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Maple Heights
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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Maple Heights Mustangs (5-0) beat E. Cle. Shaw Cardnials36-6 in a muddy contest. Maple Heights stumbled out of the gate, but behind a dominating defensive performance and a solid rushing attack, the Mustangs easily rolled past Shaw for the win at Stafford Stadium on Friday.

On a night when the field conditions and weather begged for both teams to keep the ball on the ground, the No. 6 Mustangs were able to do just that, with Michael Jenkins and Da'Junn

Graham leading the way. Jenkins carried 30 times for 199 yards and four touchdowns.

"We knew with the type of conditions we were in that we were going to be a downhill-running team tonight," Mustangs head coach Todd Filtz said. "We have a lot of stuff in our arsenal that goes sideline to sideline, but we told them that we were going to be a downhill-running team."

"We saddled up our hogs, got our quarterback and running back ready to go, and we pounded the football at them."

The victory kept the Mustangs' streak going when it comes to wins. The defending Division II State Champion, Maple Heights, continued its unbeaten streak. Maple Heights has won 16 straight regular-season games and 20 consecutive games overall.

Early on the Mustangs did everything they could to help Shaw. The Cardinals forced a pair of turnovers on the Mustangs' first two possessions. Maple Heights' defense made sure the Cardinals would not take advantage of the opportunities and forced punts after both turnovers.

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The Mustangs had several miscues, two fumbles, two interceptions and a slew of dropped passes, probably due to weather conditions and penalties. #50 Kendrick Wilbert seems to have a zest to be one of Maple's greats.

Shaw (2-2, 1-1) could not maintain any consistency on offense, as Mustangs defenders chased and harassed Cardinals ball-carriers throughout the game. The combination of the Mustangs defense and the Cardinals own mistakes kept Shaw in long-yardage situations with regularity.

Last season it was quarterback Shaq Washington running the show for the Mustangs and guiding them to the Division II title, this season it appears running back Michael Jenkins and Da'Juan Graham are poised to do the same. During Friday night's win over the Cardinals Jenkins rushed for 202 yards on 30 carries and four touchdowns, while Graham showed his dual-threat abilities throwing for a 29-yard touchdown and rushing for 63 yards on just seven carries.

But because the maroon and white boasts one of the fastest more athletic defensive units in the state of Ohio, they were able to keep Shaw in check despite good field position for head coach Rodney Brown's Cardinals. After a bye this upcoming week, three of Maple Heights final four games will be loaded with OHSAA computer points and if they are to win those games, finishing atop Division II Region VI is a realistic possibility. The Mustangs still have meetings with the top team in Division I Region I Cleveland Heights, upstart Lorain and Bedford.