

Big defensive stop helps spark 2nd-half comeback that carries Port football team past Westosha Central

You never know when one big hit will turn a football team's fortunes.

Facing an uphill battle on the road, the Port Washington Pirates trailed Westosha Central by 10 points midway through the second half of a nonconference game last Friday.

Sensing that his team needed a spark, defensive lineman Andrew Drake fired off the ball and dumped a Central running back for a 4-yard loss. Besides breaking up the play, Drake's bone-jarring tackle fueled a determined comeback that led to a 27-23, nonconference win for the Pirates.

"From that moment, we got a stop and just kept rolling," said Port coach Tim Greisch, whose team evened its season record at 1-1.

"Andrew is 6-2, 338 pounds, and when he got excited, everyone else did, too. We started playing even harder."

After giving up 23 points through the first three quarters, the Pirates' defense pitched a shutout in the final period and set the stage for offensive heroics, as well.

Port's hardest-hitting player with the ball was fullback Alex Multerer, who rushed for a game-high 158 yards and three touchdowns on 24 carries. The senior scored the Pirates' final three touchdowns, including a 15-yard charge with 35 seconds left that capped the rally.

Multerer accounted for all of Port's second-half touchdowns, including scoring runs of four and eight yards that chipped away at the Central lead.

"I have never seen a kid run harder with the ball than Alex did in the second half," Greisch said. "When he saw the end zone on that last touchdown, he was not going to be denied."

Any hope the Falcons had of a last-second comeback were snuffed on the ensuing kickoff when Port recovered a muffed ball.

"It was a great win for a young football team that's still trying to put it all together," Greisch said. "It was just what we needed."

But Westosha Central made sure it didn't come easily.

Hard-hitting Pirates turn the corner

Written by Steve Ostermann

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The Falcons, who defeated Port, 20-0, last season, appeared headed for a repeat when they controlled the first half and took a 15-6 lead into the break. Quarterback Austin Damaschke did most of the damage, rushing for most of his team-high 143 yards on 21 carries and throwing a 66-yard touchdown pass to Jason Castona.

When Jared Zirbel added a 7-yard scoring run in the third quarter, the Falcons owned their biggest lead.

Port's lone score of the first half came on a 15-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Taylor Devenport to tight end Shane Kennedy.

"The game started out a lot like the season opener," Greisch said. "We couldn't stop anybody and were getting beat physically up front, so we started rotating people."

The loss of defensive back Joe McIlree with a second-quarter hamstring injury that sidelined him the rest of the game didn't help the Pirates, either.

One of the changes the Pirates made was inserting Drake, a starting offensive lineman, into the defensive front.

"We were trying to find the right mix defensively," Greisch said. "Andrew's got a fire about him. It was contagious."

Greisch also singled out the play of defensive end Zach Hauser, Devenport at quarterback and Kennedy at linebacker and tight end.

Kennedy was Devenport's top target, finishing with three catches for 60 yards. He also led the Pirates in tackles with 10.

"Shane's always solid defensively, and this year he's also making an impact with the ball," Greisch said.

Both teams finished with healthy offensive numbers. Port piled up 394 total yards, including 300 on the ground. Westosha Central totaled 314 yards, 227 on rushes.

Besides helping the Pirates put a season-opening loss to Muskego behind them, the win provides a confidence booster for their North Shore Conference opener this Friday. Port will host Germantown at 7 p.m.