

**THE GAME: MASSILLON 37, McKINLEY 29**

# **THE BELL IS BACK**

## **Tigers jumps to big early lead, hold off late Bulldog rally**

Chris Easterling  
The Independent  
Monday, October 29, 2012

MASSILLON The sound of the Victory Bell hadn't chimed inside the Massillon locker room in a while. Three Octobers had come and gone without the Tigers ringing the bell.

Yet, shortly after 5 on Saturday afternoon, there was the distinctive "clang," echoing through a jubilant Tiger locker room at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

The Victory Bell was back in Tigertown, but not without a fight. Massillon jumped out big early, then hung on late to outlast McKinley's comeback attempt to prevail 37-29 in front of 17,582 fans.

"The bell's been over in Canton for three years now," Tiger senior Brody Tonn said. "Everybody's saying, 'You guys ever going to get the bell back? You guys going to get the bell back for your senior year?' Our slogan all year has been '15 weeks,' but all we focused on this whole week was getting the bell back and beating McKinley for our seniors."

And Tonn was front and center in helping Massillon, which heads into Saturday's Division I regional quarterfinal against Nordonica (7-3) at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium with a 9-1 record, end a two-game losing streak overall - and three-game regular-season skid - to the rival Bulldogs.

Tonn threw a 7-yard touchdown pass on a fake field goal to give the Tigers a 7-0 lead. He also caught a 35-yard scoring strike to put Massillon ahead 14-0.

And, for good measure, he turned away a McKinley scoring threat late with an interception in the end zone with 3:15 remaining.

Early on, such late heroics would have seemed unnecessary for Massillon. After all, thanks to three first-half Bulldog turnovers, the Tigers were in possession of a 24-0 lead with 7:42 remaining in the first half.

"When they make a mistake, it just gets us excited," said Tiger junior Marcus Whitfield, whose 37-yard touchdown catch gave Massillon a 24-0 lead. "We get a chance to punch it down the field and score."

Even after McKinley pulled to within 24-7 at halftime, many in attendance would have never expected things to come down to a last-ditch heave by the Bulldogs on the final play of the game.

The players wearing the special graphite-gray uniforms - on a day that matched those duds = weren't surprised.

"Every time we go into the locker room at halftime, we always say to the whole team, 'It's 0-0,'" sophomore defensive end J.D. Crabtree said. "You can never give up, especially on an opponent like that. ... They're all extremely fast. We were ready."

Massillon twice opened up 20-point third-quarter leads - at 27-7 and 34-14. The latter came on the third of Kyle Kempt's three touchdown passes on the day, this one a 66-yarder to Gareon Conley.

"They were trying two-on-one (Conley) all day, and we got our chance," said Kempt, who was 16-of-32 for 285 yards with the three scores and one interception. "We capitalized on it."

McKinley, which will take a 7-2 record into Saturday's regional quarterfinal at Hoover, used the arm of sophomore quarterback Eric Glover-Williams to mount its comeback. Glover-Williams, who rushed for 141 yards and a score on 27 carries, threw second-half touchdown passes to Jeff Richardson and Chris Prowell-White, the latter pulling the Bulldogs to 37-29 - after a two-point conversion - with 5:04 left.

Glover-Williams completed 15-of-30 passes for 196 yards.

## **Massillon brings back Victory Bell, tops McKinley**

Chris Easterling  
Saturday, October 27, 2012  
The Independent

MASSILLON Halfway through Saturday's 122nd showdown against archrival McKinley, the Massillon Tigers looked like they were on their way to a rout. The only problem was, nobody told the Bulldogs that fact.

Still, despite a valiant comeback effort by McKinley, Massillon finally got its hands on the Victory Bell for the first time since 2008 with a 37-28 win in front of 17,582 at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

"It's almost unreal," said Tiger senior Brody Tonn, who threw a touchdown pass, caught a touchdown pass and came up with a game-saving interception late in the game. "I haven't beat McKinley since my freshman year. ... I'm absolutely just speechless right now. I'm so proud of everybody on this team."

