



CHARLES PULLIAM

The Page football team captured its first state championship after a fifth consecutive trip to the Class 5A title game. Check out the full photo gallery online.

CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL

Page completes quest for first state title, community win'

BY CHARLES PULLIAM
SPORTS EDITOR

Published Dec. 6, 2025

CHATTANOOGA – After so many what ifs stacked up over four consecutive finals ending in disappointment, Cayden Aukerman's 45-yard touchdown from Cameron Kruse inside the final minute of the Class 5A BlueCross Bowl championship last Friday exposed every emotion.

It rendered relief. It provided pure euphoria. There was even anger.

"If you saw my celebration, I just started screaming," Aukerman said of the go-ahead touchdown with 58 seconds to play. "I think that was like all the anger coming out of me for the past three years of losing."

The Rudderville boys accomplished the final goal – the program's first state championship in its 50th year and fifth straight attempt. It resulted in a perfect 14-0 season as Page defeated Sevier County 21-14 Friday night at Finley Stadium in a title game rematch.

The fifth time still turned out to be the charm, and it certainly made it more sweeter than ever.

"I wish we could have got the last four, but to cap off a high school career like this – it's every high schooler's dream," four-year senior starter Jake Rathbone said. "This is really a community win. We're bringing this back to Rudderville."

The Stops

If there's one word that might best describe this year's group of Patriots, many fall on resilient. For the third time this postseason, Page trailed at halftime and things worsened to start the third quarter.

Sevier County had dominated time of possession, gobbling

up nearly 17 minutes of clock in the first half to manage a 7-0 lead. Furthermore, the defending champs pushed the Patriots backward on the opening drive of the second half with Joseph Galazin blocking a punt to set the defending champs up all the way at the Page 26.

Nathan Patterson rushed for six yards on first down as the Smoky Bears snatched the momentum, poised for another score. Patterson ran into eventual state MVP Cohen Grissom on second down, and again was denied by Sean Cunningham to force 4th-and-1 as the stingy Page defense stepped up to another challenge.

Grissom closed with 14 tackles and two sacks. Cunningham made 10 stops.

"They did a great job of responding," Page coach Charles

Rathbone said. "You don't lay down and suck your thumb and just give up. You move on to the next play."

Looking for the decisive play – like last year's field goal attempt blocked and returned for a touchdown before the break – Sevier County went for it. Page seniors Emmanuel "Calvin" Johnson, Jordan Curll, Jake Rathbone and banged up junior Liam Perry stood tall up front to allow Knight Wilson to slip around the edge and bring down Patterson for a defining fourth down stop.

Wilson, an Air Force signee, then switched hats on the other end of the field to cap a 13-play, 83-yard drive that nearly doubled Page's offensive output from the first half. The senior dove for the first down on 4th-and-2 at the 5-yard line getting the nose of the ball to the marker. James Pierre followed and used a big hole set by



CHARLES PULLIAM

Page coach Charles Rathbone embraces his son Jake, a senior, after the page football team clinched its first state championship.

Sloan Bass, Rathbone and Curll to his right and Caleb Coffman and Perry to his left to supply a 3-yard touchdown and tie the game at 7-7

with 3:37 to play in the third.

The Smoky Bears didn't flinch and mounted an 11-play drive to reach the Page 25 before the Patriots defense came up big again. Grissom and Cunningham stuffed Patterson for a 2-yard loss to force 3rd-and-5 before big fellas Curll and Bass sent quarterback Cooper Newman backward. Newman's pass on fourth down also fell incomplete as Page's defense stonewalled the Smoky Bears once more early in the final frame. They stopped all four fourth down tries on the night.

"We all have worked so hard. We have put in the hours. We have held each other accountable," the senior nose guard Johnson said. "That all builds up to that point where you build a brotherhood and no matter the odds – we won't quit; no matter the pressure."

The Playmakers

After just four pass attempts in the first half on limited opportunities, Kruse was able to find some rhythm under center. He finished



CHARLES PULLIAM

The Page football team endured four consecutive championship losses before clinching the programs' first state title. The Patriots have gone 66-8 in five seasons with four runners-up and a state championship.

>>>TITLE, Continued on Page C2



CHARLES PULLIAM

Page quarterback Cameron Kruse attempts a pass in the fourth quarter. The junior recorded two touchdowns in the final frame of the Class 5A state championship.



CHARLES PULLIAM

Page's Cohen Grissom, No. 20, and Jordan Curll, 72, pressure Sevier County quarterback Cooper Newman. Grissom was named the Class 5A championship MVP.

Title

Continued from Page C1

15-for-20 for 135 yards and guided Page down field on another scoring drive – this one capped by Wilson on a 15-yard strike to the right side of the field off a little bubble.

Aukerman stuffed Sevier County workhorse Bryson Headrick into two other defenders for Wilson to slip by for the score at the pylon.

"I can't say enough about the dudes on this team. They all stepped up today," the junior QB said. "We were just trying to get the ball in our playmaker's hands and Knight made one hell of a play and Cayden made a heluva block."

Wilson caught three passes for 18 yards and the TD. He added 12 tackles.

