

Knights survive Brighton's challenge

Bengals pressure defending 5A champs, but lose playoff opener

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

The Brighton Bengals' reward for winning all five of its non-region games, battling through a tough region and winning a play-in game with a "Hail Mary" throw in the final minute?

A matchup against Lone Peak – on the defending 5A state champion's home field.

"We had no easy road," said Brighton coach Ryan Bullett.

Still, the Bengals were up to the challenge.

Josh Thompson rushed for 104 yards and two scores and led a fierce Brighton rally, but the Lone Peak Knights survived to claim a 24-17 victory in the first round of the 5A playoffs.

Quarterback Baron Gajkowski, who played at Jordan the year before but transferred when he realized he wasn't going to play much, drove the Knights on a game-winning drive after they had lost a 17-0 lead.

The Knights then held on, forcing Brighton into a fourth-down incompleting in the end zone.

"Champions are made when you come against adversity," said Gajkowski. "We just came together as an offensive unit in the huddle. We



Josh Thompson takes advantage of some nice blocking to run through the defense.

didn't get some calls our way the refs were calling, but we just came together and said we've got this."

Gajkowski completed 4-of-5 passes for 48 yards and rushed for an additional 19 yards on the decisive drive, which he capped with a 3-yard TD pass to Talon Shumway.

"When our back was against the wall when they tied

it up, we went down 74 yards and got the score and that's kind of been the mark of our team. Sometimes we just need a wakeup call," said Lone Peak coach Tony McGeary.

Nobody expected the underdog Bengals to go quietly after falling behind.

Brighton got a great

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BRIGHTON FOOTBALL: Lone Peak 24, Bengals 17



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game from Thompson and Uaea Masina, who rushed for 77 yards. Osa Masina was on the bench after suffering a possible concussion in the Bengals' play-in game the previous Monday.

After falling behind 10-0 in the first quarter, Brighton controlled the ball, running 54 plays, compared to just 28 for Lone Peak. The Knights benefited from David Bennett's blocked punt, which was scooped up for a score by Taylor Nelson.

Brighton trailed 17-7 at halftime, but continued its second-half offensive dominance and had a chance to tie – or win – in the final minutes. A 14-play drive stalled, however, with the incompleteness in the end zone.

With the victory, Lone Peak advanced to play Davis the next week. The Knights won, but were defeated in the semifinals by eventual champion Jordan.

Gajkowski finished the game 12-of-21 for 143 passing yards and two touchdowns, in addition to 90 yards rushing. He led Lone Peak to scores on its opening two drives, including a 23-yard touchdown pass to Austin McChesney that put the Knights ahead 10-0 with 3:25 left in the first quarter.

Brighton whittled it to 17-7 late in the first half on Thompson's 3-yard run. Another Thompson TD run late in the third quarter made it 17-14.

After Brighton tied the game on Hunter Dall's pressure-filled 36-yard field goal with 8:50 remaining, the Knights got the response they needed to punch their quarterfinal ticket.

LEFT: Tyson Reid
TOP RIGHT: Nick Giles, Uaea Masina, Josh Menna, Tyson Alldridge and Jackson Barton.
MIDDLE LEFT: Alec McCardle and Sage Nelson
LOWER RIGHT: Josh Menna and Nick Giles

GAME SUMMARY

Brighton	0	7	7	3	- 17
Lone Peak	10	7	0	7	- 24

- LP – FG Michael Smith 30
- LP – Austin McChesney 23 pass from Baron Gajkowski (Smith kick)
- LP – Taylor Nelson 2 blocked punt return (Smith kick)
- B – Josh Thompson 3 run (Hunter Dall kick)
- B – Thompson 3 run (Dall kick)
- B – FG Dall 36
- LP – Talon Shumway 3 pass from Gajkowski (Smith kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Brighton – Thompson 15-104, Uaea Masina 15-77, Drew Jensen 5-23, Brady McCloy 2-4, Kekoa Kane 1-2. LP – Gajkowski 15-95, McChesney 2-18, Dustin Watkins 2-14, Shumway 2-8, Zachary Mortensen 1-4, Brady Anderson 2-2.

PASSING: Brighton – Jensen 6-12-0-77 yards. LP – Gajkowski 13-22-0-160 yards.

RECEIVING: Brighton – Isaiah Kaufusi 3-39, Taylor Reid 1-35, Uaea Masina 1-2, Thompson 1-1. LP – Shumway 5-58, David Jensen 3-50, Watkins 3-22, McChesney 1-23, Zach Buhley 1-7.