

TheVindicator

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SECTION C

Sports and RECREATION

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL | *Week 10*

Cards trump top rivals — again



BREAKING FOR BIG YARDS: Canfield High's Dan Banna, center, breaks through the line for a big gain as Poland's Mark Turnbull, left, and Luke Wollet (34) try to chase him down during Friday's game. The Cardinals scored on the next play in their 28-10 victory.

The Vindicator/Robert K. Yosay

*Canfield prevailed,
28-10, to make the
playoffs with a 9-1
record and a full head of
steam.*

By JOE SCALZO

VINDICATOR SPORTS STAFF

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POLAND — Just after Canfield senior Pat Fening broke loose for the game-clinching score in Friday's game against Poland, one of the Cardinals assistant coaches opened his cell phone, listened and yelled out, "Mooney's up 21-0 in the third quarter."

Mooney's opponent, Columbus Watterson, is in Canfield's region. A Watterson win would have been problematic, especially if the Cardinals lost.

But after a convincing 28-10 victory over their rivals, the Cardinals don't have to worry about backing into the playoffs.

They're going in with a full head of steam.

"We've always believed that if we're good enough to beat the Poland Bulldogs, we're good enough to go to the playoffs," said Canfield coach Mike Pavlansky.

For the second straight year, the Cardinals used a victory over the Bulldogs to get into the postseason. And, most likely, they knocked their rivals out.

"They took it to us," said Poland coach Mark Brungard, who dropped to 0-3 in the rivalry. "It's sad for these seniors to have to play their last game here."

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Earlier in the week, Pavlansky talked about how special teams usually plays a role in the outcome of the Poland-Canfield game. It happened last year when the Cardinals won the game on Pat Sankovic's game-winning field goal.

And it happened Friday.

With less than five minutes left in the first half, Canfield's punt coverage team broke through Poland's line and nearly blocked Sam Romeo's kick.

"They came up to me and said,

'Coach, we're so close,' " Pavlansky said.

After a 16-yard touchdown run by junior Dan Banna tied the game at 7, Canfield forced a three-and-out by the Bulldogs.

Poland again lined up to punt. Again, the Cardinals broke through.

This time, though, they didn't miss. Junior Andy Angelo blocked the kick, Canfield got the ball at Poland's 15 and Banna scored his second touchdown on the next play, making it 14-7 at halftime.

"Angelo made a great play," Pavlansky said. "That was huge."

Canfield's defense gave up a field goal to start the second half, but

stuffed the Bulldogs the rest of the way. Canfield's offense, meanwhile, opened big holes up front for Banna and Fening, eventually wearing the Bulldogs down.

"At the beginning of the year, everyone talked about how we had to replace our line," said Banna, whose team lost all five linemen to graduation last year. "Those guys stepped up and did what they had to do."

Quarterback Mark Carrocce made it 21-10 in the third quarter on a 3-yard run that was set up by a terrific 32-yard over-the-shoulder catch by Fening from Carrocce. Fening then scored on a 20-yard run with 3:25 to end the suspense.

Fening finished with 94 yards and Banna added 63 for the Cardinals (9-1), who will make their fourth straight playoff appearance.

"They lined up and punched us," said Brungard.

Greg Sabol had 63 yards rushing on 17 carries and scored the game's first touchdown, on a 3-yard run in the first quarter, to lead the Bulldogs (7-3), who still have an outside shot at the postseason. Poland entered the game seventh in Div. III, Region 7.

"Right now, I'm just trying to help these seniors get through this," said Brungard. "We'll worry about that [postseason] tomorrow."

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