

By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer

Elliot Carlson mixed in a 53-yard punt return touchdown with two other rushing scores and running back Tim Johnson also scored twice as their Plainsmen mauled the Bulldogs 43-16 Friday night in Bridgeport.

Perkins County's win clinched the team a third-consecutive district championship; they finished the season with a 7-1 record.



No Bridgeport player laid even a finger on Carlson after he took a reverse handoff from Kaleb Vak at the Plainsmen 45-yard line and ran a Jason Amateis punt 55 yards into the Bulldogs end zone. Two Bulldogs chased him for a sniff but stopped pursuit at the 20-yard line.

The special teams scorcher gave the visiting Plainsmen a 29-8 lead with 8:08 left in the third quarter and followed just four plays and 1:31 after a Johnson one-yard touchdown run.

Both Carlson on his 50-yard touchdown run and Johnson on his 43-yard touchdown run reached the end zone untouched by a defender.

Carlson slipped around Bridgeport defensive end John Pappas while Perkins County lineman Alex Malmkar collared cornerback Kaden Hall to set up a 40-yard foot race along the left sideline on the quarterback's 50-yard touchdown run.

Backfield mate Johnson hustled upfield and bumped off cornerback Amateis at the 10-yard line to ensure the score.

Carlson rushed for 215 yards this game and shredded opponents for 1,598 yards and 20 touchdowns during the Plainsmen's eight-game season. (That averages to a mind-boggling 200 yards per game.)

Johnson simply ran straight through a huge hole in the middle of the field and veered right, finding no Bulldogs nipping at his heels along his whole 43-yard cruise.

The 1-6, all-purple Bulldogs raised eyebrows by stopping Perkins County's second drive and methodically marching down the field to take an 8-7 lead with most of the first quarter gone.

Quarterback-turned-running back Jaime Gonzalez led the 78-yard, 13-play drive that munched 5:37 out of the first quarter. Gonzalez reached the edge twice for runs of 16 and 12 yards, moving Bridgeport forward 41 yards with his legs.

Stopped on their own 29-yard line and staring at a 4th-and-15, Bridgeport's progress received tremendous aid from a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty call on the Plainsmen.

Versatile Wyatt Pankowski did the honors a run from the Perkins County two-yard line.

"When disciplined and motivated, this is a great football team," Plainsmen Head Coach Chip Kay said after the game.

"[Falling behind] didn't seem to faze our team at all," Coach Kay said.

The Bulldogs took their only and short-lived lead on a controversial play: On the point-after

conversion, Gonzalez took a pitch and dashed for the right sideline. He extended his arms toward the orange pylon and appeared to have lost the football and fallen out of bounds as Plainsmen linebacker Alex Johnston cancelled him.

The closest official, however, credited Gonzalez with two points. Just four plays and 1:16 later, however, visiting Perkins County rubbed out that lead with Carlson's 50-yard run past the Bulldogs' 4-3 defensive set.

The Plainsmen defense impounded four Bulldog fourth down conversion attempts. Defensive back Johnson crunched down on Amateis' ill-advised fake punt attempt at midfield early in the second quarter; after Carlson and Johnston ran for 23 and 22 yards respectively, Johnson got the opportunity to punch it in from two yards away for a 22-8 lead.

Plainsmen defensive end Colton White strung Gonzalez out at the right sideline on a Bulldogs 4th-and-5 at midfield in the third quarter. White refused to "buy" Gonzalez's cut move back inside and dropped him quickly.

Continuing to make the extraordinary look easy, Carlson kicked into overdrive and looked like a greyhound running past Bulldogs to turn the score to 43-8 and activate the continuous clock.

Offensive lineman Tyrone Summers detained Bridgeport counterpart Blake Smith and Carlson needed nothing more for his score at 4:12 of the third quarter, shifting to high gear shortly after crossing the line of scrimmage and braking 53 yards later.

Carlson and Poppe both appeared in the Bulldogs' offensive backfield several times, with Carlson nabbing the quarterback twice. Poppe mugged junior Bridgeport running back Leighton Freeze on a third down conversion play just before halftime.

Perkins County's secondary limited the Bulldogs to a worthless six yards on nine pass attempts. Defensive backs Johnson, Austin Thelander and Chase Miyamoto did not let receivers wander from their sight; Thelander snowed Freeze for a loss of yardage to set up a Bridgeport turnover (on downs) in the second quarter.

Next Action

A rematch with Hershey awaits the Plainsmen to begin the NSAA class C2 playoffs at 6 p.m. today (Thursday) on Haenfler Field in Grant. Perkins County beat the Panthers 14-7 in week four of the season in Hershey.

P.C. 43, Bridgeport 16

	1	2	3	4	
Perkins Co.	15	14	14	0	—43
Bridgeport	8	0	0	8	—16

Rushing leaders—Perkins County: Carlson 13-215 (53T) 3TD; Johnson 5-55 (43T) 2TD; Johnston 3-44 (22); Vak 3-11 (5);

Bridgeport: Gonzalez 17-84 (16); Pankowski 18-81 (15); Benavides 8-41 (24).

Passing leaders—Perkins County: Carlson 3-8-14; Bridgeport: Amateis 1-1-6; Gonzalez 0-8.

Receiving leaders—Perkins County: Johnson 2-13 (9).

Tackling leaders—Perkins County: Carlson 7.5 (6); Malmkar 6.5 (4); Miyamoto 5 (3); Johnson 4.5 (3); Walker 4 (1); Poppe 4 (2); Sestak 3.5 (1); Ross 3.5 (1); Throckmorton 3.5 (2).