"Knight is everything you want in a kid and football player – he loves the game

Page 21, Sevier County 14 CLASS 5A CHAMPIONSHIP

PHS 0 0 7 14 - 21

SC 7 0 0 7 - 14

Scoring Summary

1Q 4:42 SC – Cooper Newman 5 run (Aiden Ottolini kick);

3Q 3:45 P – James Pierre 3 run (Jonathan Baba kick);

4Q 6:12 P – Knight Wilson 15 pass from Cameron Kruse (Baba kick);

4Q 2:16 SC – Bryson Headrick 12 run (Ottolini kick);

4Q 0:58 P – Cayden Aukerman 45 pass from Kruse (Baba kick).

and is an absolute baller," coach Rathbone said of the senior leader.

Page's 14-7 lead with 6:05 to play didn't last long with Sevier County serving up a major counter punch on their next possession behind Newman's four completions and 41 yards. Headrick scooted in from 12 yards out and after the PAT, the game was knotted at 14-14 with 2:16 remaining.

Twice in the state finals before, Page trailed late and needed a score for a tie only to run out of time. The Rud-

derville boys had enough clock and could go for the win now.

After three rushing plays by Pierre and Isaac Otey to cross midfield, it was Aukerman's moment after a timeout with 1:04 to play.

"It's a receiver's dream to be on the biggest stage and to have the ball be drawn up for you," he said.

Aukerman streaked up field on the snap to get behind the defense. He hauled in the long ball and strutted into the endzone for the go-ahead touchdown.

"There was great blocking by the line, a perfect ball by Cam and when no one is guarding you, it's pretty easy to score," Aukerman said.

"I was just trying not to miss," Kruse added. "What a play call. That boy took care of the rest."

Going out with the W

Page has lost just eight games in five years decorated with record-breaking seasons. However, half of those losses have come in the state finals. The Rudderville boys were starved by their own success without the storybook ending and gold ball at the finish line.

Foundation builders like Ronan O'Connell, Brenden Anes and Eric Hazzard joined the boys in warmups, in the locker room and on the sidelines Friday. All three are enjoying successful college careers at some of the best program's in the nation.

"They were still here supporting us," coach Rathbone



CHARLES RATHBONE

team. O'Connell and Hazzard showed Rathbone the ropes early on and the senior will now head to Central Arkansas matching Hazzard's record of 60 high school starts.

"They laid the foundation," he said. "If it weren't for them, we wouldn't be here today. It's as much their win as it is ours."

The Rathbones shared an embrace after the final horn Friday. Father and son. Coach and player.

His hug epitomized the long journey to the top by the Patriots.

"That's probably the most special thing that ever happened to me in my life," the elder Rathbone said at the conclusion of his 23rd season on the Page sidelines. "Man, I tell you, it's the best feeling in the world."

The younger Rathbone echoed the same statement.

"That's the only time I've cried tears of happiness, so you know it's real," he said. "It's the best feeling in the world."

said. "It's a great feeling as a coach when you no longer have to be a disciplinarian ... the seniors handle that."

"Those guys helped build that and they are as much a part of this as anybody else."

Rathbone remembers the disappointment suffered in the first trip to the state finals – a 42-34 defeat against Powell. O'Connell and Hazzard were key players on that team. His son, Jake, was in the stands as an eighth grader itching to play for dad's



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Page stops Centennial to earn 5th consecutive championship bid

BY CHARLES PULLIAM
SPORTS EDITOR

FRANKLIN – They call it the “Predator Package.”

The predator just looks more like a terminator in Cohen Grissom, a 6-foot-2, 220-pound edge rusher. The senior lined

Playoff Football behind some 1,200 pounds of offensive

line at Page High School and turned one play into a decisive touchdown, while setting up another in the second half as the Patriots snuffed out a sturdy challenge from Region 5-5A rival Centennial on a chilly Friday night in Rudderville for a 43-21 victory and fifth consecutive state championship berth.

“I’ve been telling them all year, gimme a carry and we’ll make it happen,” Grissom said with a smile.

With 2:43 to play in the third quarter, the Patriots gave the Forrest transfer his shot and the offensive line up front led by Jake Rathbone, Jordan Curll, Sloan Bass and Preston Ashmore tore open a hole big enough for a pickup.

“All I know, is as soon as I got the ball, I looked left and there was this giant hole, so I was gone,” Grissom said of his 44-yard touchdown run.

The score provided an immediate answer to a Cougars’ threat after the post-season road warriors on the other end of the field had just inched within 15-14 on a wild 4-yard touchdown strike from former Patriot QB Mitchell Grandjean to Gavin Johnson after a 4th-and-6 conversion prior.

“It started up front,” four-year starter Jake Rathbone said of how the Rudderville boys responded. “The physi-



Cohen Grissom and Cayden Aukerman celebrate a touchdown.

cality up front.”

That led to Grissom’s touchdown run, one that left fellow defender Sean Cunningham wide eyed with his teammates on the sideline.

“I mean, that’s a grown man running right there, so watch out,” said Cunningham, who paced the defense with nine solo tackles.

