

## **Arab Knights Travel to Butler - Part 2**

### **David A. Myers**

The message broadcast via the airwaves, to homes and autos back in Arab, had the town in an uproar. Their boys were taking it to the number one team in the state! Cheers erupted from parking lot parties all over town. A moment later automobile horns sounded all across the city as Tommy Port barreled into the end zone for the touchdown.

"Port straight up the middle. He scores! Port scores! The Knights are in the end zone again!"

The extra point split the uprights. The Knights had come back from a disastrous start.

Old Josh Haney sat on his front porch with his wife, Elizabeth.

"Hee-haw!" the old timer yelled as the extra point went through.

Elizabeth walked over and kissed him on the forehead. Many years ago, she had watched from the bleachers as a fiery young Josh scored touchdowns for the Knights. Across the street, in the parking lot of the First Baptist Church, a group of students celebrated as George announced the game tying score. Most of Arab listened as the two teams traded possessions with neither team scoring. The half ended in a fourteen - fourteen tie.

"What a game folks. Those fans that made the trip are really getting a show. The Knights are playing a great game so far," said George as the Arab band played in the background.

"The Arabian Knight band is also putting on a show," said Hal. "The entire stadium is on their feet with the band playing *Dixie*. What a sight it is."

"Hal, Jimmy Mason is doing quite a job running this Arab offense. They're looking very impressive. Mason wasn't with the Knights last year. When Kevin Johnson moved out of town last summer the Knights found themselves without a quarterback. Where did Mason come from?"

"I had a talk with Coach Steele before the game and he told me to watch number twelve, that he would be a pleasant surprise. We've been worried about the quarterback position all summer and it turns out that Coach Steele had a rabbit in the hat. Jimmy

transferred to Arab from Louisiana during the summer. Apparently, he's played the position before."

"Also let me mention that Kevin Johnson won the starting position down at Hoover and is getting off to a pretty good start tonight. Just in at halftime, Hoover – 17, Oneonta – 7.

"Aha! He's that new dude from Louisiana," said Guy.

"He's sounds like an awesome quarterback, Guy," said Winston.

"Ha! Those losers will screw up. Just wait until the second half."

"And we're ready to start the second half. Hal, the bleachers on Arab's side of the field doesn't seem to have experienced the usual exodus of fans following the band's half-time performance."

"You're absolutely right, George. I think the fans smell a huge upset in the air. There's still twenty-four minutes of football left, though, and a lot can happen in two quarters."

"Here we go. The kick goes to White and he goes right. Slips a tackle and, oh, a crushing tackle by, it looks like, it's Simmons! White tried to cut back inside and for a moment it looked like he was going to break another one. Big Bill Simmons filled the hole and put a big hit on White at the thirty-one. First and ten for the Rebels. White was slow getting up."

From the sideline, Jimmy watched the Knight Defense work. He studied the play of his friend Bill Simmons. The kid was incredibly strong. Not once did Jimmy see Bill pushed back off the line. As this became obvious to the Rebel offense, they took great pains to run away from him. By running outside they were able to take advantage of their superior team speed. Quarterback Will Jones and White each had several good runs and the Rebs moved systematically down the field. After eight minutes of play the Rebels had moved down to the Arab five. They did it all on the ground.

"What a drive by the Rebels," George said. "They are taking a lot of time off the clock."

"They're attacking wide, George, and they've been able to turn the corners and get outside."

"First and goal to go. Jones takes the snap and runs the option right. He's hit at the line of scrimmage. He pitches back to White! White gets into the corner of the end zone, touchdown!"

"The Rebels take the lead on a five-yard run by White. What an impressive drive by Butler. It's gut check time for the Knights."

Tommy Port took the kickoff and ran it back to the thirty-three. Jimmy trotted out with his offense. He clapped his hands as he came to the huddle.

"Let's go Big Blue! Let's DRIVE, baby!"

