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Brickies bring end to Marion’s grid season

Hobart advances to state finals with 49-20 win over Giants

By Sean Douglas

In their last two contests against Delta and East Noble, the Marion Giants overcame early adversity to ultimately record victories. However, on Friday night against Hobart, a nightmarish first quarter, combined with a stout Brickies’ rushing attack, put the Giants in a hole, which they could not climb out of, and their remarkable season came to a bittersweet end in a 49-20 defeat.

“We just didn’t read well in the first half,” Marion Head Coach James Bell said. “In the first quarter,

we were not reacting. We didn’t read well. We were reacting slow, and we just were not aggressive for whatever reason. That was the bottom line. It was more us than it was them.”

It did not take long for the hosts to put the ball in the end zone. In fact, it only took one play, as Hobart quarterback Riley Johnson took a designed quarterback run 66 yards to the house, putting the Brickies up 7-0 in a matter of seconds.

Khalid Stamps tied the contest at 7-7 on his first touch, scoring on a 79-yard kickoff return, but the Brickies quickly re-estab-

lished control. On the second play of their second drive, Johnston found star wide receiver Zach Vode on his first pass of the game, and the senior did the rest, scoring from 64 yards out to put the Brickies back in front for good.

Less than two minutes later, Hobart’s special teams got in on the scoring party, blocking a JD Fagan punt and recovering the loose ball in the endzone for a 21-7 advantage. Marion’s offense followed with a three-and-out, and the Brickies went right back to work, scoring their fourth touchdown of the quarter on



Zaimar Burnett makes the tackle on Hobart’s Tyler Turley. Photo by Sean Douglas

a six-play, 57-yard drive, capping it off with a Tyler Turley five-yard touchdown.

“We came into the game all hyped. We wanted to win and we were going to give our all,” Marion lineman Johnny Davis said. “But they came out harder than we expected. They got some very big plays.”

Stamps scored his second touchdown of the first half on the Giants’ ensuing possession, scampering 55 yards on his fifth carry to cut Marion’s deficit to 28-13. But that was as close as the Giants would get the rest of the way.

From there, Hobart’s offensive line set the tone, dominating the line of scrimmage and opening gaping holes for Johnston and Turley to run through. Turley ran for a remarkable 256 yards on 25 carries, while Johnston ended the evening with 150 yards on just 13 total totes.

“Their offensive line played as a group,” Davis said. “They played hard until the whistle blew, and they played as a group. They were putting each other in good spots to get good angles to get good blocks.”

Turley scored twice more in the second quarter, on five and six yards runs, respectively, to give the Brickies a commanding 42-13 halftime lead.

Despite their large deficit, the Giants continued to battle, and played much better football in the second half of play. While the Brickies

continued to run the ball without much resistance, Marion’s defense stiffened, allowing only one touchdown in the final two quarters.

“Hats off to my brothers and my team for not giving up on us and not giving up on the seniors,” Davis said. “We battled all the way through. Hats off to their team, [too]. They’ve got all my respect. They came out and they played hard and they got the better of us. They are a good football team.”

Malachi Silmon scored Marion’s final touchdown from 10 yards out early in the fourth quarter, but the Giants’ first quarter proved too much to overcome.

Stamps led the Giants with 156 yards on 18 carries, while Silmon finished his Marion career with 63 yards on 13 total carries.

Despite the disappointing finish, the Giants, in a tumultuous year full of uncertainty, put together one of their best campaigns in program history. After back-to-back losses to Eastbrook and Lawrence North to begin the season, the Giants won 10 of their final 12 contests, winning their fifth sectional championship and their fourth regional title in school history in the process.

In the midst of an ongoing pandemic, voices of doubt outside the program, and the anxiety surrounding a threatened season, Giants came to work every day, battling with one another and developing an unbreak-

able bond.

“It’s been everything to me,” Davis said. “At the end of the day, they’re my brothers. It’s been special to be able to play with them and make it this far. People though we were going to lose to Mississinewa back in the sectional, and we made it this far. We overcame a lot of adversity, and at the end of the day, we played hard, and we’ve got big things coming.”

Without question, Marion’s senior class played a direct role in their success – not just this year, but in Marion football’s resurgence over the last four. Stamps, Silmon, Davis, Josh Balfour, Greg Johnson, Trevor Riah, Ty Coleman, and countless others helped bring Giant football back to prominence, and additionally, have helped set the stages for continued success in the future.

“Every one of my seniors had a different personality, and each one has something special about them,” Bell said. “I’m just glad that I had a chance to work with each one of them. Johnny Davis is an outstanding leader. [Josh] Balfour stepped up this year as a two-way starter. Greg Johnson got better every ball game. He works tremendously hard. My guy who plays with passion, Trevor at center, did a wonderful job and just continued to work and excel. And Ty [Coleman,] he’s had a great year at corner. He’s an All-State corner, there’s no doubt in my mind.”



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