

# ADAMS VS. FARMINGTON HILLS HARRISON



*Photo by Joe Vaiciunas*

*Game time weather: 49 degrees, overcast skies, blustery*

The winner of this game would clinch a coveted state playoff birth. Would the Highlanders carry-over the momentum from their thrilling win over the Troy Colts? Could the defense contain the much heralded receiver in Mark Dell?

The Hawks received the kickoff and DB Mark Hammett made the tackle at the 26-yard line. After 1st and 2nd down plays that didn't move the ball, the Hawks recovered their own fumble on 3rd down. It was enough for a Hawk 1st down. From the 39-yard line the Hawks pass to receiver Mark Dell was intercepted by junior DB Adam Smith. Smith made a nice play to pick-off the pass and in so doing lost his helmet in the process. The Highlander offense took over at the 50-yard line. A screen pass to FB Hamilton picked-up 9-yards to bring up a 4th and 1 situation. An illegal procedure penalty forced the Highlanders to punt. Josh Patten's punt was covered well by Steve Emery and Alex McClelland. The Hawks 2nd possession started from the 27-yard line. A pass to the tight end was good for a 1st down. With the ball at the 43-yard line the Hawks tried to go wide around their left side but DE Wayne Sanders and LB Aaron McNamara would have none of that. The play gained only 2-yards. On the next play, the Hawks QB hit Dell for a 10-yard pass completion and a 1st down. On the following play, DL junior Mike Polk stuffed the run attempt. On 2nd down another pass attempt to stand-out receiver Dell was again intercepted by DB Adam Smith. This time Smith managed to keep his helmet on. Great job Adam!

The Highlanders 2nd possession of the game started with a Wilson QB keeper for a 1-yard gain. On 2nd down, Josh Renel made a spectacular one-handed catch for a 25-yard gain. On the ensuing play, a counter to Renel was stuffed by a Hawk LB. A Hawk penalty brought up a 2nd down and 5, FB Cory Hamilton broke free for a huge gain before DB Mark Dell caught him at the 20-yard line. A running play for no gain followed by an incomplete pass led to 3rd and 10. Wilson's pass attempt was blocked by a hawk defender. With the ball spotted at the 20-yard line, Casey's 37-yard field goal kick was blocked by DL Ben Bojicic. The Hawks took over at the 46-yard line. On 1st down, Lb McNamara stopped the RB for a 2-yard gain. A delay-of-game penalty on the Hawks set-up a 2nd and 13 situation. Another well executed pass to Dell was good for a 1st down. From the 41-yard line, Hawk RB Dan Sirovy blew through the middle of the Highlander defense and into the end zone for a touchdown. The P. A. T was "good".

Highlanders 0 Hawks 7

With less than a minute left in the 1st quarter, Josh Renel returned the kickoff to the 34-yard line. SB Conner lost 2-yards on 1st down and Wilson ran the QB keeper for a 2-yard gain to bring up a 3rd and 10 to the Highlander offense. A pass interference call against the Hawks gave the offense a 1st down and the ball at the 49-yard line. Jake Wilson ran the ball hard and using the spin move picked-up 19-yards off the QB option. With the ball on the 31-yard line, the offense sputtered as they were called for off-sides and could not advance the ball into the red zone. Facing 4th and 13, Wilson was sacked and the ball was turned over on downs. The Hawks 4th possession resulted in a punt after a pass interference call on the Highlanders that moved the ball past mid-field. An incomplete pass to Dell and a hitch pass that CB Smith tackled the receiver for a 3-yard loss forced the Hawks to punt. Renel's punt return picked up 32-yards and moved the ball to the 41-yard line.

The next Highlander possession went quicker than Steve Walbrun's pot of chili at the earlier tailgate. On 1st down Wilson's pass to Cody Wilson was intercepted. The Hawks had the ball at the 30-yard line. It didn't take long for the Hawks to take advantage of the great field position. QB Craig Sacha threw a pass to Dell who was covered like a blanket by DB Smith. Dell showed why he's touted as the #1 receiver in the state and simply out-jumped Smith for the ball. Touchdown Hawks. The P.A.T. was "good".