Leading 22-14 to start the fourth, Page scored twice more quickly to take the momentum. Drew Rempel slipped defenders in a race to the pylon for a 73-yard touchdown off a quick pass from Cameron Kruse with 10:43 to play and after a defensive stop, Grissom’s second and only other carry covering 29 yards set up Kruse to find senior Cayden Aukerman for a 8-yard strike that extended the lead to 36-14 with 6:37 remaining.

Kruse closed 14 of 15 for 184 yards with three TDs. Like Grissom, he credited the bulky and experienced guys up front.

“I can’t speak enough

about those five or six dudes,” the junior QB said. “In high school football, that’s what wins you games at the end of the day – the play in the trenches.”

Rathbone has been a part of Page’s last 52 wins and will match a rare record when he starts his 60th high school football game next week in the state finals. He said he and the big fellas up front depend on trusting one another.

“I really feel like I’ve known these guys my whole life,” Rathbone said. “We all have a super strong bond and that’s what you need. We trust each other and that correlates on and off the field so together we can get it done.”

However, just like how Cougars have done over the second half of the season, they refused to quit and Grandjean’s gritty group responded with one final score on a 9-yard touchdown reception by Azavier Tefteller. Grandjean complet-

ed 17 of 31 passes for two touchdowns and 169 yards with one interception on the night.

“I love how our guys battled,” he said. “Instead of just giving up, we came down and we scored a touchdown. That’s what this has all been about, fighting for each other.”

After an onside kick attempt turned into a big return for the home team, James Pierre capped his big night on the ground with a 21-yard touchdown run to close the scoring. He finished with 194 yards on 17 carries with the bulk of the work after Isaac Otey exited early.

Page rolled up 444 yards including 260 on the ground, while limiting Centennial to 84 yards rushing and 264 overall. The 21 points was the lowest since a 26-14 loss at Nolensville on Oct. 17 for the Cougars.

Grandjean, who was intercepted by Colin Mulick on his opening drive, re-



James Pierre rushed for 199 yards and a touchdown against Centennial.

Published Nov. 29, 2025

Page 43, Centennial 21

CLASS 5A SEMIFINAL

CHS 7 0 7 7 - 21

PHS 0 12 10 21 - 43

Scoring Summary

1Q 3:02 CHS - Malachi Steele 14 run (Wells Stanley kick);

2Q 11:55 PHS - Knight Wilson 10 pass from Cameron Kruse (Jonathan Baba kick);

2Q 6:26 PHS - Safety;

2Q 0:30 PHS - Baba 27 FG;

3Q 8:33 PHS - Baba 27 FG;

3Q 4:27 CHS - Gavin Johnson 4 pass from Mitchell Grandjean (Stanley kick);

3Q 2:43 PHS - Cohen Grissom 44 run (Baba Kick);

4Q 10:48 PHS - Drew Rempel 73 pass from Kruse (Baba kick);

4Q 6:37 PHS - Cayden Aukerman 8 pass from Kruse (Baba kick);

4Q 2:41 CHS - Azavier Tefteller 9 pass from Grandjean (Stanley kick);

4Q 2:24 PHS - James Pierre 21 run (Baba kick).

grouped and guided the visitors to the first touchdown when Malachi Steele scored on a reverse from 14 yards out with about three minutes to play in the first.

Kruse hit Knight Wilson for the answer early in the second after Pierre slipped between tackles to pace the scoring drive. Wilson forced an intentional grounding call midway through the second after Jonathan Baba pinned the Patriots on the 1-yard line thanks to the special teams hustle from Flynn Steele and Colt Brown prior.

Baba added a couple short field goals for a 12-7 halftime lead and 15-7 advantage to start the second half.

Page will face Sevier County in a championship rematch next Friday at Finley Stadium in Chattanooga. The Smoky Bears, which defeated Page 27-20 in the finals last year, scooted past Knoxville Halls 49-13 in the other semifinal.

It will be Page’s fifth straight try at the program’s first state title.

“We all just want to be out there and play for a state championship again,” Cun-

ningham said. “I know I can’t wait ... I love my guys and I just can’t wait to go to battle with them one more time.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PAGE PATRIOTS ON A STANDOUT SEASON AND THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORY!



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Page rallies to defeat Beech, stay unbeaten

BY CHARLIE BATEMAN
SPORTS WRITER

FRANKLIN – After allowing the first two touchdowns Friday in the Class 5A state quarterfinals, the Page High School football team battled back to defeat visiting Beech 31-21 to earn a fifth consecutive Thanksgiving week filled with football.

Junior quarterback Cameron Kruse provided back-to-back touchdowns in the fourth to take the lead and seal the win. He connected with senior Air Force signee Knight Wilson for an 86-yard

Published Nov. 23, 2025

strike to take a 24-21 lead with nine minutes to play. Wilson closed with three catches for 137 yards and the score.

Kruse, who was 9-for-13 for 190 yards, rushed for a 3-yard touchdown with 3:38 to play to extend the lead to two scores.

“I mean, it’s all about the guys around me,” Kruse said. “They make my job so easy – the O-line and wide receivers out there making plays. It is really all there.”

