

Inadvertent whistle costs Massillon chance at late, go-ahead score

Chris Easterling
The Independent

For the better part of three quarters Thursday night, it was the opposite story from a year ago for the Massillon Tigers with regard to handling GlenOak star tailback Bri'onte Dunn. Instead of letting the Golden Eagle back run wild, the Tiger defense was able to keep Dunn relatively in check.

However, when the fourth quarter came around, Dunn began to run wild, scoring two touchdowns in the final 7:10 of the game to lift the Golden Eagles to a 22-21 win over Massillon inside Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

While Dunn's fourth-quarter outburst may have ultimately cost Massillon, many may look at an apparent fumble by the Golden Eagles at midfield that was nullified by an inadvertent whistle with 1:33 remaining. The ball was given back to GlenOak, which ran out the rest of the clock.

"Ultimately, what they did was take the game out of letting the kids decide," said Tiger coach Jason Hall after his team fell to 1-1 on the season, "whether we win or GlenOak wins."

Dunn, who had 297 yards in three quarters a year ago on his way to 320 yards in a 28-27 Tiger win, had 115 rushing yards on 23 carries through three quarters. In the fourth quarter, he exploded for 134 yards on 16 carries with a pair of scores to help GlenOak erase a 21-10 Tiger lead.

"Coach (Scott Garcia) said we had to work hard," Dunn said. "We were down two touchdowns. We worked hard and we weren't quitting for this one."

The GlenOak senior finished with 249 yards on 39 carries. He also threw a 20-yard touchdown pass to Lunden Butler on a halfback pass to give the Golden Eagles a 7-0 lead with 49 seconds left in the first quarter.

For Massillon, though, Thursday night was as much about missed opportunities as it was about Dunn's fourth-quarter heroics.

Massillon basically spent the entire first half in GlenOak territory. In fact, the only play out of their five first-half drives that was snapped on the Tiger side of the 50 was the first play of the game – a 48-yard strike from Kyle Kempt to Justin Blake to the GlenOak 27.

However, for all of that great field position, the Tigers only mustered one score on a 28-yard game-tying touchdown from Kempt to Montel Harrison with 11:15 left until halftime.

Two sacks and a penalty self-destructed the first drive at the GlenOak 15-yard line. Another drive, which started after Massillon recovered an onside kick, ended when it was stopped on downs at the GlenOak 4.

Still another, which reached the GlenOak 6, was thwarted when a pass off a field-goal try was picked off in the end zone.

"We missed opportunities," Hall said. "We missed a field goal. We bobbled the snap; it happens. We got stopped on fourth down. ... As hard knocks as we thought the end of the game was, we missed on opportunities where that situation could've been avoided."

That missed chance cost the Tigers a chance for the halftime lead. GlenOak, given the opening, didn't miss on its chance to take the edge into the intermission.

The Golden Eagles drained the final 4:15 off the first-half clock and took a 10-7 when Stephen Semple wrapped up the half with a 23-yard field goal.

GlenOak's final first-half drive featured the two longest runs of the first half for Dunn, who was bottled up for much of the half to the tune of 75 yards on 16 carries. Thirty-one of those yards came on consecutive runs of 13 and 18 runs to take the ball down to the Tiger 7.

The Tigers' fortune with regards to field position didn't change with the change in halves. However, they found their luck in finishing drives did, as they took their first third-quarter possession from the GlenOak 43 into the end zone on Ryne Moore's 17-yard scoring run for a 14-10 lead with 7:20 left in the third quarter.

They recovered a GlenOak fumble on the Eagles 47. Three plays later, Kempt hit Tre Hendricks for a 46-yard scoring pass to take a 21-10 lead with 5:24 left in the third.

A second GlenOak turnover – this one an interception by Brody Tonn – forced the Tigers to take just their second snap of the game in their own territory, this time at their own 27. Massillon would not run another play in GlenOak territory the rest of the game.