuries all year. Two of their best, Andrew Davis and Justin Dolley, were sidelined for the season in last week's 17-16 loss at DeWitt Central.

And workhorse tailback and linebacker Trev Biery was still nursing a foot sprain that has hampered him for the last few games. He still played all but a few downs on both offense and defense, made a ton of tackles and bulled his way to 156 yards on 29 carries.

"It takes a toll on ya," Biery admitted. "But we all battle it out for each other. We're all brothers out there."

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Indeed, as players and fans gathered on the field afterward, their season-long motivational chant was lustily belted out once again.

“One, two three...all in.”

As his team readies for a rematch at home Monday against DeWitt (7-3), Perkins said this year’s team has overcome a lot of obstacles. “This is a special group of kids,” he said. “Look at tonight. They came back after being down four times. They just kept clawing and fighting.

“We had some breakdowns on defense that resulted in big plays for them. But our offense kept bailing us out.

“We controlled the ball. And when they had to, the guys rose to the occasion. They kept their heads up and never gave up.

“That, to me, says a lot about their character.”

DeWitt Central advanced with a 24-21 win at West Delaware.

Western Dubuque ended its season 4-6.

MARION 29, WESTERN DUBUQUE 27

WD MAR

First downs 6 23

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Rushing 26-140 63-335

Passing 6-14-1 6-15-1

Passing yards 134 136

Fumbles/lost 1/1 0/0

Punts 5-39 3-30

Penalties 2-10 2-20

Western Dubuque 14 0 0 13 - 27

Marion 3 10 3 13 - 29

SCORING PLAYS

WD – Dylan James 46 pass from Dylan Kramer (Nick Kruse kick)

MAR – FG Dalton Ott 35

WD – Dan Beard 59 run (Kruse kick)

MAR – FG Ott 32

MAR – Tyler Gunderson 26 pass from Trevor Hardman (Ott kick)

MAR – FG Ben Kroemer 28

WD – Tyler Donovan 45 pass from Kramer (pass failed)

MAR – Trev Biery 1 run (Ott kick)

WD – Dawson Nemmers 15 run (Kruse kick)

MAR – Quinn Cannoy 75 pass from Hardman (kick failed)

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing – WD –Dan Beard 6-58, Dylan Kramer 3-26. MAR – Trev Biery 29-156, Tyler Gunderson 14-113.

Passing – WD – Kramer 6-14-1-134. MAR– Trevor Hardman 6-15-1-136.

Receiving – WD – Dylan James 2-75, Tyler Donovan1-45. MAR – Quinn Cannoy 1-75, Gunderson 1-26.