Drive is exactly what they did. By running Port and Smith up the middle along with some quick crossing routes, the Knights mounted a drive that was every bit as impressive as the Rebels' previous drive. This drive ended with the Rebels back on their heels as Smith dove across from the one for the score. The extra point tied the game at twenty-one. There were eight minutes left in the game, which was starting to resemble two heavyweights standing toe-to-toe in the middle of the ring.

"Here's the kickoff and it goes to White at the twenty. He goes outside and he's down the sideline! Across the fifty, he's still going. Ohhh, he's finally knocked out of bounds at the Knight twenty! What a huge play for Butler."

"You better believe it was a huge play, George. The Knights had regained the momentum, but now Butler has just taken it back. I'll bet you there's some big time moaning back home right now."

"It's time to play some big defense now. Option right and White is down inside the ten-yard line to the nine. First and goal Butler!"

"That was a great run. The Knights are really going to have to dig in here."

"Jones gives to White and he's leveled by Simmons! Simmons was on White as soon as he got the ball and he lost three. Second down."

"That's exactly what the Knights are going to have to do to stop Butler. Get to White before he has a chance to get it turned up field."

"Here's a pitchout to White running left! Stopped at the eight! The pursuit got there for Arab and that'll bring up third down. A big play for both sides coming up here."

"George, this is high school football at its best. Whichever team wins this one, the other will have nothing to be ashamed of. Five and a half minutes left. Here comes third down."

"On that last play the Knights were really spread out across the line. They're counting on Simmons dominating the middle and allowing the others to contain the corners. It's a gamble but it worked that time."

"They're lined up a little tighter this time."

"The Rebels are up to the line. Here's the snap. Jones is back to pass. Here comes Simmons. He's got him! Simmons gets the sack at the twelve! Fourth down and here comes the kicker. The Rebels are going to try for a field goal."

"What a big defensive series for the Knights! Just under five minutes left in the game."

The kick was good and the Rebels went up by three. Coach Steele spoke quickly to his offense.

"Guys, we've still got time to drive. We don't have to get everything on one play. Now, we've been driving on these guys all night. Remember, the clock stops with every first down. I don't think they can stop us. Just hold onto that ball. No fumbles. Let's go Big Blue!"

"Blue!" the team repeated in unison.

Tommy ran the kickoff back to the thirty and the offense took the field.

"Okay guys, let's take this one home. Unless I say otherwise, everything on count one. Twenty-four, twenty-four. One, two three, hey!"

"The Knights are up to the line," announced George. There was tension in his voice. "Mason hands to Port and he's out over the left side to the thirty-six. The clock continues to run. Second and four."

"George, the Knights are going to have to throw the ball. They've got a ways to go and time is ticking away."

"And Mason is back to pass. He's looking down field, everyone's covered! He unloads to Fuller and it's complete for a

short gain. It looks like we're about a yard short of a first down. What now, Hal?"

"We've got to get the first and keep the drive going. The nose of the football is just touching the thirty-nine. The Knights have to cross the forty for a first down."

"Let's see what Coach Steele decides to do. Everybody is in close. It looks like the Knights are determined to play slam mouth football. The give is to Port. I don't think he made. Oh no! The rebels looked like a concrete wall on that play. There was just nowhere for Tommy to go. It took a tremendous effort just to make it back to the line. The Knights call time-out."

"This is it for the Knights, George. We're down to two minutes and fourth down. If we don't get the first here it's over. It would be a shame to have played this well and have come so close to fail now."

In the homes, porches, and parking lots in Arab, the radio audience sat at the edge of their seats and waited for the fourth down play.

"Here we go. The Knights are to the line. Power-I left. Every one's in close. Port has been the go-to guy all night. Here's the snap and the give to Port. Oh, he's hit for a loss. No! Mason's still got the ball! It's a naked bootleg right! What a fake! There's no one there! Mason is running down the sideline! Thirty, twenty, he'll go all the way! Ten! Five! Touchdown! Touchdown Jimmy Mason! Touchdown Mason! Touchdown Knights!"

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