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POWERED BY YOU AND THE LANCASTER EAGLE-GAZETTE

Lancaster turns it on against Independence

Gales overcome turnovers

BY JOE ARNOLD • SPORTS WRITER • SEPTEMBER 6, 2008

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LANCASTER - It's tough to see embarrassment through a facemask, but Ryan Cheek's face showed just that when his 19-yard run in the second quarter Friday night ended with a fumble and a turnover deep inside Independence's red zone.

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So when Cheek coughed up the ball again on Lancaster's first drive of the second half, the Gales' quarterback/running back was determined to make amends. He picked up his own fumble and bolted 80 yards for a touchdown that went a long way in Lancaster's 37-6 win over the 76ers on Friday.

"I haven't fumbled since I was in the eighth grade," Cheek said. "It's embarrassing. But I guess I got lucky on that second one."

Lucky and fortunate.

The touchdown pushed a tenuous 16-0 lead to a commanding 23-0 edge. It sucked most of the life out of a plucky Independence team.

The 76ers, after benefiting from a handful of Lancaster fumbles and misfires in the first half, went three-and-out on their three possessions following Cheek's score.

"We told (the defense) that this was their week to get a shutout," Gales coach Rob Carpenter said. "We might have left them out there a little longer than what we should have, and (Independence) did punch it in, but we played hard."

Lancaster's defensive line, a unit that was ravaged by Logan in the season opener, shut down the 76ers' primary threat, Devin Clodfelter. The shifty running back managed just three runs of 10 yards or more. He finished with 126 yards on 32 carries.

"It was tough," Cheek said. "Every now and then he'd bounce it outside or cut it up the middle. You couldn't guess or anticipate where he was going, because if you did, he'd go the other way."

Independence quarterback Eric Pugh accounted for the 76ers' only score, a 1-yard TD run with three minutes, 37 seconds left. The 76ers fell to 2-1.

"We all played really well," defensive end Kenny Harlan said. "They were a good, fundamental team, but coach (Jack) Cheek has been on us about getting our reads down. I'm glad everyone did their jobs (Friday night)."

Not wanting to be outdone, the Gales' offensive line opened up mammoth holes for Cheek, Nathan Carpenter and Chris Dilger. Cheek scored on a 63-yard run with 4:11 left in the third quarter, and Dilger, a back-up quarterback, scampered 62 yards for a TD with 10:05 left in the game.

"The offensive line had a great night," Ryan Cheek said. "They're all starting to get the new offense down. They're doing real well."

Lancaster's strong second half overshadowed a first half in which the Gales (2-1) were unable to land a knock-out punch. After a 2-yard run by Cheek and a 54-yard TD pass from Cheek to B.J. Baughman gave



Lancaster's Jentzen Rohr and B.J. Baughman bump chests after Baughman scored a touchdown in the Gales' 37-6 win against Independence on Friday. E-G photo by Ty Wright

KEYS TO THE GAME

- **Key Player:** Lancaster quarterback/running back Ryan Cheek had 230 yards on 11 carries. He scored three rushing TDs and threw for one more.
- **Key Stretch:** The Gales' Chris Dilger booted a 30-yard field goal as the first half expired, and Cheek rumbled 80 yards on Lancaster's first possession of the third quarter to give the Gales a 23-0 lead.
- **Up Next:** Lancaster travels to Pickerington Central on Friday for the first-ever Ohio Capital Conference-Ohio Division showdown with the Tigers.

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the Gales a 13-0 lead, Lancaster went three-and-out on its next two possessions. Cheek's fumble ended what was a sure scoring drive, and on the Gales' next drive, Carpenter was upended at the 76ers' 1-yard line and fumbled. The ball rolled into and out of the endzone for a drive-killing touchback.

Dilger, however, booted a 30-yard field goal to put Lancaster ahead 16-0 as time expired in the first half.

"We were a little disappointed offensively that we left points out there in the first half," Rob Carpenter said. "We got the field goal, and against a team like that, that was big."

Cheek finished with 230 yards on 11 carries. He was 3-for-6 passing for 63 yards and a TD. Carpenter had 47 yards on nine carries. The Gales piled up 411 yards of total offense to Independence's 206.

"It feels good, especially defensively," Cheek said. "We all are getting the feel of where we're supposed to be."

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