

There are victories, and there are sweet victories. This one was one of Oil City's sweetest in a long time.

It is the one all of Oil City land had been waiting for since Sept. 8 when certain things were said by certain people after North East walloped the Oilers, 35-0, in a non-region game.

The Oilers didn't have Ethen Knox then. So what? said some. The Pickers would have won anyway.

Well, Not. So. Fast.

With Knox scoring five touchdowns and rolling up more than 300 yards rushing in the District 10 3A quarterfinals Friday night at the Erie Vet, Oil City stomped the Grape Pickers, 51-14.

Knox scored on a 59-yard run after the opening kickoff to give the Oilers an 8-0 lead. They never looked back, despite two North East touchdowns before intermission.

Still, the Oilers led 22-14 at halftime and took control early in the third quarter after sophomore Cole Findlay intercepted a pass in the end zone.

Knox, who had already also scored on runs of 3 and 14 yards by intermission, then added his fourth TD of the game three plays later on a 78-yard jaunt. He then tacked on his third PAT to make it 30-14.

By the end of the third, the Erie County (region whatever) champs were dead and buried after another 10th grader, Brayden Buzard, made an interception on the Pickers' next possession.

Knox then scored his fifth touchdown, this one coming from 28 yards out, following a 28-yard pass play to Hayden Wilson. Findlay's throw to Jon Hargenrader made it 38-14.

Rounding out the scoring for the 7-3 Oilers were touchdown runs of 39 and 31 yards by Hargenrader and Sean Alexander and a kick by Hank Lockhart after Hargenrader's TD. They came in the fourth quarter.

North East gained yardage (257 yards) but not as much as the Oilers (569) and couldn't overcome the four turnovers. Oil City didn't have any turnovers and never had to punt.

Next up for the Oilers will be top-seeded Sharon Nov. 10 at a site to be announced. North East was eliminated with an 8-3 record.

OIL GUSHERS – Knox was 33/353 rushing, according to stats released Tuesday night by Ritt Smith...Pearsall is up to 83 tackles and 15 TFL...Justen Dunkle has 10 TFL to go with nine hurries...The Oilers' OL of Henry Milford, Tanner Kightlinger, A.J. Bucholz, Lenny Liebold, Nico Blauser and Tim Walentoski have been particularly dominant the last three outings, allowing the team to hog the ball against the Pickers, Titusville and Conneaut. Oil City ran for 515 yards in all vs. the Pickers...The Oilers had three interceptions with Gavin Stephens – who was shaken up earlier – grabbing the other from heralded QB Jackson Hume...Another telling North East turnover was a fumble, forced by Knox and recovered by Kightlinger, that led to Oil City's third TD and a 22-7 lead. Hargenrader and Wilson had big catches that helped the Oilers recover from a second-and-25 during that scoring drive...Findlay later contributed an 18-yard keeper...Buzard was filling in for injured junior LB Ben Garland; the Pickers were without their best defender, senior Jacob Babo (89 stops)...The two receptions by Wilson – who was injured and life-flighted in the first North East game – were his first of the season; he had a TD catch last year against Franklin...The score was similar (52-20) to last year's regular season game...Haergenrader and Alexander filled in for Knox running the ball that first game against North East. They teamed for almost 200 yards rushing, but didn't reach the end zone. Fitting that each found pay dirt in the fourth quarter Friday...Some glitches at the start of that North East stream; I switched to radio and found that Franklin coach Matt Turk was handling the color. Did a nice job. He says he'll be behind the mike again for the Sharon game..Still waiting for official stats (offense and defense)...