

Bears done in by Ebert's fast second-half start

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Published: Tuesday, November 6, 2007 3:06 PM EST

Hilliard Darby dodged several first-half bullets in the first half of its Division I, Region 3 quarterfinal game against visiting Upper Arlington Saturday, Nov. 3.

The Golden Bears dominated the first 24 minutes, but led by a mere 3-0 margin as the whistle blew to end the second quarter.

The No. 1 seed Panthers fired back after intermission, but UA wasn't as elusive.

Senior quarterback Jeremy Ebert raced 73-yards on the first offensive play of the third quarter and Darby was suddenly on top 7-3.

That was the first of five second-half TD's the Panthers would use to kill the No. 8 Bears 35-10.

Ebert, who was held to 11-yards rushing in the first half, exploded for 203 yards and three TD's in the second.

"We came together in the locker room and played our game in the second half," Ebert said. "I got some great blocks.

"Going untouched -- it was easy. I didn't do much, I just ran."

Senior running back Jordan Richeson got in on the scoring frenzy, adding two touchdowns and rushing for 69 yards after being held to 23 in the first two quarters.

Darby (10-1) now gets a chance to avenge its only loss of the season when it plays No. 5 Groveport Madison (8-3) in a Region 3 semifinal at Upper Arlington Saturday, Nov. 10. Kickoff is at 7 p.m.

The Cruisers handed the Panthers their only loss of the season, a 34-17 beating, Nov. 26.

They beat host Brookhaven (the No. 4 seed) 41-27 Nov. 3 to advance.

"We're going to have to go back and study that film and hopefully do better than we did the first time," Darby coach Paul Jenne said.

The other Region 3 semifinal matches a pair of unbeaten. No. 2 Pickerington Central (11-0) faces No. 3 Dublin Coffman (11-0) at Gahanna Lincoln Nov. 10.

Here's what happened at Darby Nov. 3:

Despite taking an early lead, the first half could only be defined as frustrating for UA.

Beginning its first offensive possession its own 29, junior running back Alex Drake gained eight yards on first down and the Bears added an extra 15 when the Panthers were called for an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

They drove to the Darby 30, but that's where frustration began.

On a third-and-eight play, senior linebacker B.J. Machen (a Georgia Tech recruit) blasted through the Bears offensive line and tackled junior fullback Tommy Farwick for a five-yard loss.

The sting of Machen's tackle was temporarily offset when Bears' junior punter Mark Crawford dropped the ball on the Panthers 1-yard line.

Darby went three-and-out on its first two possessions, but UA was unable to capitalize -- despite starting inside (the Darby 38), or near (its own 47) midfield on its next two possessions.

First was a drive that stalled on the Darby 25. On fourth-and-12, Farwick had Machen beaten on a pass route, but senior quarterback Braden Layer's throw sailed a foot over his outstretched arms.

Next was a drive to the Darby 18.

An illegal procedure penalty, a dropped pass and a missed field goal all contributed to the Bears coming away empty again.

The Panthers finally crossed midfield on their next possession, but Richeson fumbled and the Bears recovered at their own 36.

They went three-and-out, but junior Harrison Reed muffed Crawford's punt and the Bears were back in business on the Panthers' 33 with 5:31 remaining in the half.

That resulted in senior kicker Jared Sylvester's 25-yard field goal at the 1:55 mark.

"We should have scored three (touchdowns) in the first half, but we didn't score and that hurt," Bears' coach Mike Golden said. "We controlled the ball, but we knew we had to take advantage of every opportunity and we didn't do that."

Ebert (a Northwestern University recruit) wasted little time turning up the offensive volume in the third quarter.

His first touchdown run gave Darby a 7-3 lead, but midway through the quarter, UA fired back with a 38-yard TD strike from Layer to Sylvester.

The Bears took a 10-7 advantage into the final period.

On his team's first possession in the fourth, Ebert blew threw a gaping hole and raced 74 yards for the game-winning score.

Less than two minutes later, Richeson scored on a 39-yard run to increase the lead to 21-10 and Ebert added a 28-yard TD run to give Darby a 28-10 advantage with 6:12 to play.

"When we got up 21-10, you could feel that's when the wind went out of their sails and we were able to capitalize on some things," Jenne said. "Our game plan was to go right at them -- not try to finesse them or live by the pass -- which is what I think they thought we had to do."

UA's last gasp occurred when senior defensive back Stephen Wells intercepted a Layer pass near midfield and returned it to the 16.

Three plays later, Richeson punched it into the end zone from 2-yards out to end the scoring.

"We've got Groveport coming up -- a little chance for revenge there -- so now we're looking forward to that."

"We came together in the locker room and played our game in the second half. I got some great blocks. Going untouched -- it was easy. I didn't do much, I just ran."

-- *Jeremy Ebert*