

Brighton Rallies to Bury Huskies

By Bruce Smith
MatchupUT.com

The 5A playoffs were fiercely on the Hillcrest Huskies' minds Friday night. Knowing the road to the playoffs had to go through their rival, Brighton, they put up a good fight before falling in a Region 4 game.

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

"We were fired up," said Hillcrest coach **Kirk Merhish**. "The kids wanted to put on their best show. This was our last hurrah if we wanted to make the playoffs."

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.

That 80-yard play was Hillcrest's longest of the season.

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



Hillcrest's Andy Harris sticks Brighton running back Sosaia TaKai, making the jarring tackle early in this pivotal Region 4 game.

"They were up 10-0 before we knew what had hit us," said Brighton coach Ryan Bullett.

It didn't take long after that, and the Bengals did it with defense.

Brighton had the state's stingiest defense at the time, 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 Merhish. "We had a good ball game going."

Brighton finished the night with 287 yards rushing, and averaged almost eight

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HILLCREST FOOTBALL: Brighton 49, Huskies 10

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yards per carry. Newell had a decent night, completing 6 of 14 passes, and averaged over 25 yards per completion. His 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, Kemp had to throw, but he was frequently pressured and completed just 6 of 23 passes for 192 yards.

Pecht benefited the most from his throws, catching a 55-yarder in addition to the long touchdown throw. Pecht also had a 50-yard kickoff return to temporarily ignite the home crowd.

Defensively, **Liam Smith** led the way with 13 tackles. **Andy Harris** and **Bridger Dallimore** had interceptions.

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)

TOP: Aaron Colborn.

BOTTOM: Austin Schugk, Dylan Foote and Dylan Ford trot back to the sidelines.

