



The game that wouldn't end

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Classic.

There really isn't another word to describe what happened at Staley High School Friday night when the Falcons battled the Lee's Summit West Titans for the right to head east to St. Louis for the Class 5 Show-Me Bowl.

Staley, 13-0, kept its undefeated dream season alive with a four-overtime 76-70 win in the Missouri Class semifinal game that had more than its fair share of incredible plays, turning points and emotionally draining moments.

Staley head coach Fred Bouchard received hug after hug from family and friends after the game. He had to wipe the tears of joy away. It was one of the greatest moments in his long coaching career.

"It's unbelievable," an emotional Bouchard said after the game. "When it was 49-49, I was saying it was unbelievable. You talk about a heavy weight slugging match...15 rounds, and we don't have a winner yet? Let's go 10 more. It was one for the ages. Maybe the best one I've ever seen."

Offensively, players from both sides had career games, knowing that this could be their final game of the season.

Let's start with Falcons running back Morgan Steward who ran for 268 yards and four touchdowns including the game winner in the fourth overtime. Then there was quarterback Trent Hosick. He had 215 yards on the ground, six rushing touchdowns and one through the air.

For West, 12-2, quarterback Luke Knott did everything he could to carry the team on his back. He threw for 373 yards and four touchdown passes. He also rushed for 198 yards and four more scores on the ground. Wide receivers Shaq Harrison 112 yards and Austin Panko, 103 yards were Knott's top targets.

Staley and West have two of the better defenses in the area, but that wasn't the case on Friday given the score.

The game was back and forth throughout. Staley led 35-28 at the half and then extended that lead to two scores going into the fourth quarter at 49-35.

But this was the Lee's Summit West team that came from 28 down to Glendale two weeks ago before winning that game in overtime.

Knott went to work, first hitting Harrison on a 35-yard strike to cut the deficit to seven with 6:13 to play in the game. West then put up one of its few defensive stops and got the ball back with 1:58 to play on its own 22-yard line. A 27-yarder to Harrison moved the ball to midfield. Then Knott connected with Harrison later in the drive for 32 yards setting up a first-and-goal at the three with five seconds to play. His next pass was incomplete, and :00.3 seconds remained on the clock, enough time for one more snap to extend the season.

Knott took the snap from center, rolled right and hit Harrison in the end zone with no time remaining. Brad Clements, who made it to the game from West's semifinal soccer game earlier in the day, split the uprights, and off to overtime they went knotted at 49.

"I was thinking whoever was keeping the time, they may get fired after this game," Bouchard said laughing about the touchdown scored with less than a second remaining in the game.

In a sense, this game was somewhat similar to last year's semifinal classic between these two teams in which the Titans came out on top. In that game, Knott threw a last-minute touchdown pass, in regulation to Brandon Smith that sent the Titans to the state champions. Staley's win means there will be a new Class 5 champion.

"We knew this was going to be a fight," Bouchard said. "We did not expect 146 points to be scored tonight. Who would have thought that?"

In overtime, again the action was back-and-forth. Staley had the ball first, scored, then West, then Staley and so on.

In the fourth overtime, West had the ball first. In a game that was short on standout defensive plays, Staley came up with the biggest one. Knott was flushed from the pocket and hit from behind, the ball came loose, and the Falcons recovered. Staley now had the opportunity to win this game.

Tied 70-70, from the 25, Hosick handed the ball off to Steward and sidestepped his way through Titan defenders until he was able to dive into the end zone for the score and the Falcons win.

"God is good," and excited and tired Steward said after the game. "I've been praying for this, and we've been working so hard for this, and now we've just got to go finish it off."

In just four years of existence, Bouchard has built a juggernaut of a football program. He has a first-time undefeated Staley Falcons team headed to St. Louis to play for the school's first state championship.

"Our guys work hard and put in a lot of time," Bouchard said. "They counted up the practices we've had and meetings and came up with 93 days, and we're shooting for 100, and we had to win this one to get to 100. They work very hard and have earned this opportunity."

For Lee's Summit West, a successful season comes to a disappointing end. Before the season, everyone pointed to this game as *the* one. It more than lived up to the hype, and then some. Both teams put on a show that the players, their families, friends and anyone else who was there will remember for a long time. But what may have been most disappointing for Titans head coach Royce Boehm was that his son, senior Evan Boehm, saw his high school football career come to an end.

"He's special," Boehm said of his son. "Now, I get to reflect as a dad. I love him, and he's one (heck) of a high school football player. Now I can sit back and really say that. We're going to be able to move on and see him at the next level."

The Falcons will play the winner of the Hazelwood East and Kirkwood game that takes place in St. Louis on Saturday. The Class 5 championship game is slated for Saturday night.