

Redbirds Earn Three in a Row

It will go down in the Metamora football history book as “the stop”. Dane Kempf (#2) got a piece of his ankles, Bryan Love (#41) wrapped up his knees and Preston Butner (#53) pushed him back as the Birds stopped Rochester’s all-state quarterback Sean Robinson on the 2 point conversion. A 41-40 thrilling victory was secured for Metamora and the reward is third trip to the state championship in as many years.

In one of the most exciting games ever played at Malone Field, the #1 ranked Rochester Rockets came to Metamora for the semi-final class 4A football playoff game. The Rockets brought with them one of the most powerful offenses in the state led by Purdue bound quarterback Robinson. But in this game, in front of 7000 screaming fans, the Redbirds matched the Rockets and added one to earn the right to play in the class 4A state championship game.

Metamora elected to receive the opening kickoff and drove the ball 80 yards to start the scoring frenzy. Quarterback Michael Fay (#15) ran it in for 6 yards out. With a rare missed extra point by Brennen VanMieghem (#26), the Birds had the early 6-0 lead. Rochester responded with the next two touchdowns and the 13-6 lead with 11:28 left in the 2nd quarter. Metamora then scored 21 unanswered points to take a 27-13 halftime lead. Two of the Redbirds touchdowns were through the air as Dan Burk (#13) used the halfback option pass to connect with David Kuhne (#10) for a 65 yard touchdown. With 16 seconds left until halftime, Fay found Kuhne again for a 23 yard touchdown pass play.

The second half saw more of the same as the Rockets took the kickoff and scored to close the gap to 27-19. Metamora countered with a 50 yard touchdown run by Fay to give the Birds a 34-19 lead. But it was Rochester’s offensive strength that would give them three of the next four touchdowns in the second half. After Metamora had engineered one of its classic 80 yard 13 play scoring drives, the Rockets took over with 2:47 left in the game. Rochester found the end zone with 3.8 seconds on the game clock. With the score Metamora 41 Rochester 40, the Rockets called time-out to think about going for the win or the tie. Springfield Sacred Heart head coach Ken Leonard, father of the Rockets coach Derek Leonard advised his son from the sidelines to go for the tie. But Derek said “no, we’re going for the win” to set up the drama. Quarterback Robinson took the snap and rushed to the left side of the line. Just as Robinson was leaping for the goal line, Metamora’s Kempf got a piece of his ankles, linebacker Love wrapped up his knees as Robinson was in the air and defensive linemen Butner pushed him back, 1 ½ yards short of the end zone. When it counted, Metamora’s defense had done something it seemingly couldn’t do most of the game, hold Rochester’s prolific offense.

Metamora takes their 12-1 record to Champaign this Friday night at 7:00pm to play for the state title. The Redbirds take on the Geneseo Maple Leafs for the class 4A state championship. Geneseo comes to the title game with an 11-2 record and a rich high school football playoff history. The last time these two teams met was in 2002 with the Redbirds coming out on top 28-21 in a regular season matchup. Overall, Geneseo has

won four of the six matchups between these two teams. Metamora hopes to avenge the 1976 and 1977 state championship losses to the Mable Leafs with a victory Friday night. Please visit www.LakeVermilionRetreat.com/Football for more Metamora football updates and pictures.