

Bengals Rally to Bury Hillcrest

By Bruce Smith
MatchupUT.com

The 5A playoffs were fiercely on the Brighton Bengals Friday night.

One week after their remarkable victory over Alta, the Bengals blew past rival Hillcrest to remain in contention for a possible Region 4 title, and 5A playoffs.

Running back **Sosaia TaKai** ran for 162 yards, and caught a long touchdown pass, as the Bengals rallied for a 49-10 victory.

The game didn't start well for the Bengals.

Hillcrest jumped out in front quickly as QB Tanner Kemp found Matt Pecht wide open down the middle, and hit him with a perfect pass that gave the Huskies a 7-0 lead.

After a Brighton turnover, Hillcrest took advantage again and that led to Jeff Brown's 23-yard field goal.

"We came out flat in the first quarter," said Brighton coach **Ryan Bullett**, noting it had been 12 days since the team's last game.



Loi Masina (left) tries to get away from a Hillcrest defender while teammate Zane Smith follows.

"They were up 10-0 before we knew what had hit us."

It didn't take long for them to rally, though, and the Bengals did it with defense.

Led by lineman **Ricky Heimuli**, the Bengals limited Hillcrest to 208 total yards, and just five first downs. Most importantly, there were no more points after that.

Brighton QB **Derrick Newell** led the Bengals on several long drives. TaKai scored on a 3-yard run to narrow the gap late in the first quarter, and they added three more touchdowns to

take a commanding lead by halftime.

"They popped some open just before halftime and that took the wind out of our sails," said Hillcrest coach Kirk Merhish. "We had a good ball game going."

Brighton finished the night with 287 yards rushing, and averaged almost eight yards per carry. Newell had a decent night, completing 6 of 14 passes, and averaged over 25 yards per completion. His

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HILLCREST FOOTBALL: Brighton 49, Huskies 10



Rex Alo, Hayden Ricci, XXXXX and Vaea Masina look over teammate Brayden El Bakri, who had just made a tackle late in the game of the Bengals' win over Hillcrest.

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biggest play was the 80-yard pass to TaKai, who outran everyone to the end zone.

"Sosaia doesn't necessarily have great speed," said Bullett. "But he knows how to get open and make plays."

Brighton's speed on defense was also noticeable. Hillcrest ran the ball just 15 times for only 16 yards. With no running game, the Bengals were also able to pressure Hillcrest QB Tanner Kemp, who ended up completing just 6 of 23 passes.

Brighton dominated throughout the second half, and just padded its lead.

Leading 28-10 at

SCORING SUMMARY

Brighton	7	21	14	7	- 49
Hillcrest	10	0	0	0	- 10

H – Matt Pecht 80 pass from Tanner Kemp (Jeff Brown kick)

H – FG Brown 23

B – Sosaia TaKai 3 run (Aaron Stoddard kick)

B – Derrick Newell 1 run (Stoddard kick)

B – Newell 3 run (Stoddard kick)

B – TaKai 80 pass from Newell (Stoddard kick)

B – Moses Lotulelei 3 run (Stoddard kick)

B – Chris Finau 50 run (Stoddard kick)

B – Loi Masina 3 run (Stoddard kick)

intermission, **Moses Lotulelei** added a 3-yard run early in the third quarter, and then **Chris Finau** scored on a remarkable 50-yard scamper

on his only carry of the game.

Loi Masina had a short run in the fourth quarter. The touchdown gave Brighton a 39-point lead, which allowed the clock to run continuously, thanks to the UHSAA's 35-point rule, which was in effect all season.

Brighton finished with 446 yards total offense, including 287 on the ground.

Defensively, **Brett Grant** had one of his best games of the season, recording a pair of pass interceptions. **Ezra Latu** also had a pass interception as Brighton won the turnover battle against their neighborhood rival.