

Talawanda Wins Homecoming Game, Defeats Dayton Carroll 35-12

Added by Thomas Harper September 20, 2024

Oxford, OH—High School Homecoming football games will always be nights to remember. No matter what schools are matched up under Friday night lights, every student is excited for the game and the dance to come the next day. The Talawanda Brave were up against The Carroll Patriots in Oxford on Friday night and it was definitely a night to remember.

Talawanda previously had a 0-4 record before week 5 of the 2024 season. This hasn't been out of the ordinary for the school's football program but Talawanda has still been making the effort to score and give everything they have on the field. Talawanda's defense has prevented teams from dominating them in game and the school's offense has been putting in the work to get points on the board. But after a week 4 loss to Edgewood, The Brave were sure to end the losing streak.

Carroll has been having the opposite season. They were previously undefeated before week 5, beating a Talawanda rival in the Southwest Ohio Conference, Northwest, last week. Carroll have played high-scoring games in the past few weeks, their biggest win being 41-6 against Tecumseh. While Talawanda was looking for their losing-streak to end, Carroll wanted their winning streak to stay alive.

The game kicked off with a beautiful drive from Talawanda. The Brave balanced their drive with running and passing plays and Quarterback Cale Leitch was able to run into the endzone for the first touchdown of the game. The Brave continued to hit Carroll hard with their defense forcing their first drive to be over in 4 plays. The offense followed up their previous drive with a bit of a slower pace and relied on passing in order to secure 2 touchdowns before the first quarter ended.

Carroll finally got to respond at the beginning of the second quarter. Carroll was given great midfield play at the beginning of their second drive due to a couple flags thrown on the Talawanda defense. Carroll gained most of their yardage from short to medium passing plays and finished their drive with a rushing touchdown. Carroll decided to go for a 2 point conversion and was not able to reach the end zone again. Talawanda's third drive began looking much like the first, balancing running and passing in order to gain at least 5 yards per play. Carroll's defense got a little more physical but was unable to stop another rushing touchdown. With not much time left in the quarter Carroll had to make haste in the last drive of the half. They were able to open their drive with a 40 yard rush, barely able to escape and reach the endzone on the first play. After a couple plays and timeouts in the red zone, The Patriots were able to finish the half by passing another touchdown. A second 2 point conversion was attempted and again was prevented from scoring making the score 21-12.

Carroll was not able to keep their momentum in the third quarter. Talawanda was able to keep them to a 4 play drive yet again because of tackles for loss and punishing Carroll's running plays. Talawanda is able to keep their drive long with the passing game but is shut down trying to convert 4th down on Carroll's 17 yard line. Even though Talawanda's last drive lasted most of the quarter and didn't end with any points, their defense was able to stop Carroll again, making them return their own fumble and losing yardage after 2 missed snaps right before the end of the last quarter.

After returning Carroll's most recent punt, Talawanda starts their next drive by rushing. Carroll has been letting them get by way too many times and finally starts to stuff Talawanda's running game. Then a very unexpected long pass is complete and sprinted into the endzone for another Brave touchdown. Talawanda's passing game usually relied on short throws in the first half making this long pass even more impressive, really showing off the quarterback's arm. As Carroll tries to recreate such a successful passing game, a couple throws fall incomplete but The Patriots still gain midfield position due to defensive penalties. But it didn't matter to The Brave, they were still able to keep Carroll to punt on another fourth down. The Talawanda offense continues calling successful passing plays that come up with massive yardage and their quick drive ends in another passing touchdown. Carroll still has half the quarter left to make a comeback and 3 timeouts but their comeback drive is halted to 4th and 5 and The Patriots are unable to convert against Talawanda's dominant defense. The Brave offense comes back out to whittle down the clock with the running game and the game ends with the first win for Talawanda, 35-12.

What better night to upset an undefeated team than Homecoming. Talawanda was on top the entire time with an unstoppable offensive game plan and reliant defense. Carroll seemed more focused on their defense and preventing scores than trying to get around Talawanda's defensive coverage. Friday just didn't seem like Carroll's day. There were just too many incomplete passes and not enough first downs. Talawanda definitely looked like the more well-rounded team.

In a postgame interview with Talawanda Coach Brandon Burtis, he agrees by stating, "Our team has played some really good football all year long and tonight we just put it all together and didn't shoot ourselves in the foot." When asked about his game plan and the choice to balance running and passing plays rather than focus on what the team does better he responded with, "In the first couple drives we run scripted plays but most of the time we take our time when coming to the line so we can read the defense better and know what we should run next." This strategy was definitely working Friday night and explains why Carroll wasn't very successful in stopping the Talawanda offense.

The Brave are home against Shroder next week and hope to upset another high scoring team and start a new win streak.

