

Syracuse creating own playoff tradition

By Andrew Aragon
Deseret News

SYRACUSE — After reaching the Rice-Eccles turf in just their second year of existence last season, the last thing the Syracuse Titans wanted to be known as was a one-year wonder.

Beating arguably the most tradition-rich football school in the state will take care of that label.

Syracuse made a statement, smashing Skyline 31-7 in the first round of the 5A playoffs on Friday afternoon. The Titans advance to play the winner of today's Bingham-Jordan game in the quarterfinals.

"Skyline has tradition," said Syracuse quarterback Tanner Russell, who could not be contained by the Eagles. "Everybody else in Salt Lake has tradition. We want to set up ours here. We're not a one-year fluke or anything. We want to consistently go to the playoffs every year."

There's a big difference between getting to the playoffs and winning there, and Syracuse, in just its third year, is quickly learning how to be successful in the postseason. The Titans, who have been built by defense the last two seasons, used another stifling effort against Skyline.

The Eagles actually scored first when Andy Rounds caught a perfect pass from QB Chase Dunford and used his speed to reach the end zone. It was, however, the only score for Skyline.

The Eagles were hurt by five turnovers, including four interceptions, and that allowed Syracuse to eventually get the lead and then pull away.



Austin Butler (No. 3) and Mitch Larsen congratulate Andy Rounds for scoring Skyline's only touchdown.

The Titans trailed by four at halftime because they couldn't get their offense going, but big plays from the defense gave them short fields and sparked them.

Skyline had to play most of the game without two-way starter **Algernon Brown**, who suffered a knee injury in the first quarter and did not return.

Continued on next page

SKYLINE FOOTBALL: Syracuse 31, Eagles 7

Continued from previous page

Syracuse took its first lead of the game in the third quarter. Linebacker Cole Conner recovered a Skyline fumble on the Eagles' 21-yard line. Six plays later, Russell scored on a 3-yard run to give the Titans a 10-7 advantage.

"We just take pride in our defense," said Titans defensive back Alex Swanson. "We're a defensive school. Our offense came through today and we came away with a win. That's all that matters."

Conner picked off a Skyline pass to end its final possession. Mitch Tulane had two interceptions, and Swanson added a pick in the fourth quarter.

The Titans outscored the Eagles 21-0 in the fourth, thanks mainly to four Skyline turnovers. Russell scored on a 7-yard run and threw a 35-yard touchdown pass to tight end Rick Reardon. Russell's final score was an 84-yard touchdown run on a third-and-17 play when the Titans were trying to run the clock out.

Russell rushed for 115 yards and completed 10 of 15 passes for 126 yards.

"He took care of the football today," Syracuse



ABOVE: Vincent Fonua (No. 58) puts his arm around Chase Dunford as Skyline ends its season. BELOW: Junior Brody Chipman.

coach Russ Jones said of Russell. "He did a great job of executing, throwing the ball. He's a good kid, smart, knowledgeable."

It was only the third time in the last 18 years that Skyline didn't advance past the first round of the playoffs. Syracuse believes the win shows its program is here to stay.

"I don't care what you say — when you talk about football in Utah, it's about Skyline High School," Jones said. "We take our hats off to them. They came and battled us, but our kids matched their energy and came out ready to play."



SCORING SUMMARY

Skyline	7	0	0	0	-	7
Syracuse	0	3	7	21	-	31

Sky – Andy Rounds 24 pass from Chase Dunford (Izic Yapius kick)

Syr – FG Josh Kealamakia 24

Syr – Tanner Russell 3 run (Kealamakia kick)

Syr – Russell 7 run (Kealamakia kick)

Syr – Rick Reardon 35 pass from Russell (Kealamakia kick)

Syr – Russell 84 run (Kealamakia kick)