

# Rams hang on

Highland upsets 5A power Lone Peak to earn first win in surprising manner

By Brad Plathow  
For the Deseret News

When a winless team goes on the road to face an undefeated one, even the most optimistic scenario would go something like this:

*Winless team puts up a fight, keeps it close for a quarter. Undefeated team refocuses and pours it on. Both teams empty their benches in the final meaningless minutes, the outcome having been essentially secured for some time now.*

The Highland Rams did "optimistic" one better by a script entirely opposite. The Rams struck first, built a 14-0 lead in the second half and then hung on for dear life as Lone Peak's furious comeback attempt came up short in the Rams' 14-12 victory Friday evening.

The game's ho-hum rhythm switched to a feverish pitch in the final seconds. After trimming the deficit to 14-6 via a touchdown and a botched extra point, the Knights took over on their 37-yard line and, with new quarterback Talon Shumway at the helm, marched to the Highland 5-yard line with mere seconds left on the clock. Shumway was tackled in the backfield on the ensuing play, leaving the Rams to assume the game was over.

But the Knights lined up for another play, and Shumway connected with Cameron Deere for a 6-yard touchdown as time expired.

Despite protests by the Highland sideline and coaching staff that there couldn't have been enough time to get the play off, the officials set the ball for Lone Peak's two-point conversion try. The crowd took a collective breath as Shumway hauled in a pass from starting QB Chase Hansen in the back-right corner of the end zone.

He came down on his back, out of bounds.



Justin Weaver had just four carries against Lone Peak, but he made the most of them in the Rams' 14-12 win.

Game over.

"It seemed like the clock was stopped for three or four extra seconds," said Highland coach **Brody Benson**, who nonetheless chalked it up to a learning experience for his team. "We shouldn't have gotten ourselves into that situation against a very good team, anyway."

Despite nearly frittering away a two-touchdown lead, the Rams (1-2) were elated to notch their first win of the season against the previously 2-0 Knights. Highland quarterback and defensive back **Colby Earl** said those final moments helped his team build character.

"That's what we live for right there," he said.

The game's dramatic conclusion was in stark contrast to the rest of the contest. The teams

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**TOP LEFT:** Ono Tafisi looks to the sidelines for instructions.

**TOP RIGHT:** Sione Houma and Hea Tuifua try to pounce on a fumble.

**LOWER LEFT:** Colby Earl hands to Toi Taufa.

**LOWER MIDDLE:** Houma and Nate Fakahafua pressure the QB.

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combined for 11 punts and five turnovers, and Highland went into halftime up 7-0 despite being severely outgained and giving the ball back via punt or fumble on four of its first five possessions.

Earl scored on a 4-yard run after getting a short field from **Anthony Smithson's** interception of Hansen (13-for-20 for 129 yards). Entering the game as one of the state's most high profile signal callers, Hansen looked sharp at times, connecting on eight of his first nine passes. But he threw two interceptions, was sacked five times and was nearly picked off two more times.

After Earl's 18-yard jump-ball pass to **Nate Fakahafua** made it 14-0, Shumway (4-for-4 for 80 yards and 54 rush yards) replaced Hansen and connected with Deere on two touchdowns in the final four minutes. A bobbled snap on the first extra-point attempt set up the last-second dramatics.

## GAME SUMMARY

Highland	0	7	0	7	-	14
Lone Peak	0	0	0	12	-	12

**H** – Colby Earl 4 run (Hayes Hicken kick)

**H** – Nate Fakahafua 18 pass from Earl (Hicken kick)

**LP** – Cameron Deere 29 pass from Talon Shumway (kick failed)

**LP** – Deere 6 pass from Shumway (pass failed)

## INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

**RUSHING:** Highland – Earl 15-66, Sione Houma 9-58, Justin Weaver 4-49, Toi Taufa 6-13, Christian Schulte 1-10, Brandon Lloyd 1-3, Jackson Beck 1-0. Lone Peak – Shumway 12-66, Zac Saunders 3-48, Chris Nielson 7-40, Kurtis Taufa 5-6, Chase Hansen 10-0.

**PASSING:** Highland – Earl 4-8-0-99 yards. Lone Peak – Hansen 14-22-2-142 yards, Shumway 4-5-0-73 yards.

**RECEIVING:** Highland – Fakahafua 2-29, Po Lauti 1-35, Samson Kaloni 1-35. Lone Peak – Deere 9-133, Zach Newman 2-39, Zac Saunders 1-13, Taufa 3-10, Nielson 1-7, Dylan Rhodes 1-7, Matt Olson 1-6.