Massillon improves to 9-1, its best regular-season record since 2005. It is expected to play host to Nordonía (7-3) next Saturday in a Division I regional quarterfinal, although the official pairings will be announced Sunday by the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

McKinley falls to 7-2. The Bulldogs are expected to play at Hoover (8-2) in a regional quarterfinal next Saturday, with the winner of that game to play the Massillon-Nordonía winner in the second round.

The win snapped a two-game win streak overall for McKinley in the series. In regular-season meetings, the Bulldogs had won the last three coming into Saturday.

"I'm happy for these seniors," said Tiger coach Jason Hall, who now is 3-3 against McKinley. "It was interesting. We had some people talking before the game, and they asked how many of the seniors had touched the bell. None of them could raise their hand. More of a joy for them."

The Tigers at one point led 24-0 midway through the second quarter. They turned three McKinley turnovers into 17 points, with Kyle Kempt hitting Tonn and Marcus Whitfield for scoring passes of 35 and 37 yards.

Kempt was 16-of-32 for 292 yards. He finished with three touchdown passes, including a 66-yarder to Gareon Conley to give Massillon a 34-14 lead with 3:39 left in the third.

Andrew David also had a 25-yard field goal in that stretch as well. "When they make a mistake, it just gets us excited," said Whitfield, whose touchdown catch made it 24-0 with 7:42 left in the half. "We get a chance to punch it down the field and score."

The first Tiger touchdown, though, came courtesy of a little trickery. The Tigers found themselves faced with a fourth-and-goal on the McKinley 7 on their second possession of the game.

Massillon lined up for the field-goal try. However, instead of placing the ball down for the kick, Tonn - the holder - rose up and fired a strike to a wide-open Malik Dudley for the touchdown.

The Tigers, who initially lined up for a two-point conversion try before taking a timeout, added the David PAT to make it 7-0 with 4:35 left in the first quarter.

"We out and we actually had the check on," Tonn said. "I looked over to the sideline and coach said, 'It looks like they're bringing a blitz, so run it.' They actually ended up bringing everybody up the middle. Malik Dudley leaked out through the middle and was just wide open."

McKinley would crack the scoreboard when Eric Glover-Williams hit Chris Prowell-White for a 19-yard touchdown pass with 3:40 left in the half, cutting it to 24-7. It would be one of two scoring connections between the two, as their second one - a 5-yarder with 5:04 remaining - cut the score to 37-29, after Jeff Richardson's two-point conversion run.

Glover-Williams, McKinley's elusive sophomore quarterback, completed 15-of-50 passes for 196 yards and three touchdowns. His one interception came with 3:15 remaining, two plays after Richardson had come up with a interception of a Tiger pass.

That interception, though, didn't end McKinley's hopes. The Bulldogs got the ball back with 41 seconds at their own 36.

A pass interference flag against Massillon moved the ball to midfield on the first play. But McKinley would be flagged for intentional grounding, then throw a harmless incomplection on the game's final play, setting off a raucous celebration.

## Victory has a sweet ring to it

Chris Easterling  
Sunday, October 28, 2012  
The Independent

MASSILLON It was a simple show of hands. That was all that was asked for. And none were raised.

Moments before Massillon's 2012 Tigers - and particularly the seniors - took to the field at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium for the 122nd meeting with hated rival McKinley on Saturday, they were asked how many in the room had touched the Victory Bell.

How many had been able to ring it in celebration of a win over the Bulldogs?

Not one hand went in the air.

A little more than three hours later, that same bell rang and rang and rang some more in the same room where that pointed question had been asked. One by one, Massillon's 2012 Tigers - and especially those seniors - took turns ringing the bell.

No one could say that they hadn't touched the Victory Bell. After a day that started with all the makings of a Tiger rout, then had all the makings of a historic Bulldog rally, all that mattered was that the scoreboard read "Tigers 37, Bulldogs 29" when the clock hit 0:00 after four hard-fought quarters.

Few people seemed to savor the somewhat simple joy of ringing the bell more than those seniors who may have made their last appearance on what is, quite simply, one of the greatest rivalries in high school sports. Oh, there's is absolutely no doubt these two rivals could find themselves lining up on the same field in the second round of the playoffs - all that stands in the way is Nordonia for Massillon and Hoover for McKinley.

But it wouldn't quite be the same.

