

Barons rally to beat Warwick

By

Bruce Morgan

Having jumped out to a firsthalf lead, Warwick was sensing a streak-buster last Friday night.

The Warriors had dropped 22 games in row to back-yard rival Manheim Central going back to 1983, but on this night, there was optimism.

Filing into the locker room at the break, though, the Barons still liked their chances trailing 14-7.

“We just knew that we had to stay the course and wear them down and get more physical with them in the second half, and I think we were able to do that,” Manheim Central coach Dave Hahn said.

Sure enough, Manheim Central rallied in the second half, getting a pair of TD runs by Tyler

Flick, and pulled off a 27-20 win over Warwick in a thriller in front of 2,251 fans at Manheim’s Elden Rettew Field.

While the Barons improved to 3-0 heading into a clash against Wilson this Friday, Warwick (2-1) suffered its first loss of the season.

“We hung in. Both teams were tired, but apparently we were a little more tired,” said Warrior coach Bob Locker, whose squad hosts Hempfield in its Section One opener this Friday. “We had opportunities. And that’s a really good football team. So I guess in some ways, we can measure ourselves in terms of, at times, we were able to play with them, but we can’t do it for a whole game. That’s what we’ve got to figure out next.”

Four Baron turnovers — three in the opening half — contributed to Warwick’s opportunities, but the red-and-black struggled at times to

sustain drives against a stout Manheim Central defense, managing just 48 yards on the ground.

“Their two DTs (Tyler Dougherty and Troy Kolk) and their two inside linebackers (Flick and Landan Moyer) are really good football players,” Locker said, “and we had trouble running inside.”

Trey Glass showed that he’s a really good football player for Warwick, returning the opening kickoff 95 yards down the left sideline to paydirt. Following Tanner Haines’ PAT, the Warriors led 7-0 with just 16 seconds elapsed in the game.

“The Glass kid is fast and dy-



Manheim Central senior wide receiver Isaac Perron jumps to make a grab in front of Warwick’s Brendan Martin in last Friday’s game. **Photo by Kirk Neidermyer**

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namic,” Hahn said.

A short time later, the Warriors got the ball back at the Barons’ 49 after DB Nick Fucci recovered a fumble, but then went three-and-out.

“The first half was very sloppy,” Manheim Central QB Evan Simon said. “We had three turnovers in the first half. If you think about it, they could’ve had 21 points in the first half. So that was crucial, that first half with (our defense) getting all those stops.”

Manheim Central threatened on its final series of the first quarter, as Flick rumbled for gains of 26 and 9 yards to the Warriors’ 24. For the game, he finished with 136 yards on 25 carries.

But three plays later, Simon (12-of-21, 177 yards) threw his first INT of the season, which Warwick’s Justin Gerhart returned to midfield.

A 15-yard completion from Adam Ricketts (8-of-17, INT) to Glass (6-76 receiving) got the Warriors a first down, but they stalled from there.

“Offensively, we were sloppy execution-wise,” Locker said. “That falls on me, so I’ve got to find ways to clean it up before we get to next week.”

Warwick quickly got another chance, though, when Hayden Rucci recovered another Baron fumble, and this time, Fucci (11 carries, 50 yards) scored on a 26-yard sprint up the middle with 8:00 remaining in the half, which pushed the Warriors’ lead to 14-0.

About five minutes later, the Barons forced a Warrior turnover when Isaac Perron intercepted

Ricketts and returned the ball to the WHS 27. Simon (12-55 rushing) kept the drive alive with a six-yard run on fourth-and-short, and then with just :04 left in the half, the junior signal-caller scored on a one-yard run, cutting the Warriors’ lead to 14-7.

It remained that way after Warwick dodged a scare when safety Caleb Schmitz recovered a fumble by MC receiver Ben Wagner following a 56-yard catch-and-run at the Warriors’ 34 in the third.

After the Barons got the ball back at their own 38, Colby Wagner (3-49 receiving) got behind the Warriors’ D-backs and hauled in a 32-yard TD reception from Simon, and when Niko Gavala added the PAT, it was tied 14-all with 36 seconds left in the quarter.

“Our DBs are staring in the backfield instead of keeping an eye on the receiver,” Locker said. “So that’s a mistake we’ve got to fix.”

Hahn believed the game turned in their direction with that play.

“That was big,” he said. “We just needed to generate some momentum. We needed to put points on the board and tie that game up, and then we knew if we could get it tied up, we were going to take over. That’s our mentality, so that’s what we’re going to have to do next week too.”

Starting their next possession with excellent field position at the Warrior 41, the Barons scored four plays later on Flick’s 10-yard run with 10:11 to go, giving Manheim Central its first lead, 21-14.

In all, the Barons gained 104 of their 205 total rushing yards in the second half.

“To be honest with you, I think we just wore them down,” Hahn said. “The kids were coming to the sideline and our linemen were saying, ‘Coach, run the ball behind me. They’re tired. We’ve got them. Let’s go.’ They’re a great team, I think we’re a good team too, and we just kinda got the better of them at the end.”

On its next possession, Manheim Central made the task a little more difficult for the Warriors, getting a five-yard touchdown run by Flick, his seventh rushing TD in three games. The PAT was blocked, but the Barons led 27-14 with 6:45 left.

From there, Joey McCracken replaced Ricketts under center for the Warriors. Locker explained that the plan was to use McCracken in the game at some point, and with his team forced to throw the ball, the time was right.

“(Joey)’s got a strong arm,” Locker said, “and we figured, ‘Listen, it’s a two-score game. We’re not going to run the ball.’ He’s played in every game so far and he’s got a skillset.”

A 34-yard connection from McCracken (5-of-10, 69 yards) to Conor Adams on fourth-and-8 kept the Warriors’ hopes alive, and then with 2:33 to go, the sophomore QB extended the play and found Hilton Michael in the right corner of the end zone for a 14-yard TD pass. The Barons blocked the extra-point, but the Warriors were back within 27-20.

“Joey’s good in the pocket, he’s got a good sense and he’s got a good arm,” Locker said. “Hilton ran a really nice pattern in the end zone and Joey delivered the ball. That’s a real nice pass he threw.”

Unfortunately for the Warriors, their inside kick went out of bounds, allowing Manheim Central to take over at its 35, and Flick and Co. ran out the clock to preserve the win.

“I think (that game) prepares us (for Wilson),” Hahn said. “There’s not going to be too many guys like (Nick) Coomer and (Hayden) Rucci and (Nolan) Rucci and some of their skill kids that we faced. I like their kids. They’ve got some good things going on there, so I think that was a good win for us to go against fast guys and big guys.”



Warwick’s Owen Campbell (55) drags down Manheim Central running back Tyler Flick as teammates Conor Adams (20) and Thatcher Miller (21) close ground.

Photo by Kirk Neidermyer

