

Oct. 29 Football: Snow ball rolls Hamilton's way



In what was the story of the game for Hamilton, defensive lineman Jude Kernizan pounces on a Trenton fumble at the West 15-yard line during the third quarter of today's wild game. Hamilton recovered five Trenton fumbles inside the 30 (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com.)

Frigid but victorious Hornets say 'Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!'

**By Rich Fisher
Fish4Scores.com**

Oct. 29: This one will go down in the annals of Mercer County football as truly unique.

Which is only natural, since a snowstorm on Halloween weekend is different in its own right, let alone a football game being played in the middle of it.

On a day where coaches, players, officials and fans all admitted to never having experienced before, the Hamilton West football team took a 6-0 victory over Trenton when quarterback Mark Acquaviva scored on a one-yard keeper in the first overtime.

"Happiness," said running back/safety Bret Stroman of his emotions when the ref's arms went up. "A lot of happiness and relief."

The game started in a mixture of rain and snow but turned to all snow early. Not flurries. . . a hard, driving snow that was still coming down when the parking lot was emptying. The yard lines disappeared under white and snow clung to the scoreboard.

It was actually pretty cool.

Watching from the pressbox, former Hornet quarterback Jake D'Angelo said "This is the first time I've never seen Hoges without his shorts on."

"I got 'em right here," coach Tom Hoglen said, patting his pocket. "I had them on for pre-game

but had to change.”

It was that kind of day. Hoglen may be a Green Bay Packer fan but, if his shivering body was any indication, he wasn't digging the frozen tundra

“We knew the weather would be bad, but this is *bad*,” said Hoglen, whose team came up with a goal line stand at the end of regulation to force overtime. “I’ve never played in anything this bad.

“This is the great equalizer. Trenton had a helluva effort, we had a helluva effort and luckily we came up with a win and kept our hopes alive for the playoffs. That’s the bottom line.”

Stroman, who graciously stopped for an interview while his teammates fled for the warmth of the lockerroom, was also in new territory.

“It was an experience,” the senior said through viciously chattering teeth. “I’ve never played in a game like this before.”

Stroman’s stats would say otherwise, as he picked up a game-high 139 yards on 17 carries. But it was Trenton’s offense that dominated the game, as the Tornadoes appeared more adept at maintaining balance on the slippery field.

But if weather was the great equalizer for Trenton, turnovers were the great downfall.

The Tornadoes lost five fumbles, each one inside the Hamilton 30-yard line and four in the red zone.

In the second quarter, Trenton got to the 28 before Mark McKenzie pounced on a loose ball. Hamilton (5-2) fumbled it right back and the Tornadoes (2-6) got to the 19 before Javed James recovered the slippery pigskin.

The Tornadoes went from their own 35 to the Hamilton 12 to start the third quarter before another fumble was covered by Jude Kernizan. Hamilton failed to move and fumbled its punt attempt, giving Trenton possession at the 13. On third down from the eight, another one was coughed up and Jordan Williams covered it.

That made it precarious however, as Hamilton had possession at the two-yard line. One



Hamilton quarterback Mark Acquaviva, who scored the winning touchdown on a one-yard keeper in overtime, gets ready to battle the elements and the Tornadoes during the fourth quarter today (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

bobbled snap or slip in the endzone and Trenton would have a lead.



There's Nanook of the North, and then there's HaHoges of the West as Hornet head coach Tom Hoglen bundles up for today's game with Trenton. Cherish this photo, as it is one of the few in existence where Hoglen is not wearing shorts during a football game (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

quarterback Jabree Jackson (104 yards) came up short and time expired as TCHS had no timeouts left.

West survived regulation despite being out-rushed, 242-158.

“Our defense hung tough all day,” Hoglen said. “They had the ball on the one-yard line and didn’t score. I told our guys to hang in there, keep coming, maybe something happens and it did.

“Their quarterback is tough, if you don’t tackle him he makes plays happen.”

Trenton had possession first in OT and could not generate anything. Then it was Hamilton’s turn.

Starting at the 30 after a penalty, Stroman ran for 14 and James followed with two five-yard runs before Acquaviva ran for five to set up first down at the one. Several times during the game,

“In these conditions, quarterback and center exchange was huge today,” Hoglen said. “(Acquaviva and center Gabe DeGuzman) did a pretty good job with it.”

A six-yard run by Stroman provided some breathing room and on third-down, he looked to be stopped short of a first down but sprung loose for a 50-yard gain to the 40.

“I didn’t want to stop moving my feet,” he said. “I was thinking touchdown, touchdown.”

Somehow, Trenton managed to track him down and the drive stalled at the TCHS 35. A poor punt (there was no other kind you could have today) gave the visitors possession at the Hornet 20.

Once again, they grinded out yards on the ground and reached Hamilton’s 18 before a fifth and final fumble was recovered by Darius Miller at the 16 with just over three minutes left.

But Hamilton still had problems. After going nowhere on offense, they had a punt blocked giving Trenton possession on the 2-yard line with 1:13 left. After gaining one yard on first down, the Tornadoes had a costly penalty on a false start. Two runs by

Hoglen tried risky pitches to Stroman, but junked it near the goal line.

“I put it in Brett’s hands,” he said. “Once we got momentum and I saw our line kind of had momentum, I was giving it to the big fullback and he got us down there. “At the end we played it safe. We wanted to get the snap, not hand it off. I told everybody just wedge the middle on the big guy (6-6, 298-pound Richard Levy) and they got it done.”

Acquaviva ran straight ahead, starting a wild celebration from a lot of freezing players.

When asked if he felt like Hamilton stole the game after Trenton dominated statistically, Stroman said ‘I feel like God was on our side and we came out with the win.

“It was hard to play on both sides of the ball. The ground didn’t give us much traction and both teams were having trouble. It was hard to do anything. And it was cold.”

But in the end, it was all worth it for the Hornets.