Page improved to 12-0 overall with their lone loss the last two seasons coming

in last year’s state championship game. The Patriots can advance to the final for a fifth consecutive time this week against a familiar face: Region 5-5A rival Centennial.

The Cougars knocked out Henry County 45-24 in their quarterfinal to reach the semis for the second time in program history.

“We just have to focus on us,” Kruse said of the all-WillCo matchup. “We need to clean up some mistakes and be ready to see a team that we have already seen this year.”

Beech, which had a 10-game winning streak snapped, jumped out to a

14-0 lead in the first quarter behind back-to-back rushing touchdowns from quarterback Kaden Powell.

Page’s only score of the first half was set up by a long run from Isaac Otey, who finished with 97 yards on the ground on nine carries.

Otey was hit on the run and the ball popped up into Cayden Aukerman’s hands to finish off the touchdown run just three minutes before the half.

Aukerman had high praise for the Page running back room, which also received 83 yards on a dozen carries from James Pierre.

“We call them Sonic and Knuckles,” the senior wide-out said. “We’re very blessed to have such a talented backfield in Isaac and James. We haven’t even used some of these other running backs, which is dangerous.”

Aukerman said the Patriots showed plenty of resilience in the quarterfinal win.

“Everyone on offense, defense and special teams played a great role,” he said. “Down a score at half. Got the ball, came back – man, that was big time for our boys.”

“It really says a lot about our team.”

It didn’t take long for Page to score in the third quarter with Pierre grinding for a 12-yard touchdown to open the half. Jonathan Baba’s PAT tied the game at 14-14.

Both defenses made plays through the rest of the frame before Baba provided a 47-yard field goal inside the final minute of the third to give the Rudderville boys their first lead at 17-14.

Beech responded to kick off the fourth quarter and regain the lead after Powell



CAMDEN HALL

Page’s Knight Wilson (0) runs in for a touchdown against Beech during the fourth quarter of the Class 5A quarterfinal game at Page High School in Franklin, Tenn., Friday, Nov. 21, 2025.

Page 31, Beech 21 CLASS 5A QUARTERFINAL

BHS 14 0 0 7 - 21

PHS 0 7 10 14 - 31

Scoring Summary

- 1Q 4:52 BHS – Kaden Powell 7 run (Caden Campbell kick);
- 1Q 0:55 BHS – Powell 10 run (Campbell kick);
- 2Q 3:29 PHS – Cayden Aukerman 14 pass from Isaac Otey (Jonathan Baba kick);
- 3Q 11:16 PHS – James Pierre 12 run (Baba kick);
- 3Q 0:43 PHS – Baba 47 FG;
- 4Q 10:05 BHS – Brock Miller 47 pass from Powell (Campbell kick);
- 4Q 9:00 PHS – Knight Wilson 86 pass from Cameron Kruse (Baba kick);
- 4Q 3:38 PHS – Kruse 5 run (Baba kick).

fired a 47-yard touchdown to Brock Miller.

That set the stage for Kruse and the offense for a couple crucial scores in the fourth.

Aukerman praised his QB for taking the reins this season and guiding the Page offense.

“He’s a dog, and we knew it from the first day that he came to practice,” Aukerman said. “From that day on, we knew that this is a guy that is really going to impact the culture and the style of our team. I mean, he can do it all.”

Kruse hit Wilson for the explosive go-ahead score and added his rushing TD late.

The Patriots defense forced a turnover on Beech’s last possession when senior Cohen Grissom tipped a pass and deflected it to himself at the 33-yard line. He closed with five tackles to lead Page.

Friday’s post-Thanksgiving WillCo semifinal will be played at 7 p.m. back at Page. The Patriots defeated Centennial 52-17 back in September. The Cougars have won six of seven since.

Congratulations to the Page High School Football Team on being #1!



Williamson County Mayor Rogers Anderson



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Page overcomes weather delays to crush Commandos

HERALD SPORTS

FRANKLIN – After starting nearly two hours later than planned due to lightning delays, the Page High School football team opened the Class 5A playoffs in **Class 5A First Round** dominating fashion on Friday in Rudderville. The Patriots forced seven Hendersonville turnovers and crushed the visiting Commandos 62-0 in their postseason opener.

Cohen Grissom, Eli Bell and Quincy Finley all scored defensive touchdowns for Page, which forced a running clock less than a minute into the second half. Colin Mulick swiped an interception on the first play from scrimmage in the third quarter and less than a minute later, quarterback Cameron Kruse connected with Cayden Aukerman for a 16-yard strike – the first of two third-quarter touchdown receptions for the senior.

Aukerman's first scoring reception made it 35-0 with 11:03 left in the third. Four minutes later, he added a 38-



Page's Quincy Finley (15) celebrates after he scored a touchdown in the final seconds of the teams game against Hendersonville at Page High School on Friday, Nov. 7, 2025.

Published Nov. 8, 2025

yard touchdown grab from Kruse.

The junior QB completed 10 of 13 passes for 179 yards and four touchdowns to go with a rushing score. Drew Rempel added another touchdown throw when he hit Tyson Cobb for a 17-yard-

er to kick off the fourth.