Highlanders 0 Hawks 14

With the ball now spotted at the 20-yard line the Highlander offense was looking for a solid drive to get on track. After a 1-yard gain on 1st down, Wilson's pass was intercepted by the Hawk defense. The Hawk DB ran the ball down to the 12-yard line. With 6:18 left in the 1st half, the Hawks picked-up 9-yards on 1st down. On 2nd down the Hawks picked up 2-yards to make it 1st and goal from the 2-yard line. On the next play the Hawks running play was stopped for no gain. On 2nd down, senior DE Wayne Sanders smoked the Hawk RB and knocked the ball loose that "nose-for- the-ball" LB McNamara pounced on it. Highlander's ball. Renel found no room on 1st down and lost 1-yard. On 2nd down, QB Wilson found senior receiver Mike Gansser flying down the left sideline. Wilson's pass hit Gansser in stride and he caught the ball and was off. Gansser turned on the after burners and out-ran the pursuing Hawk defenders for a record setting 98-yard touchdown pass. The P.A. T kick was blocked by the big DL Ben Bojjicic.

Highlanders 6 Hawks 14

After Alex McClelland's tackle on the kick return, the Hawks had the ball at the 35-yard line. An incomplete pass on 1st down followed by a tackle by Joe Bernard led to a 3rd and 10 situation. Hawk QB Sacha's pass was almost intercepted and the Hawks were forced to punt. Josh Renel's punt return to the 44-yard line was helped by Cory Gowman's block. The offense showed signs of returning to form when FB Hamilton found daylight and ran 56-yards into the end zone for a BIG Highlander touchdown. The 2-point conversion failed as the ball was fumbled.

Highlanders 12 Hawks 14

The pooch kick resulted in the Hawks starting this next possession from the 37-yard line. A swing pass was covered by DB Hammett and LB McNamara very well for no gain. I'm not sure where the breakdown was but the next four pass plays went to receiver Mark Dell that covered 43-yards and resulted in another touchdown reception. The P. A. T was "good".

Highlanders 12 Hawks 21

With time running out in the 1st half, the Highlander offense started with good field position after Mike Monahan's kick return to the 40-yard line. FB Hamilton picked up 10-yards to move the rock to mid-field

before a QB sack lost 8-yards. The half came to an end before the offense could advance the ball into the red-zone.

The 2nd half started with a touchback hence no Highlander kick return. Hamilton, Renel and Wilson came up short of a 1st down and Patten hit a 39-yard punt. The Highlander defense came out swinging in the 2nd half. Wayne Sanders sacked the QB for a loss of 5-yards. On 3rd and 13, DB Hammett picked-off Sacha's pass and returned it to the 49-yard line.

A fumble on 1st down turned the ball back over to the Hawk's offense. There's no rest for the weary or for the Highlander defensive unit.

The defense came to play and would keep the Highlanders in the game. Key stops by Gowman, Petrusha and Bernard led to Mark Hammett's fumble recovery. LB and Captain Matt Petrusha was responsible for stripping the ball from the Hawk RB. Outstanding job Petrusha! From the 37-yard line Wilson passed to C. Wilson on 1st and 3rd down to make it 1st and 10 now from the 45-yard line. After a QB Keeper, A counter to Conner for a 2-yard gain and an incomplete pass to Renel, this drive was over.

Patten's punt was a dandy and the punt team was able to down the ball inside the 1-yard line. Right out of the shoot, the defense made things happen. On 1st down, the Hawks ran the ball and were on their way to a nice gain when the Hawk running back lost the handle and fumbled the ball. He's not called "nose-for-the-ball" for no reason. LB McNamara recovered his 2nd fumble of the night. Highlander's ball at the 11-yard line. After a QB keeper went for no gain, Wilson found SB Braden Conner in the end zone for a Highlander touchdown. The very reliable P.A.T unit was struggling. Casey's kick hit the left upright and was "no good".

