



Cam Sionko passed for three touchdowns and caught a pass for a score to help Grand Island advance to the Section VI Class A semifinals. (Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News)

## Family matters as Grand Island wins wild one in double overtime

By [Miguel Rodriguez](#) | Published October 20, 2018 | Updated October 20, 2018

Grand Island had plenty of incentive for winning its Section VI Class A quarterfinal against South Park on wet, windy Friday night. The biggest motivating factor may have been family. Playing for an individual who bleeds blue and white, the Vikings honored a request from athletic director/patriarch Jon Roth and won one for his daughter Julie.

In a wild one in which Grand Island failed to protect a pair of 12-point leads, Cam Sionko's fourth touchdown of the night proved to be the game winner as Grand Island defeated South Park, 38-32, in double overtime at Gene Masters Field. Sionko's 7-yard pass to a waiting Justin Gorrell in the end zone provided the points that enabled the second-seeded Vikings to win in walk-off fashion against a never-say-die foe in the seventh-seeded Sparks.

It also provided an uplifting moment for the GI family and community mourning the death of beloved teacher, coach and former Vikings athlete Julie Roth Neville. Roth's daughter, the mother of four, [died Tuesday after losing her battle with breast cancer. She was 40.](#) "Mr. Roth is like a father figure (to us)," said Sionko, who passed for three TDs and also caught a touchdown in GI's seventh-straight win. "The only thing he said, coach (Dean Santorio) asked him what did he need, and he said go get a win against South Park.

“I’m speechless,” Sionko said. “In all my four years of playing varsity football for coach Santorio, I’ve never been able to win (a playoff) game. It means so much to be able to fight with my brothers that I grew up playing with and keep advancing.”

Sionko’s final two throws may have been his best, considering they came with GI driving into an unforgiving wind. Needing to convert a third-and-5, he drilled a strike to Easton Speer for a 7-yard gain. The next pass was his last to Gorrell (10 catches, 150 yards) on a comeback route. Sionko completed 17-of-39 passes for 215 yards.

“You can’t say enough about what Cam did, even after he made a mistake he knows he shouldn’t have made (a third-quarter interception that led to a South Park touchdown) ... he battles and made a couple huge throws,” Santorio said. As a result, the Vikings (7-1) host third-seeded West Seneca East (7-1) next Friday in a semifinal contest.

It could have been South Park (5-3) in that semifinal. Twice the never-say-die Sparks picked themselves off the mat to turn two-touchdown deficits into tie games in a blink of an eye. The latter time was perhaps the most shocking as a broken play in which Daebeyon Humphrey avoided a sack and flicked a throw to Clarence Thomas for an 84-yard scoring play pulled the Sparks within 32-26 with 2:23 left.

After a failed onside kick, South Park didn’t just get the stop it needed. It scored on defense as Jayon Renfro poked the ball out of Sionko’s hand before he could make a hand off with Elijah Lewis returning the fumble 43 yard for the game-tying score just 56 seconds later.

South Park had a chance to win this on a fourth-down play on its last overtime possession but sophomore Jack Dlugokinski made a diving tackle to keep a diving Brandan Brown from crossing the plane of the goal line. South Park drew first blood in this one on the game’s opening drive. Seven run plays with the Latrell London taking the last 55 yards to the house off a jet sweep to make it 6-0.

The score stayed that way until the Sparks gave GI the opening it needed to take some control. Jeremiah Wilkes pounced on a bad snap at South Park’s 11 to give the Vikings their best drive start of the game with 8:33 left in the second quarter. One play later Sionko rolled to his right and then threw to his left to a wide-open Jake Nelson in the end zone to tie it. Sionko, the holder on extra-point kicks, stood up and threw a dart to an on Connor Kenney for the two-point conversion.

Grand Island increased the lead to 14-6 on Sionko’s 14 pass to Josh Oursler with 2:44 left in the second quarter. The Vikings went ahead by 12 after Ben Moskala returned an interception 20 yards to South Park’s 15. A little razzle dazzle ended the two-play drive with Moskala receiving a toss and then throwing a nice pass in the end zone to Sionko.

Then things started to get interesting with South Park scoring twice in a span of 1:33 to tie the game 20-20. Brown took a Humphrey pass 45 yards to the house to make it 20-12. The Sparks tied it after that as Justin Johnson returned an interception to the Vikings’ 7. Two running plays later by Thomas, he cruised in from the 1 with Humphrey running in the two-point conversion.

South Park seemed to go ahead 26-20 on a 68-yard screen pass from Humphrey to Thomas on its next possession but a holding penalty negated the score. GI scored before the end of the third quarter as Easton Speer scored from the 2. The Vikings went ahead 32-20 with 5:32 left when Jeremiah Wilkes recovered a fumble in the end zone on a Grand Island running play. Then the game got really interesting.

But a GI crew, wearing wrist bands in honor of Neville, with folks collecting donations for breast-cancer research in her memory, simply wouldn’t be denied on this night. “It’s the character of the kids on the team,” Sionko. “We will never stop fighting.”