Bell's 67-yard fumble return and Finley's 30-yard pick-6 closed the scoring as the backups continued to shine late into Friday night.

Both Aukerman and Knight Wilson caught five balls with a pair of TDs apiece. Aukerman had 93 yards receiving and Wilson 86.

Grissom closed with a team-high six tackles with a sack and fumble recovery in the end zone late in the second quarter that gave Page a 21-0 lead. The Rudderville boys led 28-0 at the break after Kruse fired a 59-yarder to Wilson with 32 seconds left in the opening half.

Page, which improved to 10-0 overall, will host



Page's Cameron Kruse (9) attempts a pass during the second quarter against Hendersonville at Page High School.



Hendersonville's Hugo Minor (9) is tackled by Page's Cohen Grissom (20) during the second quarter at Page High School.

Kirkwood (9-2) in the second round of playoffs next week. Kirkwood, the Region 7-5A runners-up, dispatched Brighton 31-7 on Friday to advance.

Besides the delay, Page also overcame the absence of head coach Charles Rathbone. The veteran leader missed the game because of illness.

The 62 points scored matched the second-highest offensive output in Patriots history, matching a 62-0 regular season win over Glenclyff last season. The program record is 72 points set in a 72-21 win over Montgomery Central in 2003.



Page's Eli Bell (22) runs back for a touchdown after recovering a fumble during the fourth quarter.



Page heads back onto the field after halftime of their game against Hendersonville at Page High School in Franklin, Tenn., Friday, Nov. 7, 2025. (Camden Hall/Williamson Herald)



Page's Cameron Kruse (9) listens during the team meeting after their win over Hendersonville during the third quarter at Page High School in Franklin, Tenn., Friday, Nov. 7, 2025.

Congratulations to Sloan Bass and the Page Patriots for their state championship season!



Proud supporter of Page High School Football



Page clinches 3rd straight region title

BY CHARLES PULLIAM
SPORTS EDITOR

FRANKLIN – Knight Wilson has been making plays for four seasons at Page High School. Thursday’s regular season finale was no different as he and the Patriots captured a third consecutive region championship.

Wilson, an Air Force commit, snagged two interceptions and would have had a pair of pick-6s if not for a late flag that wiped away his second swipe returned for a touchdown in Page’s 28-6 win over Nolensville to clinch the Region 5-5A title.

The penalty kind of epitomized the contest for the Rudderville boys, who were flagged 16 times for more than 170 yards to bog down the home victory.

“We have to do a better job and eliminate those penalties,” said Wilson, who also blocked a PAT after the Knights only score in the third quarter. “I thought we had gotten better over the

Published Oct. 31, 2025

last couple weeks, but it came back out tonight and we can’t have that.

“We know where we want to be and right now, we’re nowhere near that – we definitely have a lot to improve on.”

The veteran has played in the last three state championship games with the Patriots as Page now begins the climb to try and earn an unprecedented fifth Class 5A trip to the finals still seeking the program’s first title.

“Tonight feels good to get the win, but that means nothing because we want to win the next five,” Wilson said. “It’s a whole new season now and we need everybody to get going.”

Junior quarterback Cameron Kruse completed 15 of his 22 passes for 157 yards with two touchdowns to lead the offense. Running backs James Pierre and Isaac Otey combined to 169 yards rushing with Otey bouncing to the outside for a 46-yard

Page 28, Nolensville 6

NHS 0 0 6 0 - 6

PHS 7 14 0 7 - 28

Scoring Summary

1Q 3:04 P – Drew Rempel 53 pass from Cameron Kruse (Jonathan Baba kick);
2Q 6:51 P – Cayden Aukerman 20 pass from Kruse (Baba kick);
2Q 5:20 P – Knight Wilson 46 interception return (Baba kick);
3Q 7:39 N – Josh Hicks 2 run (Kick blocked);
4Q 9:18 P – Isaac Otey 46 run (Baba kick).

touchdown run less than three minutes into the fourth to make it a three-touchdown contest.

That score came after a choppy, penalty-riddled 16-play drive for the home team ended with a missed field goal after churning through nearly nine minutes of clock.

Page’s defense stepped back into the game and provided a quick stop after the miss.

The Patriots limited Nolensville to 98 total yards with Emmanuel “Calvin” Johnson and Liam Perry provided a couple big stops to give the ball back to the home team. Johnson forced 3rd-and-long by crashing into the Knights’ Tristen Lithmexay behind the line of scrimmage and Perry batted down Nolensville’s pass on fourth down with 9:31 to play. Otey scored on the next play.

“When everybody locks in on their assignments and focuses, we can accomplish a lot on D,” said Johnson, who closed with three tackles for loss. “When we play how we know we can, we can be very successful.”

The game opened with a Flynn Steele interception by Page as the Knights took a shot down field on their first play from scrimmage. Steele skied and wrestled the ball away from intended receiver Oliver Bender. The Patriots then marched into the redzone before a lofted pass was swiped for a touchback in the end zone as Dalton Odell returned the favor for the Knights to keep the game scoreless midway through the first.

