By Pastor Vince Carrig
Sports Writer

Nick Turner rushed for 198 yards and two touchdowns to rally the Plainsmen from behind and carry them to a 17-6 win over the Bayard Tigers at Haenfler Field in Grant on Friday night.

Turner capped a 4:40, 83-yard drive with a short run to open up a defensive stalemate and give Perkins County a 10-6 lead with 4:39 left in the game.

Fellow senior Plainsman Erik Hagan then severely damaged Bayard’s comeback hopes by intercepting a Brandon Stuart pass on the Tigers’ next drive. Turner put the game out of reach on the next play.

Hagan jumped the pass route he defended so completely that one would suspect he had a page from Bayard’s playbook in his hip pocket. “It was all Coach Kay’s strategy. He had me lined up where the ball was going and so I just played my technique and it worked out,” Hagan said of the game-changing play.

Immediately following, Turner shot through a huge hole on the left side for a 25-yard touchdown run. With just 2:20 left, Perkins County held a 17-6 lead. The Plainsmen defense had obviously broken Bayard’s drive to compete.

“Yeah, I would say they were [deflated]. It seemed like the momentum swing went our way and they definitely went down,” Turner said of all of the running room he finally found after Erik Hagan’s interception.

Though not on the score sheet, the Plainsmen defense did an excellent job of frustrating a potent pass offense. Tigers quarterback Brandon Stuart put the ball in the air 34 times, connecting on 19 throws.

Stuart threw at least a dozen come-back screens, where the Bayard receiver came back toward the ball and ran behind a designed blocking scheme. None of those screens led to points, nor did the 33-yard “out” route Stuart threw half-way across the field to tight end Torey Armstrong.

Armstrong caught eight balls and totaled 90 receiving yards, but the Plainsmen defense kept him in front of them and far away from the end zone.

Head Coach Chip Kay explained his Perkins County team’s defensive success this way: “We knew that they throw a lot of screens, and thought they might try to throw the ball deep on us.”

“Two things led us to having some success: number one, our defensive line was able to control the run game [along with] our inside linebackers, so that freed us up to have our outside linebackers and safeties in coverage so we always had what appeared to be double-coverage in all the right places,” he said.

“Second, we tackled well; we didn’t have a lot of their players running around free after the first

tackle," Coach Kay said.

Emerging with a win took a total team effort, and the Plainsmen received significant contributions from many players.

In his first year and his first start, Perkins County's Quinton Hite managed the offense well and posed threats as both a runner and a passer to earn the praise of his coach.

"He's a smart [player] with a good grasp of the offense; he knew exactly what he had to do coming into the game and he did it. Plus, he came up with a couple of big runs there in the fourth quarter," Coach Kay said.

Hite's roll right and keeper gained 20 yards and stood as the longest play of the Plainsmen's game-winning drive. Hite also delivered a nice ball for Kye Kurkowski to grab and surge upfield with for 13 key yards on the go-ahead drive.

Tigers running back Micah Schmall could scratch only 55 yards out of Perkins County's run defense, with no more than 17 coming on one play. Quarterback Stuart rushed for 19 yards on one play but gave four of those back on two scrambles.

While the Plainsmen defensive front locked down the running game, its secondary kept its eyes peeled. Hite deflected a bomb intended for Armstrong, and Brody Prante snagged a late desperation pass on the Plainsmen 15-yard line. Erik Hagan also gobbled up a tipped screen pass to go along with the other pass he stepped in front of, bringing Perkins County's Homecoming game interception total to four.

Plainsmen running back Alex Johnston helped set up Jeremy Hagan's 25-yard field goal with two key second quarter runs. Johnston took a last-second shovel from Hite and ran it for nine yards. Three downs later, Johnston exploded into open space, working the same exact play for 37 yards.

But by carrying 38 times for a grass blade less than 200 yards, Nick Turner willed the Plainsmen to their third win of the season.

"In my whole 20 years I've never given a player the ball 38 times," Coach Kay said.

"Definitely the sorest I've been all year after a game," Turner said of how he felt after having a couple of 250-pound linemen chase him down all evening.

The Plainsmen travel for the last time during the regular season, heading northwest to Morrill to challenge the 0-5 Lions on Friday. Morrill has lost its five games by a combined score of 232-44 (or by an average score of about 46-9), including a 49-26 loss to common opponent Dundy County-Stratton.

Score by Quarter

Plainsmen	0	3	0	14	—17
Tigers	0	6	0	0	—6

Team/Quarter/Time/Play

Bayard, 2, 9:30, Stuart 19 run (kick blocked).

Perkins County, 2, 6:42, Hagan, J. 25 FG.

Perkins County, 4, 4:39, Turner 2 run (Hagan, J. kick)

Perkins County, 4, 2:20, Turner 25 run (Hagan, J. kick)

Rushing: PC—Turner 38/195 2 (28); Johnston 7/85 (37); Bayard—Schmall 12/55 (17); Stuart 6/15 (19). Passing PC--Hite 2-14-0-0; Bayard—Stuart 18-34-0-4.