

Barons flex muscles in second half to beat Wilson, 20-10

By

John Crawford

Manheim Central junior quarterback Evan Simon took the final snap with seconds to go in Friday's 20-10 victory over the Wilson Bulldogs, knelt down and jumped up immediately in celebration.

The play sealed another come-back win for the Barons, who trailed 10-0 in the second quarter.

One week earlier, Manheim Central was down 14-0 against Warwick before rallying to win 27-20.

"Hard work pays off," Simon said, recalling his first thoughts. "We had a slow first half. (That was) two powerhouses, a battle of titans."

The game was a contest between two historically and currently successful teams. Manheim Central rarely faces an opponent as rich in tradition as theirs but the Bulldogs can match it. With a history of multiple Section One

championships, Wilson arrived in Manheim after winning two straight games.

They held the Barons to some of their lowest statistics of the season. Simon went 3-for-16 in passing, but two of those com-



Manheim Central senior wide receiver Isaac Perron (left) prepares to give a stiff-arm to Wilson defensive back Troy Corson. **Photo by Alan Johnson**

Barons

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ptions were touchdowns. Tyler Flick gained 78 yards on 28 carries, but gained crucial real estate late in the game. Even the defense, which kept Wilson from building a large lead early, allowed 242 total yards.

None of this mattered as the Barons survived the first half down by only four points and controlled the game in the second. Every Baron attributed the comeback to better training.

"Our guys are firm believers that our summer paid off," Simon said. "We train for moments like this. We train for the second half where they get tired and us, not."

Coach Dave Hahn preached the same beliefs.

"The difference between good teams and great teams is good teams get tired, great teams don't," he said. "Good teams get beat in the fourth quarter when great teams take over. We got better and we got stronger as the game went along."

Both teams struggled offensively in the first quarter. The Barons opened with a pair of three-and-out possessions, while the Bulldogs began with two short passes for a first down then threw long on their third play. QB Anthony Futrick's pass headed to the end zone but the player running under the throw was Baron defensive back Will Rivers. He intercepted the pass in the end zone for his first critical defensive play of the evening.

Both defenses produced stops through the first quarter and, aided by a missed Wilson field goal attempt, kept the game scoreless in the first quarter.

"It was a heck of a defensive battle," said Hahn.

Wilson nearly wasted another red zone possession when they reached the MC 4-yard line late in the first quarter. An illegal procedure penalty moved them backwards to the 9 and Manheim's defensive pressure kept them away

from the end zone before Wilson settled for a 22-yard field goal.

On their next possession, Wilson got into the end zone with a one yard run by Elijah Morales for the 10-0 lead.

Then with under five minutes to play in the second, Rivers' blitz on third and six from the Wilson 21 produced another turnover. Coming in from the left, Rivers hit Futrick's arm before it began moving forward. The ball popped into the air and Tyler Hartl recovered the fumble on the 5-yard line.

Given great field position by their defense, the Barons' offense needed to create points and they did. Facing third-and-three, Simon passed to the right corner and found Jake Harbach with 4:30 left in the half. The PAT attempt was blocked but the Barons had closed the gap to 10-6.

"(Harbach) was in the backfield," said Simon. "We had a corner route and a flat route. I read the corner. (The corner) came up and bopped it over him. (Harbach) made the play." Neither team moved the ball effectively in the final minutes and finished the half with the 10-6 score.

The defenses produced another scoreless quarter in the third but the Baron offense awoke early in the fourth.

The go-ahead drive started late in third when Isaac Perron ran around the end for nine yards. When the quarter ended, the Barons had a second-and-10 from the Wilson 39.

On the first play of the fourth, Simon rolled right and found Evan Hosler running downfield. The pass found Hosler around the 20-yard line and he eluded some defenders before reaching the end zone.

"We faked the jet sweep and got everyone going left," Simon recalled. "Colby Wagner did a great job of clearing out that cornerback so that it was just me and Hos. He made a nice cut and he scored."

"I heard a lot of confusion on the defensive side,"

Hosler said. "I didn't see anyone over top of me. I did my route, turned around and had clear grass. I had a receiver blocking the corner and no one else. I ran as fast as I could. I was surprised to see an open field."

A high snap on fourth-and-18 ended with Hosler tackling the punter, which gave Manheim another red zone opportunity. A defensive holding penalty moved the ball from the 11 to the five, and then two Flick runs through the middle of the defensive line resulted in the final Baron TD with 9:56 left to play.

"I think our conditioning from the preseason really wore them down," Flick said. "We were going with the jumbo package to pound it down and find the hole."

With the 10-point lead, the Manheim defense harassed Futrick for the rest of the game, with Anthony Perez and Brett Wohlgenuth sacking him for significant losses.

Wohlgenuth's sack appeared to seal the game but, true to the Bulldogs' pedigree, they converted on fourth and 19 from their 10. With 2:45 left in the game, Wilson attempted another fourth down conversion but Rivers chased Futrick from the right side, catching the QB on the left side for a two-yard loss. From there, the Barons converted two first downs before Simon took the knee to end the game.

On a night when Central struggled for offensive consistency, they still produced the victory.

"We weren't in sync but we found a way to win," Hahn remarked.



Taking advantage of a nice block from teammate Ben Wagner (far right) on Wilson linebacker Isiah Gilmore, Manheim Central's Evan Hosler (2) cuts inside and scores on a 39-yard pass from quarterback Evan Simon in the fourth quarter last Friday night.

