

Tigers roll to fifth-straight victory, face Iggy next

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The Independent

A bit of the killer instinct the Massillon Tigers showed in their first two games returned on Friday night, and not a moment too soon.

Massillon jumped out early and kept on scoring, sending Garfield to a 44-13 defeat in front of 6,995 fans at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium. The Tigers held a 34-7 lead, their biggest halftime margin to date, and opened the season 5-0 for the first time since 2005.

"I thought it was good," Massillon coach Jason Hall said. "We changed the tempo up in practice this week, and I let them know that this week was about attitude and getting back after it. Our kids responded well. We're getting better. That's the key."

But the preliminaries have concluded now for Massillon. Next up for the Tigers is a Saturday trip to Byers Field to take on the undefeated reigning Division I state champions and current No. 1-ranked team in Ohio, St. Ignatius.

The Tigers certainly tuned up for that showdown with the Wildcats against Garfield. In doing so, they returned to the form they displayed in wins over Buchtel and GlenOak, when they jumped in front of those two opponents 42-7 and 35-3.

That kind of start hadn't been seen over the previous two weeks, as the Tigers dealt with choppy opening halves in eventual double-digit wins over Stow and Firestone. But it was there for Massillon against the Golden Rams, who are now 2-3.

Massillon scored on all four first-quarter drives, jumping on top 24-7 by the end of the quarter. The Tigers also picked up the tempo during the quarter by going to a quick count at times, especially on the first drive of the game.

"We came out ready to play," Hall said. "We changed the tempo up a little bit."

The star of the first three drives was Alex Winters. The sophomore tailback registered his fourth 100-yard rushing game before the contest was even 10 minutes old, gaining 120 of his 121 net rushing yards on eight first-half carries.

"He, just like everybody else, is getting better every week," Hall said. "He's learning a lot. He's taking it in like a sponge. He's a doer. He just works hard."

Winters had a touchdown run of 13 yards to put the Tigers up 7-0 - following the Jeremy Geier point after - just 1:03 into the game. He added a 25-yard scoring jaunt with 6:14 left in the quarter for a 14-0 lead. After Garfield cut it to 14-7 on a 56-yard run by Tyson Gulley, Winters provided Massillon's answer, ripping off a 70-yard run for a 21-7 edge with 3:55 left in the first quarter.

The next two Tiger drives reached the Golden Rams' red zone, but could only generate a pair of Geier field goals of 39 and 35 yards. The last came with 5:52 left in the half, giving Massillon a 27-7 lead.

Massillon tacked on a 19-yard Robert Partridge-to-Devin Smith touchdown pass with 35 seconds remaining in the half for a 34-7 lead.

Garfield missed on a couple of potential scoring opportunities in the first half, reaching inside the Tiger 25 twice. One would end a yard short on fourth down, while Bo Grunder's interception - the first of three on the night for the senior - in the end zone squelched another one. Grunder came up with a second takeaway on a fumble recovery at the Ram 19 to set up Smith's touchdown.

"That's why he's got some offers himself," Hall said of Grunder. "He's a gritty kid. He's tough."

The Golden Rams did capitalize on a drive into Massillon territory on the first possession of the second half, as Gulley - who rushed for 179 yards in the game - punched it in from 4-yards out to cut it to 34-14 with just under six minutes left. But Geier's 25-yard field goal on the subsequent Tiger possession took away much of the Rams' momentum as it gave Massillon a 37-13 lead.

Mikal Mayle added an 8-yard run late for the Tigers.

Massillon 44
Garfield 13

Garfield 07 00 06 00 13
Massillon 24 10 03 07 44

SCORING SUMMARY

- M** - Winters 13 run (Geier kick)
- M** - Winters 25 run (Geier kick)
- G** - Ty. Gulley 66 run (Martin kick)
- M** - Winters 70 run (Geier kick)
- M** - FG Geier 39
- M** - FG Geier 35
- M** - Smith 19 pass from Partridge (Geier kick)
- G** - Ty. Gulley 4 run (Kick failed)
- M** - FG Geier 25
- M** - Mayle 8 run (Geier kick)

	Gar	Mas
First downs	18	23
Rushes-yards	55-313	33-206
Comp-Att-Int	0-7-3	14-25-0
Passing yards	0	263
Fumbles-lost	2-2	0-0
Penalties-yards	6-50	9-80
Records	2-3	5-0

Individual leaders

Rushing:

Massillon - Winters 19-121 3 TDs.

Garfield - Ty. Gulley 17-166 2 TDs.

Passing:

Massillon - Partridge 13-23-243 TD.

Garfield - Hoisten 0-5-0 3 INTs; Ty, Gulley 0-1-0.

Receiving:

Massillon - Olack 5-93; Smith 5-79 TD; Grunder 2-55; Winters 1-16.

Garfield - N/A.