

Grand Island outlasts North Tonawanda

By Rodney McKissic / *News Sports Reporter*
on September 14, 2013 - 1:55 AM

Giuseppe Campanella's nerves were all over the place before his first varsity start and near the end of Grand Island's 20-14 win over North Tonawanda, his heart was several beats faster as well.

The Lumberjacks (1-1), who rallied from a 20-7 deficit, were looking to put the finishing touches on an improbable comeback with 14 seconds left. Chris Woodard dropped back and floated a pass that seemed to hang for a week and wideout Jake Ferry seemed to catch it near the back of the end zone as several fans touched off a mini celebration. But Grand Island's Anthony Moser and Kurtis Johnson, in fact, batted the pass down with six seconds left. Woodard's last pass of the game was incomplete, and the Vikings stayed unbeaten at 2-0.

"I don't think you ever relax and hopefully you can put a game away and we weren't able to do that," Grand Island coach Dean Santorio said. "I don't care if it's 20-7 or 20-14, you're always one strike away from being right there so we're glad with the way we finished and we came up big when we needed to."

Initially, it looked like it was going to be a long night for the Vikings. Quinn Corrao looked striking in his blue sweatsuit during pregame warmups but the Vikings would prefer the dual threat was under center. A high ankle sprain suffered in last week's win at Hamburg limited his work to the sidelines. That left the offense in the hands of Campanella, a junior who started on junior varsity a year ago.

"I've never been more nervous," the 5-foot-9 Campanella said.

No worries. Campanella completed 8-of-15 passes for 120 yards and two touchdowns as the Vikings took a 20-7 advantage into halftime. Then with the lead seemingly secure in the second half, Grand Island shifted into the wishbone formation and fed the ball to tailback Paul Sukmanowski, who rushed 23 times for 142 yards.

Said Santorio: "He played great and he did everything we asked him to do in the first half; obviously we weren't throwing much in the second. Not that we couldn't, we thought we could grind out some yards which we did."

North Tonawanda trailed 20-7 and had the ball first and 10 from the 50. Woodard darted 37 yards and a personal foul put the Lumberjacks at first and goal from the 7. The junior quarterback dived in from the 1 to cut the lead.

North Tonawanda regained the ball at its own 33 and Woodard went to work, first hitting Ferry then Anthony Tripi for big gains, then an off-balance flip of a pass to Tyjier Brandy to the Grand Island 25 with 14 seconds left.

That set up the finish that had everyone out of their seats.

"My heart was beating the most it ever beat," Campanella said.

Everyone at George Vetter Stadium was fooled, most notably the Vikings' defense when Woodard faked a handoff to tailback Jon Zellner and streaked down the right sideline for a 34-yard touchdown run to open the scoring.

Not to be outdone, Sukmanowski ripped off 44 yards on two carries then Campanella lofted a pass to Ben Goc to the North Tonawanda 1. Joe Chiaravalle scored one play later and Grand Island tied the game at 7.

The Vikings took the lead on a 35-yard pass to Sukmanowski before putting together an 11-play, 50-yard drive capped by an 18-yard touchdown reception from Campanella to Goc, who finished with six receptions for 85 yards and a touchdown.