

Football: Jaylen Johnson leads Upper Darby to wild win over Radnor

QBs Sarjoo, Szychulski go arm to arm until the end



Upper Darby's Jaylen Johnson is tripped up by a Strath Haven defender in a recent game. Johnson had five TDs in Upper Darby's win over Radnor Friday night. (Pete Bannan – MediaNews Group)



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Upper Darby needed every bit of Jaylen Johnson's four rushing touchdowns to prevent a four-touchdown lead from frittering away in a 46-40 win over Radnor on Friday night in an entertaining Central League battle.

The game featured an amazing six fourth-quarter touchdowns, including four in the final 5:13 of the game. It wasn't resolved until Johnson dashed 86 yards for his fifth total TD with 1:01 remaining, after Radnor had gotten to the 13 with a chance to tie the game.

The Raptors would still tack on another late touchdown – the fourth passing score of the day from Matthew Szychulski, the third reception by Michael Enright – but the Royals (1-6, 1-5 Central) ran out the clock from there to preserve their first victory.

That drama looked like a longshot when Upper Darby climbed out to a 28-0 lead. Johnson took a handoff 21 yards on Upper Darby's opening drive to put the Royals up 8-0.

Interceptions of Szychulski set up the next two scores. Ethan Anderson picked off the Radnor QB at the 12 and returned it 40 yards. On the first play of the ensuing drive, Joseph Sarjoo found tight end A'zeem Spicer for a 48-yard score to make it 16-0.

Linebacker Kamar Perlote jumped a corner route on the next possession and nearly scored, returning it 35 yards to the 8. Sarjoo found Johnson for an eight-yard score to cash in that mistake, then Sarjoo hit Harris Series for a 22-yard score on the next drive to make it 28-0 Upper Darby midway through the second quarter. For a team with just 60 points in its first six games total, it was a bona fide offensive explosion.

But Radnor would get a foothold before the half ended. It took a halfback pass, Tucker Graham taking a handoff and firing 70 yards to Enright for a score to make it 28-7. The Raptors had to stop Upper Darby at the 3-yard line, after a 24-yard connection between Sarjoo and Milan Jernigan, to get into the break with that margin.

Any hangover from the Royals appeared to quickly disperse after the break. Sarjoo found Jernigan for 18 yards to the 5, and Johnson burst in from four yards out two plays later to make it 34-7.

But Radnor (1-6, 0-4) wouldn't go away, shaking the struggles that had led to 73 points in its first 13 halves of football this season. Szychulski found Enright for a 58-yard score to make it 34-14. Enright then picked off Sarjoo and hauled in a 24-yard pass from Szychulski to set up the QB's three-yard keeper early in the fourth to make it 34-21.

Johnson looked set to put the game away when, on the next snap, he burst off left end for the end zone. But Enright saved the touchdown by pushing him out at the 20 for a 60-yard gain, allowing Bryce Cohen to intercept Sarjoo three plays later. He returned it 58 yards to set up a short field, only Series saving a touchdown.

Szychulski went to work, hitting Graham for 28 yards and then a four-yard score to get within 34-27.

Johnson had the answer, though, bursting for 42 yards on fourth-and-1 for his fourth score to make it 40-27 with 5:13 left. Back came Radnor, Szychulski hitting Graham for a 52-yard touchdown on the first snap of the next series to get to within a score at 40-34.

The Raptors got the ball back and penetrated as far as the 13 before the Royals defense finally stiffened with 1:17 left. Johnson took the first snap of the next series 86 yards to the house to restore the two score bump at 46-34, and though Szychulski tacked on a 50-yard connection with Enright with 42 seconds left, it would prove to be too little for the Raptors.