

Hilliard Darby 35, Upper Arlington 10: Panthers QB sparks rally in second half

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Hilliard Darby quarterback Jeremy Ebert threw the ball only three times last night against Upper Arlington, but his excellent arm wasn't needed.

His legs made sure of that.

Ebert, a senior who will play at Northwestern next year, ran for 214 yards and three touchdowns, and No. 1 seed Darby dominated the second half and surged past visiting Upper Arlington 35-10 in a Division I regional quarterfinal.

After being limited to 11 yards rushing on nine carries in the first half, Ebert opened the third quarter by breaking to the sideline and running 73 yards to the end zone. He had touchdown runs of 74 and 38 yards in the fourth quarter.

Darby coach Paul Jenne praised his defense, offensive line and the downfield blocking of the receivers. He also had kind words for Ebert.

"He is a great athlete and a great kid," he said. "I'm glad he's on my team right now."

Darby running back Jordan Richeson scored two touchdowns in the fourth quarter after being limited to 23 yards on eight carries in the first half. Richeson finished with 92 yards.

The Panthers duo broke open what had been a struggle between two of central Ohio's better defenses.

Upper Arlington scored the only points of the first half on a 25-yard field goal by Jared Sylvester and handed Darby's offense poor field position throughout the first three quarters.

"The defense, they did a great job keeping those guys out of the end zone," Jenne said. "Our defense was lights out tonight, and in the second half (the offense) finally got into some looks that we'd been trying to get into."

The Golden Bears (8-3) limited the Panthers (10-1) to 34 yards in the first half and took a 10-7 lead midway through the third quarter when an open Sylvester caught a 38-yard pass from Braden Layer for a touchdown.

Ebert answered by bursting through the middle of the UA defense for a 74-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter. Richeson followed with a 39-yard scoring run to make it 21-10.

"That momentum just kept building up," Darby linebacker B.J. Machen said. "Once we got up a little bit, it just snowballed. As long we kept making plays on defense, it was going to get our offense fired up, and vice versa."

Richeson and Ebert had touchdown runs later in the fourth quarter, setting up a regional semifinal game against Groveport, which handed Darby its only loss in the final game of the regular season.

"That's going to give us a lot of motivation," Machen said. "There's going to be a lot of emotion, and we're going to come to play."