



By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer

Linebacker Michael York stole two turnovers from Hershey and ran both in for scores to distance his Plainsmen from the Panthers in a 28-7 opening-round playoff win Thursday night in Grant.

With Hershey in possession of the football and hoping to match or pass Perkins County's 13-7 lead in the fourth quarter, York cut in front of Panthersquarterback Parker Young's throw with nothing but big air in front of him for a 25-yard "pick-6" touchdown midway through the fourth quarter.

"I just saw him running the route so I just jumped it; he [Young] still tried to force the ball in there, and I just caught it," the senior York said about the interception after the game.

Whatever remained of Hershey's hopes for a victory that York did not deflate with the interception, he crushed with a fumble recovery three minutes of game time later.

Young rolled to the right with the ball, and sensed that York had the corner sealed off, so he option-pitched the ball to running back Jordan Hiatt. Hiatt muffed the pitch and left the ball on the ground.



"We worked all week [in practice] on the "scoop and score," so I just scooped it and scored," York said. I started to get excited when I saw the ball on the ground and I knew there wasn't anyone between me and the end zone."

York's two defensive touchdowns worked as the "knockout punch," leaving Hershey just 4:54 to rebound from a 28-7 deficit.

Placekicker Jeremy Hagan, also known as "Mr. Reliable," booted two field goals from 26 yards away to put the Plainsmen ahead 13-0.

Hershey's running back Hiatt broke containment on a pitch to the left side and capped a 70-yard, 4:20 drive with 27-yard run to paydirt. The score brought the Panthers within six points of the lead at 13-7 with 11:51 remaining.

York made great impact on the offensive side of the ball with 122 rushing yards as the red team's quarterback. He ran the Plainsmen onto the board from five yards away, rolling right and then reversing toward the middle of the field for a 7-0 lead 5:01 before halftime.

On Perkins County's first scoring drive, Hiatt the linebacker breathed new life into the drive by jumping offside after the Plainsmen ran Hagan onto the field to tee up a field goal. The penalty gave the Plainsmen a new set of four downs.

Running back Brody Prante picked up 24 of his 65 yards rushing on the first scoring drive in just three carries.

York aired a bomb to Taylor Boldt that covered 32 yards to set up Hagan's first 26-yard field goal just before halftime.

The Plainsmen defense extinguished a potent Hershey offense, holding the Panthers to 144 yards in 39 plays (2.9 yards/play) from scrimmage. Their feature back Hiatt, who rolled up 288 yards on Dundy County the week previous, totaled just 33 yards on 12 carries. (Hiatt picked up 27 of those 33 yards on one play, the touchdown run.)

"It was disciplined defensive play, and then once they had to make a play, most of our guys had great individual effort," Head Coach Chip Kay said his Plainsmen's defense after the game. "They read their 'keys,' they did their job, and gave great individual effort."

York the linebacker did the most to disrupt Hershey, positioning himself for one tackle for no gain and three (including a sack) for losses. Linebacker Justin Hatcher caught Young three yards deep, and unplugged Hiatt at the line.

York and defensive lineman Tyler Brott co-led the Plainsmen in tackles with five apiece. Brott twice walled off the line of scrimmage and stopped Hiatt for no gain.

Besides the two balls York snatched for scores, defensive back Kyle Schulze put a dying, wobbling throw from Young away and ran it back 20 yards, and Plainsmen defensive back Taylor Boldt stripped a fumble from Hershey's Trevor Otzel and teammate Christian Miyamoto recovered it for Perkins County.

Short gains from the backfield and turnovers short-circuited Hershey's offense.

York's passing statistics suffered the blemish of two interceptions, but the people in black and white stripes had as much to do with that as the ones in the blue-pawed helmets. York lofted a fade route throw perfectly to the corner of the end zone, but a Hershey defensive back slew York's receiver Boldt en route. Defensive back Tyler Brown sauntered under an early-Christmas-present interception as referees made no mention of the play's missing receiver.

York also perfectly delivered a throw to Boldt for a catch in the end zone, but referees flagged Boldt for interference—pushing off—and took the points off the board. In a late-game drive and a mirror-image pattern and throw, Hershey defensive back Matt Pishna did not mind the contact and swiped the ball for an interception.

Aksell Wiseman started at quarterback for the Panthers, and gave way to Young at the beginning of the second half. Wiseman rushed for six yards on six carries and completed one pass for 11 yards; Young led Hershey with 57 rushing yards but completed no passes in six attempts to Panthers receivers and threw two passes to Plainsmen.

Next Action

The 8-1 Plainsmen went to North Platte for a playoff rematch with the 8-1 St. Patrick's Irish on Wednesday evening (results not available at press time). The Irish broadsided 3-5 Cross County and did 'em again 51-0 while the Plainsmen did battle with Hershey Thursday night.

1 2 3 4

Panthers 0 0 0 7—7

Plainsmen 0 10 3 15—28

Team/Qtr./Time/Play

PC 2 5:01 York 5 run (Hagan kick)

PC 2 0:38 Hagan 26 FG

PC 3 4:46 Hagan 26 FG

Hershey 4 11:51 Hiatt 27 run (Anderson kick)

PC 4 7:48 York 30 INT return (York run)

PC 4 4:54 York 15 FUM return (Hagan kick)

Rushing leaders—Perkins County: York 21/122 (22) TD; Prante 17/65 (18); Johnston 6/12 (11); Miyamoto 2/10 (6); Hatcher 4/3 (2); Hershey: Young 10/57 (19); Hiatt 12/33 (27) TD; Wiseman 6/6 (13); Massen 1/3; Brown 1/2.

Passing—Perkins County: York 3-7-57-0-2; Hershey: Wiseman 1-1-11; Young 0-6-0-2.

Receiving leaders—Perkins County: Schulze 2/25 (14); Boldt 1/32; Hershey: Hiatt 1/11.

Defensive leaders—Perkins County: York 5/4; Brott 5/2; Hatcher 3.5/5; Gaston 3.5/5; Johnston 3/2; Fosbinder 3/2; Boldt 3/2; Miyamoto 2.5/3.