

Tigers suffer Heartbreaker to Iggy

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The Massillon Tigers appeared to have a season-defining win all wrapped up with just over two minutes left in Saturday night's showdown of unbeaten at Byers Field against St. Ignatius when Tyler Miller came up with an interception inside the Tiger 5 to preserve a one-point lead. But in the midst of the Tigers' jubilation came a cold splash of water. A penalty flag. This one for defensive holding against Massillon, negating the potential game-clinching pick.

Given new life, St. Ignatius scored on a 5-yard Bobby Grebens run with two minutes remaining, carrying the Wildcats to a 26-21 lead which would prove to be the final margin in Massillon's first loss of the season. "Our kids handled adversity," Tiger coach Jason Hall said. "We came up short."

The penalty which altered the final two-plus minutes of the game came on a defender who was away from the play. Hall, though, wouldn't comment about it directly.

"I have to watch it on film," Hall said. "I'm not going to make any excuses, it's not my mentality. I'm going to have to look at it on film. I couldn't see it because it was on the far side of the field, but I do know that it wasn't the guy that the ball was thrown to. ... We're not going to make excuses."

The Tigers fall to 5-1 with the heart-wrenching loss. Not that they can dwell for long on the defeat, as a trip to face undefeated Steubenville awaits Friday night.

"We have to get back to work," Hall said. "We don't have any time to cry about this."

What the Tigers do need to do is look at what they did to gain a 21-14 third-quarter lead over the top-ranked Wildcats, who are

now 6-0. That's especially true considering the 14-0 deficit Massillon faced less than two minutes into the second quarter.

In order to do that, Massillon did what it does best, which is hit on the big play.

The Tigers' first scoring drive - which cut the deficit to 14-7 with 40 seconds left in the half - was bolstered by a 47-yard pass from Robert Partridge to Devin Smith to take the ball to the Ignatius 22. Partridge then hit Grunder for the 5-yard scoring pass to slice the deficit in half.

"Momentum kind of swung away a little bit," St. Ignatius coach Chuck Kyle said. "They made adjustments with their receivers. They have some skilled guys, and that was a concern for us the whole week, and they hit a few." Massillon hit one of its biggest plays in the third quarter to tie the game at 14-14. Facing a fourth-and-1 at his own 29, Hall elected to go for it, and tailback Alex Winters rewarded him with a 71-yard touchdown run with 8:26 left in the quarter.

"A lot of the guys were saying, 'Punt,'" Hall said. "But that was, to me, my way of saying to my kids that this was our time. We're going to do it. ... If you've ever read Joe Paterno's book, there's a quote in there that says, 'In order to win, sometimes you have to take the chance to lose.' It's football; it's fourth-and-1. We've got a couple of 300-pounders, let's do it."

It certainly looked like the Tigers were going to do it on their next possession when Partridge hit Smith for an 82-yard pass down to the Wildcat 3. The next play, Winters fought his way in to the end zone to give the Tigers a 21-14 lead - following the PAT - with 3:58 left.

Partridge finished 16-of-29 for 265 yards with a touchdown and three interceptions. Smith had six catches for 135 yards.

The Tigers' problem, especially early, was slowing down the Wildcats' junior tailback Bobby Grebencs. Grebencs had 122 rushing yards in the first half on 20 carries, as Massillon struggled to gain any sort of control of the line of scrimmage.

Grebencs' 1-yard run with 6:13 left in the first quarter helped give the Wildcats a 7-0 lead. He then scored from 3-yards out with 10:16 left in the half to help make it a 14-0 Ignatius edge.

But the Tigers slowed Grebencs - and conversely, the Wildcat offense - for much of the second half, which helped open the door for their comeback. However, Grebencs got loose for 48 yards - and two touchdowns - on 10 fourth-quarter carries, the last one of 10 yards being the biggest, as it gave the Wildcats the lead for good.

He finished with 217 yards on 40 carries.

"I kept asking him, 'Are you OK?'" Kyle said. "He kept saying, 'Yeah, no problem.'" And, thanks to a second chance, there wasn't any problem for St. Ignatius. Unfortunately for the Tigers, their problem would come thanks to that second chance.

St. Ignatius	26				
Massillon	21				
Massillon	00	07	14	00	21
St. Ignatius	07	07	00	12	26

SCORING SUMMARY

SI - Grebencs 1 run (Franklin kick)
SI - Grebencs 3 run (Franklin kick)
M - Grunder 5 pass from Partridge (Geier kick)
M - Winters 71 run (Geier kick)
M - Winters 3 run (Geier kick)
SI - Grebencs 1 run (Run failed)
SI - Grebencs 10 run (Pass failed)

	Mas	St. I
First downs	11	23
Rushes-yards	21-109	47-234
Comp-Att-Int	16-30-3	10-23-0
Passing yards	265	111
Fumbles-lost	0-0	1-1
Penalty yards	7-60	8-67
Records	5-1	6-0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing:

Massillon - Winters 17-97 2 TDs.
St. Ignatius - Grebencs 40-217 4 TDs.

Passing:

Massillon - Partridge 16-29-265 TD, 3 INTs.
St. Ignatius - Myers 10-23-111.

Receiving:

Massillon - Smith 6-135; Olack 5-89; Grunder 3-19 TD; Allman
1-11.

St. Ignatius - Joseph 3-19.