Wilson and Johnson came up with big stops and after a quick three-and-out by the Knights, Kruse reset and connected with Drew Rempel on a pair of passes with the second covering 53 yards for the opening touchdown. Cayden Aukerman locked up a defender to open up the sideline as Rempel dashed for the TD and early lead.

Midway through the second after Page continued to thwart anything by the



Knight Wilson and Cayden Aukerman

CHARLES PULLIAM

Knights, Kruse fired a 20-yard strike to Aukerman after two Pierre runs up the middle behind the Page offensive line. Jonathan Baba’s PAT made it 14-0 with 6:51 left in the half.

Johnson and Cohen Grissom combined to sack Nolensville’s Ryan Newell as the Knights continued to go backward. Facing 3rd-and-11 from the Nolensville’s own 22, Newell dropped back and was quickly pressured by Grissom again. His pass to midfield fell right into the hands of Wilson, who streaked 46 yards for the touchdown and 21-0 lead that stuck through the half.

“I knew I had a post coming and credit Cohen up front getting so much pressure,” Wilson said. “That made it pretty easy really – kind of a floater for me to go get.”

An early penalty and dropped pass to start the third quarter led to Nolensville’s best field position of the night with 9:45 to play in the third and the ball at the Page 45.

The Knights turned in a 7-play scoring drive capped by Josh Hicks’ back-to-back rushes, including a 2-yard

touchdown with 7:39 to play in the frame.

Wilson blocked the PAT.

Thirteen flags were issued the rest of the way to go with a clock issue that at one point stopped play for more than 10 minutes in the fourth as the game dragged on.

Nolensville threatened after Otey’s TD in the fourth before a massive Flynn sack forced 4th-and-13 from the Page 38. Wilson swiped the next pass and streaked 79 yards for the touchdown, which was called back for an illegal block.

With 4:34 to play, Nolensville’s Jake Sentell slammed into Kruse and popped the ball up for a teammate to grab as the Knights took over deep in Page territory at the 23.

Six plays later, Page’s defense was still standing tall. Steele and Grady Cason then provided the exclamation point with a fourth down stop and just over two minutes left.

Page finished the regular season 9-0, unbeaten for the second season in a row heading into the playoffs. Nolensville closed 7-3 overall and earned a home playoff as the

Hillsboro at Page, Week 10

PHOTOS BY JOHN CROSS



Sean Cunningham



Levi Cissell



Peyton Dickerson

CONGRATULATIONS TO PAGE HIGH ON THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP!

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Sports

Page improves to 7-0, scoring 4 unanswered TDs against Indy

HERALD SPORTS

FRANKLIN – The Page High School football team stayed unbeaten after posting a second consecutive friendly non-region Williamson County rivalry over Independence on Friday to improve to 7-0 overall.

The Patriots rallied from a 14-7 halftime deficit by scoring 27 unanswered points for a 34-14 victory in the meeting of Class 5A and Class 6A local programs.

After rushing touchdowns by Hunter Mullen and Eli Garlington boosted the visiting Eagles in front by halftime, James Pierre ignited the offense for the Rudderville boys by taking a short screen pass from quarterback Cameron Kruse, shedding tacklers and racing 51 yards for the touchdown with 5:08 to play in the third. The TD pulled the home team even and triggered four consecutive



Page running back James Pierre

touchdowns for the Patriots. Isaac Otey added a short touchdown run three minutes later for the go-ahead score and Kruse provided

two more touchdown passes to Drew Rempel and Cayden Aukerman in the fourth quarter to stretch the advantage.

Kruse closed with 223 yards passing and three touchdowns with one interception. He completed 15 of 20 passes to lead the offense

Page 34,
Independence 14
IHS 7 7 0 0 - 14
PHS 0 7 14 13 - 34

Scoring Summary

2:26 1Q IHS – Hunter Mullen 2 run (Kick good);
2Q 8:33 PHS – Sean Cunningham 6 blocked punt return (Kick good);
2Q 1:24 IHS – Eli Garlington 11 run (Kick good);
3Q 5:08 PHS – James Pierre 51 pass from Cameron Kruse (Kick good);
3Q 2:01 PHS – Isaac Otey 2 run (Kick good);
4Q 9:35 PHS – Drew Rempel 51 pass from Kruse (Kick good);
4Q 4:25 PHS – Cayden Aukerman 6 pass from Kruse (Kick failed).

Published Oct. 18, 2025

ing for 91 yards to Page's 61. Junior Colin Mulick provided nine tackles for the Rudderville boys and Sean Cunningham returned a blocked punt six yards for the opening Patriots score in the second quarter.

Garlington gained 52 yards on 19 carries with the rushing score to lead the Independence offense. Colby Barone tallied seven tackles for the Eagles' defense with Blaze Katina intercepting a pass and picking up a sack.

Page, which won 31-0 in last year's matchup with Independence, hosts Hillsboro on Oct. 24 and battles Nolensville on Oct. 30 to close out the regular season and Region 5-5A.

The Eagles host Brentwood and trek to Summit on the same dates in two Region 6-6A games.

