



## PERFECT

**WIAA FOOTBALL DIVISION 4 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP: Catholic Memorial 21, Ellsworth 12**

By Dave Radcliffe

dradcliffe@conley.net 262-513-2655

MADISON — In this case, it wasn't how Catholic Memorial finished, but rather how it started.

The Crusaders scored 21 unanswered points in the first quarter, then let their defense and special teams do the rest as they defeated Ellsworth 21-12 in the WIAA Division 4 state championship game on a frigid Thursday night at Camp Randall Stadium.

It marked the fifth WIAA title and ninth overall in program history for CMH, who has won three consecutive titles dating back to the last two instances the state series was held in Madison in 2018 and 2019.

"These kids worked extremely hard all season, got better, but it was our senior class, that was the difference in this season," CMH coach Bill Young said. "I love these kids. They're terrific."

Young was doused with a gatorade bath after senior quarterback Rory Fox took the final knee. If there was any doubt how confident the Crusaders were entering Thursday, they then broke out a box filled with state championship hats on the sideline.

"To be honest I was a little nervous," CMH senior Charlie Jarvis said. "I think coach Young does a very good job of making sure that there's no overconfidence anywhere. There's no chance you're going to go out there and be unprepared when coach Young is your coach."

It didn't take long for the Crusaders (14-0) to strike.

After Fox pulled it down and ran for a first down, he connected with junior Antwan Jones for a first down to move into Ellsworth territory. On the very next play, Fox tossed an option pitch to sophomore tailback Corey Smith, who took it 41 yards to the house to make it 7-0 with 10 minutes, 20 seconds left in the opening quarter.

"I think our game plan that coach (Nick) Vitale put together was just incredible," Jarvis said of his offensive coordinator. "The way we were able to execute, we were able to go out there and punch them in the mouth."

The ball was right back in Catholic Memorial's possession after the ensuing kickoff.

Senior Kenny Piacsek poached a short kick down the right sideline and it was jumped on by sophomore Josh Oechsner at the Ellsworth 34-yard line. On

See **CRUSADERS**, PAGE 2B



**LEFT:** Catholic Memorial senior Morgan McKnight holds up the gold trophy as senior Josiah Nathaniel (72) and sophomore Donovan Harbour (79) celebrate after defeating Ellsworth in the WIAA Division 4 state championship Thursday in Madison. **CENTER:** Catholic Memorial senior defensive back Charlie Jarvis runs with the ball after making his game-clinching interception during the WIAA Division 4 state championship Thursday in Madison. **RIGHT:** Catholic Memorial head coach Bill Young holds up the gold trophy after the Crusaders beat Ellsworth in the WIAA Division 4 state championship Thursday in Madison.

Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

fourth and 6, junior receiver Bennett McCormick made a juggling catch to move the chains, eventually leading to a 5-yard touchdown run by Fox.

Less than four minutes into the game, the Crusaders led 14-0.

"It's just massive, stealing possessions," Jarvis said. "Special teams is a third of the game and a lot of times you don't realize it. But when you've got a special teams coach like Matt Bergan ... we stole three, maybe four possessions tonight. That's huge."

The Panthers (12-1) finally got a chance with the ball and escorted it into CMH territory, only to turn it over on downs when senior lineman Adam Boehm made the stop on fourth and 5. Once again, the Crusader offense proved eager to take advantage.

This time Fox went to the air, hitting senior running back OB Allen in stride on a wheel route down the left sideline for a 27-yard touchdown, and it was 21-0 with 1:37 left in the first.

But the CMH offense went cold, and Ellsworth wasn't ready to go away quietly.

An interception by senior defensive back Marvell Lee halted the Panthers' next possession. But after the Crusaders turned it over on downs, Ellsworth went 69 yards on five plays, highlighted by a 39-yard connection from quarterback Jack Janke to Ashten Quade that was nearly broken up. Quade then ran it in on the next play from 13 yards out to get the Panthers on the board with 8:13 to go until halftime.

"We got a little stagnant," Jarvis said. "We obviously didn't score after the first quarter. But credit to them. They put together a defense that could stop us. Not many teams have been able to do that."

The next Catholic Memorial drive ended in an interception. Ellsworth then marched 53 yards in 10 plays, scoring when Janke punched it in from the 1-yard line. But once again, the two-point conversion was unsuccessful, keeping it a two-possession game and some pressure off the Crusaders.

As it turned out, that capped the scoring Thursday night.

"Our defense has been outstanding all year long," Young said. "Ryan Stefaniak and Mitch Schultz, coach Maz (Jeff Mazurczak), we work so hard and take a lot of pride ... our kids are really well prepared and they were ready to play a great game today. It was just phenomenal."

The Crusaders recovered an onside kick to open the second half but did nothing with it. Jarvis had an interception to halt the Panthers' next drive, returning it near midfield. Then Ellsworth sucked up over eight minutes of clock, only to turn it over on downs without ever entering the red zone as CMH took over with 4:28 remaining on its own 21.

Click here to see this page in the eEdition:



(Login Required)



"To go out there and just shut them out was huge," Jarvis said. "Our senior leadership is just amazing. Just a combination of ... forcing the ball out early before the quarterback wanted to just creates turnovers and fumbles. It's huge for our defense to get those stops like that."

Ellsworth would get one more crack at it but Jarvis played centerfield and picked off his second pass of the game with 2:52 to go. A big 48yard run by Fox on third and 8 sealed it as the Crusaders were able to enter victory formation with Ellsworth out of timeouts.

"We've got a bunch of seniors and underclassmen that absolutely love football and they're so dedicated," Young said. "They're football intel is really high and they handled that pressure and to be perfect ... this is the third team in my 44 years as head coach to be 14-0.

"It's just been a special year and I love these kids so much. I'm sad to see it end, I really am."

The Crusaders finished with 330 total yards of offense, 197 of which came in the first quarter. Fox led the way with 12 carries for 90 yards, while Jarvis had a team-high seven tackles, including two for a loss.

"It's kind of sad. It's all coming to an end," Jarvis said. "These last four months I've spent with just these kids and for that to all be gone, it's a crazy feeling. The thrill, it just overwhelms you. I'm happy to be out here. I'm happy that we won. I wish we had more games, honestly."



Catholic Memorial sophomore Corey Smith outruns the Ellsworth defense for a 41-yard touchdown during the WIAA Division 4 state championship Thursday night in Madison.

Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

