



Centennial vs. Millennium 9.25.10

By John Theriault
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In most games, there is usually a defining moment that determines the outcome of the game.

According to Centennial coach Rich Taylor, there are those that figure it out and those that don't.

Taylor's Coyotes were facing that moment when a 13-0 lead over Millennium shrunk to 13-7 and the Tigers threatened to take the lead moments into the second quarter.

But one of many huge plays by the Centennial (4-0) defense would catapult the No. 2 ranked 5A II team to a resounding 48-14 win over the Tigers in Goodyear on Friday night.

"It's almost like our guys recognize when that critical time is there and they do something about it. There are players that don't recognize it, but our guys do and tonight they made it happen," said Taylor.

"If they score there, they could turn the momentum of the whole game around but our guys stepped up at that moment.

The 'moment' actually was a sequence of less than 2 minutes early in the fourth quarter.

After Vegas Johnson and Zach Hoffpaur each scored the first of their two TDs to make it 13-0 Centennial, the Tigers came back with a big Chad Hons-to-Kieran Duncan 6 yard pass for a 13-7 score.

On the ensuing drive, Millennium's Troy Terry picked off a rare errant pass by Justin Sanchez and returned it to the Centennial 14-yard line.

Three straight stops, however, set up a 41-yard field goal attempt for the Tigers.

But Centennial's big play guy Tevin Ray blocked his second kick of the season, followed by a scoop and run by Hoffpaur for 70 yards down to the Millennium 15 yard line. A penalty on the play gave the Coyotes the ball on the Tigers' 40, but two plays later, Johnson would charge in from 27 yards out and the rout was on.

"Sometimes it's your night and sometimes it's not your night. I think tonight I did pretty good," said a modest Hoffpaur.

Along with 26 and 24 yard TD receptions and the huge fumble recovery, the junior Hoffpaur's 'pretty good night' included two interceptions, both of which set up scoring drives.

"Those interceptions I got were because our defensive line got a ton of pressure on their quarterback tonight," Hoffpaur added.

The line of Jake Abbott, Denzell Daniel-Jones and John Finocchi were in the Millennium backfield for a good part of the night, forcing a total of 4 pickoffs (two more by Gary Ross) and a number of near misses.

Johnson was huge for Centennial, racking up 122 yards on just 9 carries. His two TDs give him 6 on the season.

Sanchez, meanwhile, was dangerously effective as usual. The junior signal caller finished the night 8 of 13 for 180 yards and 3 TDs in just one half of football. Sanchez's third TD pass was an 11-yarder to Julien Singleton, seconds before halftime.

Sanchez was relieved by Troy Hawthorne who collected 60 yards rushing, including a 10 yard TD, on just 3 carries.

Centennial's Jaylen Ortiz continued his effective running for the Coyotes, gaining 50 yards on just 5 touches including a 23 yard score midway through the fourth quarter.

The Tigers did keep the Centennial defense on its toes early in the game, thanks in large part to their standout running back DeAnthony Easley.

The senior waltzed his way through the Coyotes' defense with some huge carries in the first half, including gains of 24, 29, 28 and 40. The Coyotes eventually tamed Easley, but not before he managed 135 yards on 12 carries. Easley also caught a nice ball from Taylor Nezdoba for a 28 yard TD to close out the scoring for the Tigers.

"(Centennial's) defense was really tough. We just couldn't get a lot going on them tonight," Easley explained