

Upper Arlington 24, Gahanna 21, OT: Bears show grit

Gahanna rally erases UA lead before Sylvester's field goal wins it

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BY MARK ZNIDAR

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KYLE ROBERTSONDISPATCH

- Upper Arlington's Tommy Farwick outruns Gahanna defenders Alex Lauginiger (22) and Elliott Williams for a 51-yard touchdown.

It's way too early to say Upper Arlington's season hung in the balance when Jared Sylvester lined up a field goal in overtime last night.

No doubt, though, the Golden Bears' short-term mental health was at stake. What looked like a rock-solid victory was turning into mush before their eyes.

Sylvester blocked out the din of a near-capacity crowd and a Gahanna timeout that was called just before the snap and kicked a picture-perfect 28-yarder to give Upper Arlington a 24-21 victory over the Lions.

"We were just going to go through our regular routine," Sylvester said. "I had never been in that situation before. I had to stay confident and stay composed. I could tell it was going in, and I started running -- just running. It was an adrenaline rush. It was the dream of every kicker."

Sylvester bailed out an offense that committed three turnovers, including an interception by Kevin Guthrie and a fumble recovery by K.C. Sparks that led to two Gahanna touchdowns and wiped out a 14-point deficit.

The third turnover, a fumble by usually dependable fullback Tommy Farwick at the Gahanna 9-yard-line in the final minute of regulation, could have destroyed the Bears. It didn't. They not only played on, they played with desperation.

A tackle for a 5-yard loss on third-and-4 to the 19 by linebacker Colin McClain on star tailback Darius Reeves forced Gahanna into a 36-yard field-goal attempt in the first overtime. Kicker Ryan Ballenger missed to the left.

UA played its safe on its first possession in overtime knowing Sylvester has a big leg.

Coach Mike Golden told the young Bears to get tough after the mistakes.

"We told the kids to play hard and fight back," he said. "We were fortunate to win. Sometimes you can let it slip away completely. We didn't. We're a very inexperienced team and we got it done. We knew this would be a great challenge going on the road. We knew it would have a playoff atmosphere."

Upper Arlington (2-0) took a 21-7 lead on three touchdowns by Farwick. The first was a 51-yard run on the Bears' first offensive play and the second a 5-yarder with 43 seconds left in the first quarter. He made it 21-7 with an 11-yard run in which he dived for the goal line from the 3.

Gahanna (1-1) scratched back. Guthrie intercepted a pass over the middle and returned it to the UA 37. Six plays later, he caught a 9-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Blake Hickey on third-and-8.

The Lions made it 21-all on a 2-yard run by Reeves. Receiver Elliott Williams kept the drive alive with two third-down catches, an 11-yarder to the 24 and a 24-yarder to the 2.

"But it's about playing hard all four quarters," Williams said. "If we play that way in the first half, the score could have been different. The game isn't one or two quarters. It's something we have to work on. We just didn't get it done at the end."