

Tigers moving on, sweep out Hoover

By CHRIS EASTERLING
The Independent

MASSILLON, OH — For almost 365 days, the Massillon Tigers had last year's first-round loss to Hoover ingrained in their memories. On Saturday night, they had a chance to either replace that memory with a much more positive one, or add another bitter one.

They decided to give themselves something much better to think about, as they elicited a bit of revenge on the Vikings — and advance into the second round of the playoffs — with a 17-10 victory over Hoover in a Division I Region 2 quarterfinal in front of a boisterous 6,898 fans at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

"It definitely feels good to get a win, especially in the playoffs, because we keep going," said Tiger senior Bo Grunder, who had four clutch catches — all to pick up first downs — as well as a key stop on a fourth-and-goal play midway through the fourth quarter. "It feels good since last year. I've thought about that 14-7 score (in the loss to Hoover) the whole season, the offseason and the whole year. We just paid them back."

The Tigers did so by getting arguably their best defensive performance of the season as they held Hoover's Erick Howard to just 99 yards on 38 carries. Of those yards, 46 came on the Vikings' third-quarter touchdown drive which cut Massillon's lead to 17-10.

It was only the third time this season Howard, Stark County's all-time leading rusher, was held below 100 yards. And it was 96 yards fewer than the 195 yards he gained on 40 carries in last year's win over the Tigers.

"That's what we wanted," said Tiger coach Jason Hall, whose 8-3 team will now face 10-1 Twinsburg next Saturday night at Fawcett Stadium. "We told all our kids that we weren't just going to come up and lay into him, we were going to give him everything we've got every play. ... It sounds kind of cliché, but we'd

rather die with pride than live without it. That's just about leaving it on the field."

Hoover had two chances in the fourth quarter to force a tie, but were stopped both times. The Vikings reached the Tiger 6 midway through the quarter, before Grunder came up with the key defensive play on a quarterback keeper by Brett Tulodzieski four yards shy of the goal line.

The final chance came over the final two minutes of the game, as the Vikings reached the Massillon 47. But a third-down pass play didn't pick up enough for a first down, nor did the receiver get out of bounds, and the clock ran out, setting off a wild celebration by the Tigers.

"Give Massillon a lot of credit, players and coaches," said Hoover coach Don Hertler Jr., whose team bows out at 7-4. "They really did a great job. I don't know how our kids could've played any harder. ... We just couldn't get over the hump."

The Tigers played from ahead almost the entire game, starting with their second drive which resulted with a 5-yard touchdown run by Jake Reiman. Reiman, starting in place of the injured Alex Winters, carried the ball three times for 36 yards on the drive and actually outgained Howard 49-35 over the first half.

Reiman finished with a career-high 65 yards on 14 carries.

"I've said it all along, Jake can play for a lot of teams," Hall said. "He can obviously play for us. We have three or four quality tailbacks. ... Jake can run the ball, there's no mistake about it."

Hoover had two first-half drives which moved deep into Tiger territory. But only one of those resulted in points, as A.J. Sarbaugh booted a 43-yard field goal to cut the Massillon lead to 7-3 with 9:25 left in the half after the Vikings reached the Tiger 26.

The other drive, which moved to the Massillon 29, was snuffed out by a nifty interception by strong safety Josh Remark.

"I rolled down and I saw him (Tulodzieski) get his arm back ready to throw the ball," Remark said. "I just broke and I caught the ball. ... It was all possible because he had to come my way because my teammates were getting the job done up front."

Meanwhile, the Tigers were methodical in scoring points on their two second-quarter drives, taking at least 11 plays on each as they built up a 17-3 halftime lead.

The first was a 15-play, 80-yard march which ended when Robert Partridge hit Devin Smith on a 5-yard fade route with 5:06 remaining in the half. The other was an 11-play, 68-yard drive which ended when Jeremy Geier kicked a 24-yard field goal as time expired at the half.

A key to both drives was some clutch catches by Grunder, who had three grabs for 28 yards in the quarter. All three came on either third or fourth down, and all three picked up the necessary yards to move the chains.

Grunder would come up with one more clutch catch in the fourth quarter, when he made a 23-yard grab on third-and-12 from the Tiger 16 to keep Massillon's final drive going.

"I just want to help my team win the game," Grunder said. "When it's time to make a catch, they can throw it to me, Devin, J.O. (Justin Olack). We have a lot of options. It just depends on who's open."

Massillon 17
Hoover 10

Hoover 00 03 07 00 10
Massillon 07 10 00 00 17

SCORING SUMMARY

M - Reiman 5 run (Geier kick)
H - FG Sarbaugh 43
M - Smith 5 pass from Partridge (Geier kick)
M - FG Geier 24
H - Howard 1 run (Sarbaugh kick)

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First downs	18	14
Rushes-yards	48-141	22-70
Comp-Att-Int	9-22-1	17-30-0
Passing yards	127	229
Fumbles-lost	1-0	1-1
Penalty yards	8-72	11-92
Records	7-4	8-3

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing:

Massillon - Reiman 14-65 TD.

Hoover - Howard 38-99 TD; Tulodzieski 8-43.

Passing:

Massillon - Partridge 17-30-229 TD.

Hoover - Tulodzieski 9-20-127 INT.

Receiving:

Massillon - Smith 4-91 TD; Grunder 4-51; Olack 4-40; Allman 4-38.

Hoover - Nettleton 3-31; Sarbaugh 2-43; Howard 2-17; Gardner 1-19.