

# TIGERS ROMP

## Massillon Waits on Weather Then Starts Quickly During Win

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The Independent

MASSILLON The Massillon Tigers waited through a nearly hour-long delay before they could get started with Thursday night's game against Warren Harding. Once they were able to get under way, they didn't wait around to jump on the Raiders.

The Tigers scored on their first two possessions in rolling to their sixth straight win, a 24-7 victory over Warren in front of 5,997 rain-soaked fans at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

"Delays are hard," Tiger head coach Jason Hall said. "We were getting ready to come out and they come in with a delay. At the end of the day, you have to respond and you have to handle that."

Massillon will take a 7-1 record into next Friday's showdown at undefeated Steubenville, the No. 1-ranked team in Division III. The game against Big Red is the first of two consecutive road games to wrap up the regular season for the Tigers, the other being McKinley the following Saturday.

Those two games ultimately will decide Massillon's playoff hopes. The Tigers were ranked No. 7 in Division I, Region 2 in this week's computer rankings.

"They'll respond; they respond to big games," Hall said. "Steubenville and McKinley are two of the biggest games on our schedule for the tradition and history of these programs playing each other. Our kids will be ready to play next week."

Before Massillon could think about the critical final two games, it had to tend to business against a Warren team that had just one win coming into the game - and left with the same number of wins as it fell to 1-7. But before the Tigers could take care of the Raiders, they had to wait out a weather delay.

Thursday night's game was scheduled to kick off at 7:10 p.m. However, lightning delayed the start of the game until almost 8.

Massillon wasted no time in grabbing the momentum once play commenced, as it recovered an onside kick on the opening kickoff. It also forced a turnover on the first play of the initial Raider possession.

Both of those were converted into touchdowns for the Tigers on Kyle Kempt-to-Ernie Baez scoring passes. However, Massillon needed third-and-long conversions in order to get those scores.

On the first Massillon drive, it faced a third-and-13 from the Raider 23. Kempt found Baez on a screen, and Baez raced untouched into the end zone for the score at the 9:51 mark of the first quarter,

After recovering a Raider fumble at the Warren 20, the Tigers found themselves in a third-and-15 situation at the Raider 25. This time, Kempt hit Baez in the right flat, and he once again ran into the end zone for a 14-0 lead at the 8:46 mark of the first quarter.

“They were manning us and playing some cover-4 and really playing off Ernie Baez,” Hall said. “That allowed Ernie to cross the field. We hit him on a middle screen and then a drag route. We were able to convert on those.”

Kempt would finish the game with three touchdown passes, as he added a 30-yard scoring strike to Chris Calhoun on the first drive of the third quarter that made it 24-0 Tigers. Kempt was 14-of-26 for 176 yards on the night.

“The crossing patterns seemed to work,” Hall said. “We hit Chris Calhoun with a deeper crossing pattern later in the game.”

Massillon added a 26-yard field goal by Andrew David in the first half. That came on a drive set up by a partially blocked Warren punt that Ryan Rambo returned 27 yards to the Raider 26.

The Tigers’ 17-0 halftime lead was more than enough against a Raider offense that struggled to get any consistent drives going. At the break, Warren had just 66 total yards - 20 of those coming on its second possession which reached the Tiger 25 - and four first downs.

For the game, the Raiders mustered 214 offensive yards. Warren broke up the shutout bid with 27 seconds left when Jalyn Powell scored on a 10-yard run against Massillon’s reserves.