

Sep. 17 Football



If you started with us on the home page, we promised you would get the answer and here it is. Damar Russell was looking for a halfback option pass from Brett Stroman, which was delivered to perfection in the first quarter of today's game as Russell hauls it in for 42-yard gain (Photos by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

Hornets win as Stroman runs wild behind ever-improving offensive line

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Sep. 17: In Hamilton West's 31 offensive plays of the first half against Lawrence today, 26 of them were running plays and all but two gained positive yardage.

When asked if that was an offensive lineman's dream, senior left guard Sal Vaccaro grinned widely.

"It's more than a dream," Vaccaro said. "It's like life itself."

And life was good for the Hornets today as a Bret Stroman masterpiece provided a 40-17 victory at Lawrence.

That raises Hamilton's record to 2-0 heading into next Saturday's backyard brawl with Nottingham, also 2-0.

Stroman was awesome as he rushed for 211 yards and four touchdowns on 31 carries. He also returned a late interception 55 yards for a score, returned the opening kickoff 21 yards, caught three passes for 24 yards and threw an option pass for 42 yards.

In case you lost count, that makes 353 total yards for the senior running back/safety.

"What can you say, their guy had an unbelievable game," Lawrence coach Rob Radice

said.

In a day of big plays, Stroman's biggest may have been in the Hornets' second possession.

Hamilton took a 7-0 lead on Bret's 3-yard touchdown run. But the Cards came back on their first play from scrimmage on a 55-yard option touchdown pass to Charlie Morreale to make it 7-6.

On Hamilton's next series, the Hornets had a first-and-15 when Stroman threw a 42-yard option pass to Damar Russell . Three plays later Stroman scored again and Hamilton was en route to a 28-6 halftime lead.

West was also helped by a fake punt in which Karif Collie went 21 yards for a first down to sustain a drive.

"We had four drives and we were able to score on all of them," said coach Tom "The Lord of Lambeau" Hoglen. "They came out and caught us by surprise and scored quick.

"Our guy responded right away. Bret came up with the halfback pass after that. So we kind of saved that play for a momentum swing and we were able to do that."

By intermission, Stroman had three touchdowns and quarterback Mark Acquaviva one. The Hornets had rushed for 196 yards, 140 of them belonging to Stroman.

"We like to pound it at them, go at them, see if they can stop it," Stroman said. "If they can't, we just keep going."

Lawrence cut it to 28-17 in the third quarter before Hamilton responded with another long scoring drive and Stroman capped the day with his interception return.

Hamilton finished with 282 rushing yards on 42 carries, as the Hornets all-new offensive line continues to grow up quickly.

The group features left tackle Joe Avanzato, Vaccaro, center Gaibriel Deguzman, right guard Gary Stern and right tackle Khalil Ross.

"They're coming together," Hoglen said. "I gotta give a lot of credit to coach (Mike) Papero, our offensive line coach. There's not a verbal kid in that group. They just come out and do their job and work hard and take pride in their work. That's what being an offensive lineman is all about.

"They're doing all we can ask for. Those guys get into people and stay with the blocks. They're able to do that. Just give our running backs some space to go, and they'll go."

One of the most important facets of an O-line is cohesion, and Vaccaro thinks that's starting to come.

"It's starting to jell real nice," he said. "We're getting our plays down. We just know them off the top of our heads now without even having to think about it. We're just straight off the ball."

No one is enjoying this more than Vaccaro, who missed all last season after being slated as a possible starter. The 5-10, 190-pound senior hurt his left clavicle during a helmets-only preseason practice session.

"It was a freak accident kind of thing," Vaccaro said. "I'm feeling pretty good this year, I've been rehabbing a lot. The injury shouldn't stop me this year."

Vaccaro said that while standing on the sidelines was torture last year, he managed to take advantage of watching the Hornets veteran O-line at work.

“I got to see how great our senior class did and how winning feels,” he said. “I definitely learned some things. I learned when it gets tough in the game, you don’t quit. There were games last year where people didn’t have faith in us, and we kept in it and won.”

A similar script is being followed this year.

With a whole new line.

And one heck of a versatile running back.

EXTRA POINTS: Javed James did a nice job in limited action with 32 yards on six carries, while Acquaviva had 13 yards on three carries and went 4-for-6 for 27 yards. “Mark Acquaviva is calm, cool and collective,” Hoglen said. “He’ll run the show, which is what we ask him to do. Nothing bothers that kid so that’s what I need at quarterback” . . . Michael Craig had the game’s lone sack . . . Hamilton’s game with Nottingham will be its home opener . . . One downer was the Hornets PAT team, as Hoglen was none too happy that Hamilton botched its last two attempts.