Aukerman paced the receivers with five catches for 50 yards.

Both teams struggled on the ground with Independence gaining the edge rush-

Page runs past Centennial in region opener

BY CHARLIE BATEMAN
SPORTS WRITER

FRANKLIN – The Page High School football team remained unbeaten and opened Region 5-5A with a rivalry win in Week 6 by handling host Centennial, 52-17.

The Patriots improved to 5-0 overall paced by an explosive offense that has combined to score 100 points in the last two games.

"The secret to a good offense is getting the right play calls in, making sure our guys are getting out in space, and playing really well up front," Patriots senior Colt Brown said. "We have been playing together, knowing that every week is important, and not taking any team for granted. We come in every week with the same mindset – that we need to win."

Centennial fell to 1-4.

Page's offense rolled, having seven rushing touchdowns in the contest and 293 yards rushing on the ground. Page junior quarterback Cameron Kruse and senior running back James Pierre both had three rushing touchdowns in the contest. Kruse also finished with 176 yards through the air. Pierre

Page 52,
Centennial 17
PHS 7 24 14 7 - 52
CHS 10 0 0 7 - 17

Scoring Summary

1Q 9:00 PHS – Cameron Kruse 3 run (Jonathan Baba kick);
1Q 6:00 CHS – Moses Miller 2 run (Wells Stanley kick);
1Q 2:52 CHS – Stanley 31 FG;
2Q 8:49 PHS – Jonathan Baba 32 FG;
2Q 6:58 PHS – Kruse 6 run (Baba kick);
2Q 4:29 PHS – James Pierre 69 run (Baba kick);
2Q 0:19 PHS – Kruse 3 run (Baba kick);
3Q 8:41 PHS – Isaac Otey 59 run (Baba kick);
3Q 6:22 PHS – Pierre 3 run (Baba kick);
4Q 9:27 CHS – Malachi Steele 40 pass from Mitchell Grandjean (Stanley kick);
4Q 7:37 PHS – Pierre 22 run (Baba kick).

was the team-leader on the ground with 128 yards with sophomore Isaac Otey gaining another 124 yards and a TD rushing.

"We took this game seriously as a team," Pierre said. "I took this game personally because it is a district game. We have confidence. That is

Published Sept. 30, 2025

the mark of a good team."

The Patriots defense limited Centennial to 244 yards. Senior linebacker Sean Cunningham led the team in tackles with seven. Page also forced interceptions with junior cornerback Ryder Casillas and junior safety Liam Strother snagging picks.

"We really like playing together as a unit," Brown said of the entire team. "When we play together, we all pursue 11 hats every single play. We are not individual guys."

The Patriots scored first on the opening drive running behind the powerful front anchored by the likes of Jacob Rathbone and Jordan Curll. Kruse scored a 3-yard touchdown to kick off the scoring.

The Cougars fought back with 10 unanswered in the final half of the first quarter. A long sustained drive was capped off by a 2-yard rushing touchdown from junior running back Moses Miller. Centennial grabbed a lead late in the first quarter on a 31-yard field goal from senior kicker Wells Stanley for the 10-7 edge.

Page imposed their will on the Cougars in the second

quarter, tallying 24 points, starting with a game tying 32-yard field goal by junior kicker Jonathan Baba. A pair of Kruse touchdowns gave their offense a boost along with an electric 69-yard touchdown run by Pierre to extend the halftime lead to 31-10.

Centennial senior quarterback Mitchell Grandjean, who was one of the quarterbacks on Page's roster last season, talked about what makes Page so dangerous as a team.

"They played a good game," he said. "We came in and battled hard. Obviously, some things did not go our way but that is something we have to build off of and improve on."

"They have a lot of big guys up front. They are a good team with chemistry and are very disciplined."

The Patriots offense continued to surge when Otey turned on the jets for a 59-yard scamper to stretch the advantage to 38-10. Roughly two minutes later, Pierre picked up his second score on the day; this time muscling his way up the middle three yards for the score.

The Cougars put a solid drive together early in the fourth quarter as Grandjean



PHOTOS BY KINDELL BUCHANAN
Cayden Aukerman celebrates with teammate Jordan Curll.

went up top to senior wide receiver Malachi Steele for a 40-yard touchdown pass to cut the margin to 45-17.

Grandjean praised his wide receiver for the offensive spark.

"Malachi puts in the work," he said. "We have built a connection together, putting in time on the practice field and in the film room."

Pierre capped off his big day for Page with his third rushing touchdown, as a strong run up the left sideline to the end zone from 22

yards out closed the scoring. Page will travel to region foe James Lawson next Friday while Centennial will host the Battle of Franklin next week.

"Franklin is definitely not a team to sleep on," Grandjean said. "If we come in and do our job, we will have a good game."

"James Lawson is a solid team," Brown added of the Patriots' Week 7 tilt. "We are going to have to focus in practice this week on our keys and what we need to do to keep winning."

Page shuts out Brentwood in rare WillCo meeting

BY CHARLIE BATEMAN
SPORTS WRITER

FRANKLIN – In a matchup more than two decades in the making, the Page High School football team defeated Brentwood for the first time on Friday night, shutting down the visiting Bruins 30-0.

