

Geier's kick lifts Massillon past Twinsburg

By CHRIS EASTERLING
The Independent

CANTON, OH - It was as good a time as any for Jeremy Geier to attempt - and hit - the longest field goal of his two-year Massillon Tiger career.

With the score tied and 28 seconds showing on the clock Saturday night, Geier connected on a 40-yard field goal to lift Massillon past Twinsburg 10-7 in a Division I regional semifinal in front of 7,621 fans at Fawcett Stadium.

"It couldn't have come at a better time," said Geier, whose previous career long - both for an attempted and a made field goal - was 39 yards. "That was awesome."

The win sends Massillon, now 9-3, to the regional championship game for the first time since 2005. Standing in the Tigers' path is archrival McKinley, which is 8-4 after routing GlenOak 48-7 earlier Saturday afternoon at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

The fifth playoff meeting between the two rivals will be held at the University of Akron's new InfoCision Stadium. The previous four playoff meetings were all at the Rubber Bowl.

It wasn't nearly as easy for the Tigers to earn their rematch with the Bulldogs, who won the regular-season meeting 35-21 at Fawcett Stadium. In fact, Massillon found itself in a dogfight with another group of Tigers - these from Twinsburg - for almost 48 solid minutes.

"I can't say enough about the character of this team and the way they handle adversity," Massillon coach Jason Hall said. "They never give up. You think they're down, and they just keep fighting. It's a bunch of fighters. I'm just proud of these kids. I'm happy to be a small part of it."

The only scoring prior to Geier's field goal was a touchdown pass for each team. Twinsburg's came on a 38-yard screen pass from Andrew Collier to Dion Johnson with 3:39 left in the first half for a 7-0 lead, while Massillon matched that with a 41-yard strike from Robert Partridge to Devin Smith with 8:46 remaining in the third quarter.

While both teams' touchdowns came through the air, it was the running games for both which really set the tone. Twinsburg rushed for 216 yards, while Massillon gained 140 on the ground.

For Massillon, much of that rushing total came in the second half, when it made a concerted effort to utilize its size advantage up front with a variety of unbalanced looks to pound the ball against Twinsburg. The biggest benefactor was Jake Reiman, who had 19 of his game-high 26 carries and 78 of his game - and career - high 125 yards in the second half.

"I couldn't have done it without my line or my fullback," Reiman said. "They block their (butts) off today. ... I'm just glad I got my opportunity and I'm trying to do the best I can with it."

Both teams had plenty of chances to add to their totals. All eight of Massillon's possessions in the game had at least two snaps on Twinsburg's side of the 50, including a pair of drives - beyond the Tigers' two scoring drives - which moved inside the Twinsburg 30.

But Massillon turned the ball over three times on Twinsburg's side of the field, including a pair of interceptions, one of which came in the end zone.

"It wasn't pretty," Hall said. "It was not pretty. We made mistakes and I said it at halftime, we were killing ourselves. It wasn't like they were smashing us at the line with a lot of negative plays. We killed ourselves."

Twinsburg had its chances as well. The Summit County edition of the Tigers had seven of their nine possessions reach the Massillon side of the field, including three drives inside the Massillon 30.

Two of those drives were turned away by fourth-down stands by Massillon, and another was squelched when Bo Grunder got the first of his two interceptions on the night. Grunder also put the final nail in the Twinsburg coffin with a pick with 17 seconds left.

Twinsburg also had an 83-yard touchdown pass late in the first half negated by a holding penalty.

"This is the same problem we had last year against Hoover (in the second round of the playoffs)," said Twinsburg coach Mark Solis, whose team bows out in the second round for the second straight year, this time at 10-2. "I have to go back and work my (butt) off as a coach and figure it out. We have to do a better job when we get down in the red zone. What it is, when we get down there and people put pressure on us, we don't handle it well."

Massillon 10

Twinsburg 7

Massillon 00 00 07 03 10

Twinsburg 00 07 00 00 07

SCORING SUMMARY

T - Johnson 38 pass from Collier (Russell kick)

M - Smith 41 pass from Partridge (Geier kick)

M - FG Geier 40

	Mas	Tw
First downs	20	17
Rushes-yards	34-140	37-216
Comp-Att-Int	13-27-2	12-22-2
Passing yards	226	132
Fumbles-lost	1-1	1-0
Penalty yards	7-48	6-50
Records	9-3	10-2

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing:

Massillon - Reiman 26-125; Nalbach 3-14.

Twinsburg - Nero 7-95; Johnson 15-65; Collier 12-43; Hiller 3-13.

Passing:

Massillon - Partridge 13-27-226 TD, 2 INTs.

Twinsburg - Collier 12-22-132 TD, 2 INTs.

Receiving:

Massillon - Olack 4-104; Smith 4-64 TD; Grunder 4-41; Allman 1-17.

Twinsburg - Johnson 3-56 TD; Comar 3-30; Nero 3-24; Grant 2-16;
Francisco 1-6.