

The Oilers never gave Punxsutawney and its vaunted offense time to get settled. One play after the opening kickoff, Cole Findlay returned an intercepted pass 18 yards to the 24. Six plays later the Oilers were in the endzone on a 3-yard run by Steven Heise, the first of his four touchdowns in the 47-14 Sweet 16 playoff victory Friday night at the Oil Field.

And there's more.

Two plays later, Punxsy's tailback fumbled and Findlay was quick to pounce on the ball. The Oilers again wasted no time lighting up the scoreboard again. It took three plays; the first was a 24-yard run by Findlay and the third was a 29-yard scamper by Heise. Landon Riley added the second of his five extra points, and 2:30 into the game, it was 14-0.

The 10-2 Chucks, District 9 champions, turned the ball over on their next possession, this time on an interception by Heise. Turns out this would be the third of six takeaways the Oilers had in the game. They didn't take advantage this time, but soon a sack by Tycen Sindlinger and Noah Lucarelli forced a punt that led to a 65-yard scoring drive for a 21-0 Oil City lead.

The big play was a throw-back by Findlay to Heise who was alone on the other side of the field, good for 20 yards. Heise scored from the 5 on the next play.

It wasn't supposed to be this way, according to the experts. Four of five scribes from

District9and10.com picked the Oilers to lose. Findlay apparently noticed.

"Once again they counted us out. When the pre-game predictions were made, they all picked Punxsy. We've done it for how many weeks in a row? When are they going to learn?" Findlay said to Ryan Kunselman of The Derrick after the game.

The Chucks did live up to their press clippings before the first half ended. In fact, the 13-yard fourth down pass from Maddox Hetrick to Logan Moore came as time was running out. That made it 21-6 since the snap on the point after was bobbled, and My'Saun Mills made sure the kicker didn't get away.

Oil City continued to dominate after intermission as it laid claim to the unofficial northwestern Pennsylvania 4A title. The 10-1 Oilers – winners of eight straight – did officially earn a trip to the PIAA quarterfinals TBA against either Aliquippa or McKeesport, which will play for the WPIAL title this afternoon.

The Oilers scored after the second half kickoff on a 10-yard run by Heise, giving him his second four-TD game of the season. A 31-yard pass play from Findlay to Mills ignited the 75-yard march.

Still another Punxsy turnover, this one a fumble recovery by Caleb Sparks on its 13, set up an 11-yard Findlay touchdown late in the third.

The Chucks did have an answer to that. A 22-yard pass to Moore to the 4 set up a 1-yard TD by Jordan Ruten. Hetrick passed to Jaden Greenblatt for the conversion.

The Oilers weren't done, however. Carter Bialo recovered an onside kick attempt and they needed three plays to hit paydirt. The big play was a 27-yard pass from Findlay to Spence Singleton. Findlay then scored from the 12.

And, there were two more interceptions to come for the Oilers, the first by Findlay, who turned his into a 50-yard pick 6, and the second by Heise.

Findlay's second interception broke Dakota Cole's school career interceptions record. Findlay now has 13. Cole, who last played on the 2020 team, had 12.

Both Findlay and Heise are top five all-time for season and career interceptions at Oil City.

The Oilers won the statistical battle, outgaining the Chucks, 356-264. And while Punxsy turned the ball six times, Oil City totaled zero turnovers.

Findlay racked up another 270 yards total offense, and Heise ran for 124 yards.

Findlay out-stated Hetrick who totaled 172 yards of offense. He managed to put the ball up despite pressure from Sindlinger (two sacks) and Abdul Stanton, Bryaden Buzard and Blake Stevens with one each. Birthday boy Lucarelli also had a sack to go with a tipped pass.

Moore, Punxsutawney's all-time leading receiver, had 11 catches for 123 yards.

OIL SPILLS – Your's truly originally miscounted Findlay's career interceptions, now the 12 has been corrected to 13, giving him the school record...Dakota Cole previously held that mark with 12...Findlay also tied an unusual record: most takeaways in a season. He has 10 (eight INTs, two fumble recoveries. Jeff Brown and Todd Piendel, who both played on the 1985 team, had 10 apiece that season...Findlay has 15 career takeaways, which is at least a contender for the school record...Cole finished with 14...

Defensive stats from game: Tycen Sindlinger 14 tackles, Heise 13, Blake Stevens 12, Brayden Buzard 10, My'Saun Mills 8, Spence Singleton 6.

Sacks to Sindlinger, Stevens, Buzard, Abdul Stanton and Noah Lucarelli.

Also in the Chucks' backfield with TFLS: Sindlinger, Buzard and Matt Antrilli (two times apiece) along with Mills, Stanton, Lucarelli, Caleb Sparks and Lucas Brown.

Buzard forced two fumbles while Stevens and Findlay were credited with two passes defended apiece. Buzard, Mills and Singleton each had one. Findlay now has 25 in his career.

The hits just keep on comin' – Stanton 6 QB hits, Buzard 5, Lucarelli and Sparks 3, Stevens and Ashton Wagner 2, Sindlinger and Brown 1 each.

Lucarelli blocked a pass, and Logan Heath recovered the onside kick.

Heise is now tied with the legendary Jim Shaughnessy for 10th place in career touchdowns at 27 apiece.