Highlanders 18 Hawks 21

Verville's squib-kick was returned to the 32-yard line. A pass to RB Sirovy moved the ball to the 50-yard line. Another pass to Dell was good for another 18-yards. From the 37-yard line the hawks picked-up 6 – yards and on 2nd down DL Mike Polk stuffed another run attempt. Incomplete passes on both 3rd and 4th down was due primarily to the Highlander blitz that was on QB Sacha's heels. The ball was turned over on downs. Great job defense! The Offense had the ball at the 31-yard line as the 4th quarter started. Cory Hamilton ran the ball hard on 1st and 2nd down and picked-up 5-yards. A pass to Josh Renel was good for a 1st down. On the ensuing play, a screen pass to Hamilton was intercepted by Hawk DL #70, Mike Ciceri. Once again the defense would have to step-up to give this team a chance to come from behind. So step-up they did. After a 7-yard pass completion to DL Pete Schmidt stuffed the RB for a 1-yard gain. A 4-yard gain picked-up a 1st down and the ball spotted at the 26-yard line with 8:40 left in the game. After a big 10-yard gain that moved the ball to the 15-yard line, the defense dug in. Facing 3rd down and 2, both 3rd and 4th down plays were stopped by the DL with great LB support. With 6:43 left in the game, the Highlander offense took-over from the 6-yard line. A short gain by Hamilton followed by a 7-yard gain by SB Renel brought up a 3rd and 3. A hitch pass to Conner was good for 2.5-yards. On 4th and less than 1-yard FB McClelland was short of the 1st down. With 4:43 left in the contest, Facing 4th and 10, Sacha's pass to none other than senior all-state receiver Mark dell was good for a Hawk touchdown. The P.A. T was "good". Highlanders 18 Hawks 28

With 4:01 left and trailing by 10 points, the Highlander offense started at the 40-yard line after Adam Smith's kick return. The 1st down QB keeper gained 1-yard. On 2nd and 9, Wilson found senior receiver Gansser for another BIG touchdown pass. This time it was a 47-yard strike. Casey's P. A. T was successful this time.

Highlanders 25 Hawks 28

Anyone who follows the Highlanders would not count them out. This team seems to thrive on thrilling comebacks.... The Hawks returned the ball to the 27-yard line. Wayne Sanders came-up big on 1st down

and stopped the RB for no gain. An incomplete pass led to a 3rd and 10 situation. This time it was McNamara who made the sack on the QB and forced the Hawks to punt with 2:32 left on the clock. Josh Renel saw a golden opportunity for a big punt return and did not disappoint his teammates. Renel cut and spun his way down to the 27-yard line. Great effort Josh! On 1st down Hamilton found no room and was stopped for no gain. With the clock moving Wilson hit Conner for a nice 10-yard gain and a first down. With the ball at the 15-yard line and less than a minute left, Wilson went back to pass and threw a pass to a Dell-covered Cody Wilson in the corner of the end zone. Dell went up for the ball and came down with it and the game was over.

Final score: Highlanders 25 Hawks 28

As disappointing as this loss was for the players, they played hard and NEVER gave up. Aside from a few mistakes, this game was theirs. I know I speak for many on how proud we are of these players. This season is far from over. The team knows what they have to do to qualify for the playoffs. Good luck vs. the Falcons. We know you can and will do it!

I'd like to mention the people behind the scenes that work hard to make the season a success. Steve Walbrun--video / webmaster; Joe Vaiciunas-- pictures; [Jeff Petrusha](#) & [Randy Ruehle](#)--statisticians; [Clynn Heinrich](#)--video; Tim McNamara, Joe Colluci, Terry Conner; spotters for the summary writer.

Most of all, I'd like to thank the Mom's, who keep our Highlanders fed, their uniforms clean, and their spirits up.

*Dan R.*