

It was the game that had everything. And one that showed Oil City coach Dan York does, indeed, have a big bag of tricks at his disposal.

Undaunted after falling behind 14-0 to the homestanding, more athletic and Class 6A Erie Royals, the Oilers made big play after big play and stole a 21-20 non-region victory Friday night.

And they did it having to face talented senior quarterback Paul Johnson – who didn't take the field last week against Franklin.

Johnson made his presence felt early, having a hand in both touchdowns as the Royals took a 14-0 lead a minute into the second quarter.

It almost seemed as if the rout was on at that point.

But the Oilers did not roll over. No, they rolled on, responding with a nine-minute, 69-yard scoring drive to get back into the game. Steven Heise -- aka Football Player -- authored most of the yardage during the march, but it was Cole Findlay who ended it with a 1-yard touchdown with 2:13 left in the half.

The extra point was blocked, and that's when the ups and downs of the game began.

Another INT for Findlay

Two plays after the kickoff, Findlay intercepted Johnson – his fifth pick of the season and the 10th of his career – and then hit Spence Singleton with a 25-yard pass to the Erie 39.

So things were really looking up – the Oilers were driving and they were getting the ball to start the second half.

But optimism hit a speed bump on a controversial intentional grounding call. And when Erie got the ball back in the last 1:30 of the half, things looked even bleaker when Johnson found and uncovered receiver alone for a 40-yard gain to the Oil City 8.

The Royals didn't score, though, as Heise and Tycen Sindlinger stopped a ball-carrier short of the goal.

So, it was still a 14-6 game at intermission.

The Oilers quickly changed that when Singleton returned the second half kickoff to the Erie 39. Three plays later they were only at the 37 for a fourth down play when Findlay found Heise who found a wall of blockers for a 37-yard touchdown. A pass to Landon Baker tied the game at 14.

11-yard loss

Erie would go ahead, 20-14, on its next possession – a 46-yard run on third-and-21 by the elusive Johnson. This drive was not without its ups and down for the Oilers. First, there was another controversial call, this one for pass interference that gave the Royals a first down on the 35. Two plays later Brayden Buzard nailed the ball-carrier for an 11-yard loss, that set up the third-and-21.

Johnson's scramble came with 5:30 left in the third, but the Royals were left with only a six-point and a short-lived lead when Heise blocked the point after.

Oil City's next possession started off well, a 33-yard pass to Baker to the Erie 40, but there would be more adversity for the Oilers to overcome.

First, they were at the 41 after a chop block call and needed 18 yards for a first down. They made it on the 11 on a 30-yard pass to Noah Lucarelli who up to that point was making tackle after tackle on defense for limited yardage. The reception was his first of the season. But then a third down play was blown up in the backfield as the third quarter ended.

The Oilers got a break with an offsides call against Erie on fourth down. Heise's 2-yard run tied the score and Landon Riley's kick put them ahead to stay, but there was still 10:26 left to play.

Erie was at midfield on its next possession when Buzard recovered a fumble after a bad snap from center. That would turn out to be the last time the Royals had the ball...

Fake punt and then some

Although...the Oilers couldn't advance, and on fourth down set up to punt – with Findlay in as the punter instead of Logan Heath. Of course, he didn't punt; he brilliantly got 12 on the fake and a first down. Oil City was faced with still another fourth down, this time with 2:29 to play, and, of course, the Oilers went for it again. This time Findlay passed to Baker for 12 yards and the clinching first down.

And from there they went into victory formation and kneeled out the clock since the cupboard of timeouts for Erie was bare.

OIL SLICKS – Johnson scored on a 17-yard run and threw an 8-yard TD in the first half for the Royals...Even though he didn't play against Franklin, Johnson did do damage against Prep and McDowell earlier this season...**Yardage very sketchy** and subject to change: 246 and zero turnovers for the Oilers, 234 for Erie (Johnson 182 total offense)...Three plays of 40-plus yards for the Royals...Heise carried 29 times, no long gainers but kept Johnson & Co. off the field...Findlay 7/13 for 151...Sophomore LB Tycen Sindlinger made 15 tackles and is second on the team with 58...Lucarelli and Stevens had eight apiece. Stevens leads with 66 tackles...Sindlinger, Lucarelli, Stevens, Brayden Buzard and Caleb Sparks have teamed for 53 stops in the backfield...