By Pastor Vince Carrig
Sports Writer

Coming out on the wrong end of two fourth-down conversion plays in the fourth quarter tormented the Plainsmen and enabled the Decatur Community Red Devils to win 21-12 Friday night in chilly Oberlin, Kan.

Trailing 14-6 and needing to reach the Red Devils’ 21-yard line, the Plainsmen came up two yards short with 10:49 left. Linebacker Konner Fortin caught Perkins County quarterback Elliot Carlson from behind as Carlson waited for holes to open behind his linemen and ended the drive.

The Red Devils moved that very turnover 39 yards until the Plainsmen defense forced a fourth-down-and-two at Perkins County’s 38-yard line. Junior fullback Kennedy Fortin, however, bulled his way for five yards and a first down with 6:36 remaining.

“The difference in those plays was their ability to control the line of scrimmage in key situations,” Plainsmen Head Coach Chip Kay said of the Red Devils after the game.

Quarterback Dayton Dreher sealed Decatur Community’s win soon afterward with a keeper left that boosted the Red Devils’ lead to 21-6 with just 2:52 to play. Dreher got excellent lock-up blocking from running back Troy Juenemann, who started on the left flank and kept 13 yards of edge open for his teammate.

Plainsmen receiver Austin Thelander made an unbelievable touchdown catch to keep Perkins County’s dream of an undefeated season alive. The 5-foot-5 senior leaned out of the right side of the end zone to grab Carlson’s pass and kept a foot in bounds to score six points.

The Red Devils burned up any hopes of a Plainsmen comeback from 21-14 with 33 seconds left when outside linebacker Kramer Wrinkles plowed Carlson down inches short of a successful two-point conversion.

Wearing red jerseys and socks with gray helmets, numbers and trunks, the Red Devils pounded the ball on the ground to a 14-0 halftime lead.

The junior fullback Kennedy Fortin finished his Oberlin team's second drive with an undeniable seven-yard run off left tackle to give the Red Devils a 7-0 lead after 5:21 of play.

Running back Zach May dominated the Red Devils' third drive, returning a punt 21 yards and catching a 20-yard bomb from Dreher. Dreher wound up and threw the ball 34 yards downfield, having dropped 10 yards behind the line of scrimmage before hitting May four yards deep at the end zone's right sideline.

Tim Johnson starred for the Plainsmen offense, catching nine passes for 157 yards and rushing for 37 more. Johnson pulled Perkins County to within eight points at 14-6 by manufacturing a 56-yard scoring play.

The 6-foot-2 junior Johnson took a lateral pass at the left flank from Carlson, cut inside toward the left seam to avoid traffic, then bowled over defensive back Grant Gilliam and outraced lineman Matt Glading down the left sideline to score with 4:05 left in the third quarter.

With many of the key statistics offsetting one another, the 5-1 Plainsmen have to live with the fact that referees whistled them for 60 more penalty yards than the Red Devils.

The 75-15 yardage disparity does not include other painful punishment: the 50-yard touchdown run by Elliot Carlson that came off of the scoreboard early in the third quarter, and a two-minute drill run to the Decatur Community four-yard line by Carlson that ended up spotted 36 yards back the other way.

Zach May let Perkins County "off the hook" by fumbling at the Plainsmen one-yard line in the second quarter; Johnson recovered it for the Plainsmen. Lineman Colton White victimized Kennedy Fortin for a fumble on the Red Devils' first possession; Plainsmen teammate Alex Malmkar eventually fell on the fumble to prevent Decatur from potentially scoring four times in the first half.

Malmkar led the Plainsmen defense, receiving credit for 12 tackles. The hustling 6-foot, 190 pound senior stuffed Konner Fortin behind the line for Perkins County's first tackle-for-loss of the game.

Perkins County defensive back Elliot Carlson considered buying rental property in the Red Devils' backfield after all of the time he spent there. Carlson made four tackles behind the line of scrimmage, including bringing down quarterback Dreher as a cheetah hunts a gazelle for a six-yard sack.

Despite playing on a numberless field, Tim Johnson knows that he cut and dodged to create a 29-yard pass play, and that he snagged an interception as well.

"It was a great game to play because it exposed some weakness in areas we will need to improve on prior to the playoffs; we really had not played a true "power" football team this year. I believe we will be a better team because of last Friday," Coach Kay said.

The Plainsmen seniors chose to wear their new white jerseys on top of white pants for the game. The new jerseys fit more snugly and give opponents less to grab.

The white versions have black numbers. With the switch, Johnson changed from 36 to 26, and Chris Throckmorton lost a digit, going from 23 to 2.

Next Action

The Bayard Tigers hope to continue two streaks when they come to Grant on Friday: after losing their first three games, they have won the last three over Dundy County-Stratton, Hershey and Bridgeport. The 7 p.m. game concludes 5-1 Perkins County's 2012 regular season home schedule.

P.C. vs. Decatur

Perkins Co.	0	0	6	6—12
Decatur	7	7	0	7—21

Rushing leaders—Perkins County: Carlson 20-58 (17); Johnson 9-37 (13); Johnson 3-21 (11); Vak 4-14 (6); Decatur: Fortin, Kennedy 12-79 (34) TD; Wesley 12-61 (19); May, Z. 12-35 (11); Dreher 7-19 (13T) TD.

Passing leaders—Perkins County: Carlson 12-19-184-2-2; Decatur: Dreher 2-5-42-1-1.

Receiving leaders—Perkins County: Johnston 9-157 (56T) TD; Thelander 2-22 (14T) TD; Johnston 1-5; Decatur Fortin, Kennedy 1-23; May, Z. 1-19 TD.

Tackling leaders—Perkins County: Malmkar 12; Carlson 7.5; Ross 5; Poppe 5 Johnson 4.