The pair of Williamson County programs last played in 2002 with Brentwood winning all six previous meetings. Trench leader and Page senior Jacob Rathbone was impressed with how his team came together for the shutout.

"I feel like this is a big confidence booster," said Rathbone, son of Page coach Charles Rathbone and reigning region Lineman of the Year. "Props to all 11 guys on defense, even the subs. The O-line dominated."

Page was anxious to return to the field after enduring a canceled contest due to the weather in Week 3. Page senior Knight Wilson said the Rudderville boys remained focused.

"We just had to take it as an advantage," he said, noting how he watched the Bruins defeat Summit 35-7 last week. "Brentwood had to play on Saturday, so that was a short turnaround for them. It sucks to not play a

Page 30,
Brentwood 0
BHS 0 0 0 0 - 0
PHS 10 14 6 0 - 30

Scoring Summary

1Q 7:19 PHS – Cayden Aukerman 8 pass from Cameron Kruse (Jonathan Baba kick);
1Q 5:03 PHS – Baba 33 FG;
2Q 9:06 PHS – James Pierre 4 run (Baba kick);
2Q 3:14 PHS – Aukerman 6 pass from Kruse (Baba kick);
3Q 7:35 PHS – Colt Brown 14 yard rush (kick failed).

Published Sept. 13, 2025

game your senior year, but we knew how to use that to our advantage."

Brentwood's offense stalled most of the night as they failed to make it to the red zone until the fourth quarter. The Bruins were limited to just 95 yards.

Wilson, one of the signal callers of the defense, talked about how Page impressed on defense. He bragged on senior Jordan Curll as well, who swiped the game's only turnover with an interception returned 11 yards in the first quarter.

"Everyone was focused all night long," Wilson said. "It did not matter the score. We had energy coming on the field, focus, and really com-

municating our calls. Everyone was flying around on a string. Eleven guys to the ball on every play.

"(Curll) is so dominant; he is too good to not use on defense. Jordan read it really well and ended up making a really good play."

Page opened with the first of two touchdown connections between junior quarterback Cameron Kruse and senior Cayden Aukerman on an opening scoring drive that chewed up about half of the first quarter. Aukerman's 8-yard touchdown grab opened the scoring.

Curll's interception led to a 33-yard field goal by Jonathan Baba and a 10-0 lead with 5:03 to play.

Wilson, who alternates between safety and running back for Page, said that he has ultimate confidence in his linemen.

"We just know we got those dogs upfront and they are going to dominate the line of scrimmage every game," he said. "I don't care who you put up against them, I am putting my money on those guys."

"Defenses definitely game plan around it," added Rathbone. "But my brothers on the offensive line are huge. You got 1,200 pounds coming at you – that is going to be

hard to stop no matter what. We all know what we are doing, know our jobs and trust each other."

Page collected 145 yards on the ground Friday. Both Isaac Otey and James Pierre combined for 68 yards on 14 carries, while Kruse led the way with 58 yards on four carries. He also went 14 of 19 for 95 yards and the two strikes to Aukerman.

"Cam is great," Rathbone said. "In my opinion, he is one of the best quarterbacks we have ever had come through Page. His all around skill and game knowledge really stand out."

"He knows everyone's job, and he makes big plays when it is time to show out." A balanced attack at the beginning of the second quarter, mixing up the running and passing game and executing an off tackle run in the red zone set up the next score as Pierre, a senior, broke a tackle and ran four yards into the end zone for the 17-0 advantage after Baba's PAT.

Six minutes later, the Patriots used their favorite aerial attack combination when Kruse hit Aukerman in the back right corner of the end zone for his second touchdown reception of the game, this time for six yards. Two of his three receptions went



PHOTOS BY KINDELL BUCHANAN
Page's defense led by #4 Sean Cunningham and #3 Ryder Casilles pitched a shutout against Brentwood.

for TDs.

It stayed 24-0 until midway through the third quarter when Colt Brown found a seam up the middle of the field and muscled his way into the end zone for a 14 yard scamper to provide the final score.

A running clock allowed Page to maintain longer possessions in the fourth quarter, keeping the Bruins off the board. Brentwood's best chance to score came in the final possession but time expired as they approached the moved inside the 5-yard line of the Patriots for the first time.

Rathbone downplayed the rare meeting of local powerhouses.

"We love the big games," he said. "We love the big turnout, but every game is important to us. No matter

who it is we are going to show up to play.

"We really like our rivals, but it is always fun playing these big 6A teams."

The Patriots, who moved to 3-0 overall, will face Henry County in Week 5 before beginning Region 5-5A play against Centennial on Sept. 26.

"I think it is really big for us with coach Rathbone scheduling some tougher opponents," Wilson said. "Making the changes we need to make before this region run is really big for us."

Brentwood (2-2, 1-0) will look to regroup as they host district opponent Shelbyville Central next Friday. The Golden Eagles moved to 2-0 in Region 6-6A with a 31-28 win over Independence in Week 4. They defeated Franklin 15-14 last week.

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