Even the seniors themselves knew that fact. To hear a Brody Tonn or an Eric Copeland - both Massillon-born and raised - speak during the week leading up to the 122nd meeting, there was no doubting how much they had riding on their final Week 10 meeting with McKinley.

They had all heard about how they hadn't beaten McKinley since they rose up to the Tiger varsity. Sure, that win as freshmen over McKinley was nice, but it was "just" a freshman game.

As sophomores, they watched Bulldogs come into their stadium - "their house" - and celebrate a 40-17 win. Then came the ultimately slap in the face as juniors, when they were so close to victory at Fawcett Stadium they could almost reach out and touch the Victory Bell, only to have it snatched away with nine seconds left as McKinley rallied for a 23-20 gut-punch of a win.

They weren't going to let it happen again.

Not this time.

This time, they weren't just going to reach out for the Victory Bell. This time, they were going to reach out and take what they believed was rightfully theirs.

They were going to take that Victory Bell back.

If it meant jumping out to a 24-0 lead, that's what they were going to do. If it meant turning the third quarter into a game of alternating scores, so be it.

If it meant holding on against not one, but two McKinley drives in the final four minutes, that's what they were going to do.

And if it meant running the sprint of their lives to get from one sideline to the other just to get to the Victory Bell when that last, harmless McKinley pass fell to the turf, you bet they were going to do that as well.

Because the next time somebody asks Massillon's 2012 Tigers - especially the seniors - how many have touched the Victory Bell, they'll get an answer.

All of them.

## McKinley's resilience not a surprise for Massillon

Chris Easterling  
October 28, 2012  
The Independent

MASSILLON The Massillon Tigers would have been more than happy to have beaten McKinley in a rout. But, even as one seemed imminent in the first half of Saturday's 122nd meeting of the two rivals, they were prepared for the Bulldogs to mount a comeback.

And come back, the Bulldogs did. But not quite enough, as Massillon held on for a 37-29 win at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

"That's the Massillon-McKinley football game, right?" Tiger coach Jason Hall said after the game. "That's almost reminiscent of last year's game. Just back-and-forth, back-and-forth. You're never going to have a team give up in this game, I don't care what the score is. I wouldn't expect them to give up at all."

It could've been easy for Saturday's game to devolve into a blowout. In fact, it looked to be well on its way to becoming just such a game.

Massillon turned a fake field goal and then a McKinley fumble into two first-quarter touchdown passes. They turned two more Bulldog fumbles into a second-quarter field goal and yet another touchdown pass.

And just like that, it's 24-0 Tigers. And there was still two-and-a-half quarters to be played.

But even the Tigers knew there would be something from the Bulldogs.

"We knew they were good players and they could make plays," Tiger receiver/cornerback Gareon Conley said. "We had to go out in the second half thinking it was 0-0. We had to come out and play."

Even as McKinley attempted to claw back into it, Massillon seemed to have an answer. Leading 24-7 at halftime, the Tigers sandwiched another field goal and another touchdown pass around a McKinley score to keep the margin at a comfortable three scores.

Yet, the Bulldogs wouldn't quit. They sandwiched two scores of their own around a third Tiger field goal, and with 5:04 left in regulation, they found themselves on the verge of a potentially historic comeback down just eight at 37-29.

Memories of a much smaller McKinley comeback point-wise, but a much bigger one pain-wise, came back to the Tigers. A year ago at Fawcett Stadium, after Massillon took a 20-16 lead with 1:13 left, McKinley stormed back to snatch the win away with a touchdown run with nine seconds remaining to prevail 23-20.

And the Tigers weren't going to let it happen to them once again.

"Our mindset, and the speech at halftime, was last year's game," said Tiger receiver/cornerback Brody Tonn, who helped squash the Bulldog comeback with an interception in the end zone with 3:15 remaining. "Seventy-three seconds. We go up and we score. There's a minute, 13 (seconds) left and we think, 'All right, all we've got to do is play defense and the game's over, bell's ours.' And we ended up losing with nine seconds left on the clock.

"The whole time in the second half when they started scoring a lot, on the sideline we were like, 'Don't let what happened last year happen again. Remember that 73 seconds.'"