

Babylon Football:

PANTHERS POUND SHOREHAM, HEAD TO SUFFOLK FINAL

By Tony Spota

The Babylon Panthers continued on their relentless path last Friday evening at Williams Field. They crushed the Shoreham Wildcats 42-13 and will move on to Suffolk's Division IV final. Babylon's marvelous lines owned the game. On offense, center Matt Pinto, guards Ryan Matthews, and Joe Cosby and tackles Tyler Christiansen and Shea Amdur owned the night as the offense moved at will scoring on four of its five first half possessions.

Babylon's early productivity continues to amaze. This season, they've had 51 first half possessions scoring 46 touchdowns (39 by the offense and seven by the defense and special teams). Babylon has now outscored opponents 319-27 in the first half.

In this game, following an initial turnover, the Black D grabbed the ball back as Jake Carlock thrust a hand up for a brilliant one-handed interception in the end zone to thwart a Shoreham threat. The Panther lightning moved quickly, going 80 yards on four plays to establish an overwhelming dominance. Quarterback Nick Santorelli gunned a right square-out to Carlock for 25, tailback Eric Schweitzer raced through right guard following downfield blocks by Amdur and Ray Wardell for 17. Then Schweitzer zipped off left tackle, 37 yards for the score. Exclamation Point!

Next, the Panthers roared 69 yards on eight plays. Santorelli capped this one, cutting off right tackle and following Wardell's downfield block for pay dirt. The run went for 18 yards. During the drive, Carlock made a super reception lying down and taking the ball in. Oddly, the catch was nullified as Carlock had been interfered with and the penalty went for more than the play. Sometimes football just works that way. Then they drove 60 yards on eight plays. Schweitzer capped it from the 1, following power blocks by Jon Bell and Shawn Tripp.

Now Shoreham showed up with a quick answer. Quarterback Dan Hughes moved the Wildcats 58 yards on three passes, hitting Bryce Casey on a right slant for the final 36. The extra point kick was partially blocked and veered left and short. Babylon's last score of the half occurred when they went 73 yards on seven plays. Santorelli hit Luke Zappia on a right slant for 32 and capped it on a right square-in to Wardell who grabbed it and fought his way into the end zone. That one went for 20 yards. The Wildcats moved quickly back on the arm of Hughes, but they ran out of time at the Babylon 5 and the half ended with the Panthers up 27-6.

The Battle of the Cats went into the second half with Shoreham in possession only to be foiled again. A deep left fly was intercepted by Carlock, his second pick of the game and his eighth of the year. This time, the super safety grabbed it at the Bab 49 and went 51 yards for the TD with any number of blocks paving the way. Schweitzer raced around right end for the 2-point conversion. A sack by John Visgauss stymied the next Shoreham try. The Panthers picked it up from then with a 61-yard drive capped from the Shoreham 28 when Carlock came flying cross field on a right square-in and Santorelli gunned to him on the run. The big receiver raced to the left side and fought his way for the TD.

Santorelli made the fourth of his extra-point kicks and his forty-seventh of the year, tying the school season record established by Mike Parrinello in 2002 and tied last year by Alex Malhas. Shoreham added the game's last score late in the fourth quarter as Tyler Anderson raced through right guard and galloped 82 yards for the TD. Zack MacAuley tacked on the extra-point kick.

Coach Rick Punzone was clearly happy with the outcome. "Hats off to our line on both sides of the ball. They did whatever we asked of them with great results." Babylon's defensive front was excellent all year. They've shown a number of faces. Most of this game had a five-front with Visgauss at nose guard, Cosby and Matthews at the tackles and Christiansen and Rich Wilson at the ends.

Other stuff – All players from both teams were introduced before the opening coin toss. Many had been brought up from their respective JVs for the playoff experience. In addition to those added for last week, Babylon introduced new faces Jason Carlock, Joe Marrone and Sean Quigley. The Pep Band was there and opened with Our National Anthem. Santorelli completed 7 of 12 for 145 yards and two TDs. He added 64 yards on 8 carries for another TD making 209 all-purpose yards and was 4 for 4 in point-after kicks. Schweitzer had 14 carries for 114 yards and two TDs. Add a kick return for 12 yards to total 126 all-purpose. Wardell caught 4 for 60 yards and a TD. You can add any number of his downfield blocks for springers on the runs. Zappia had 6 carries for 33 yards and caught one for 32 yards, totaling 65 all-purpose. Carlock caught 2 for 53 yards and a TD. Add 2 kick returns for 18 yards and the 51-yard Int, along with his first pick.

For Shoreham – Hughes was 8 of 16 passing for 126 yards and a TD. Anderson carried 15 times for 160 yards and a TD. He caught one pass for 8 yards and returned three kicks for 58, making 228 all-purpose yards. Casey had 4 catches for 80 yards and a TD and had five kick returns for 71 yards, making 151 all-purpose.

Next up –Babylon (10-0) will meet the Glenn Knights (8-2) in the County Final for Division IV at Stony Brook University's LaValle Stadium, tonight (Thursday), 7:30 pm. Glenn had won their semifinal game in a come-from-behind win over the Mount Sinai Mustangs, 21-14. In the regular season game at Glenn, the Panthers survived an early 14 point deficit to win 36-21. Glenn is always there for the surprise and is the only team to score on the Panthers in the first period this year. Both teams will be sky high for this one.