

This Week in Football – Week 5

By Tom Downs, Essex Chargers 7/8 Offensive Coordinator

We seem to be setting a trend, and it's a trend in the right direction. Each week we have shown improvement, and this past week was no different. We challenged ourselves this week, coaches and kids, to compete for all four quarters.

While practices went well this week, and spirits were high despite our tough start, we as a team did not know if we had it in us to compete for all four quarters. We certainly competed in the first half, taking Rutland's best blows as we went into halftime only down 7-0. That's when we reminded the coaches and players that we need to compete for two more quarters. We had no idea if we would actually do that or fold like we did the previous two weeks.

What ended up happening in the second half was inspirational. While Rutland did score again in the third quarter to make it 13-0, they had to earn every yard to get it. Our kids stood up to a tough team and did not back down. That was a great sign, but we did not know how the kids would react after giving up that second touchdown. Then our kids decided to start to execute almost perfectly on their next two offensive drives. With just over 6 minutes left in the game, our kids drove down the field with Tobey capping the drive off with a boss trap run for a touchdown.

That's when I think everyone on our sideline realized "hey, we got ourselves a ball game". On Rutland's next drive, our defense stepped up and forced a punt. Our next drive had more drama than any other that I have experienced in twenty years of coaching with the Essex Chargers. I do not need to describe it all, since a lot of you saw it, but our kids made no mistakes. It was flawless. From Hazen's stretch to convert on a fourth and five, to our trick play for the touchdown, to our two point conversion to win the ballgame instead of going for the tie, it was remarkable how the kids played their best football at exactly the right time. Additionally, the kids pulled it off with minimal time remaining. When we took the lead, there was only thirty six seconds on the clock.

Now here is the side story to the trick play we ran called Arizona on our last drive where Mason scored the touchdown. At halftime, Max came to me and told me he thought that it would work against Rutland. It's essentially a mini hook and ladder

(look it up if you don't know what that is) that we run in the backfield. It's a play I saw seven or eight years ago when watching an Arizona/Oklahoma college football game, hence the name Arizona for our trick play. When we run it to the other side, we call it Oklahoma.

As the fourth quarter was winding down, Coach Dave whispered in my ear that maybe we should run Arizona. This time the idea came from Talon. That was the second player that mentioned running that play. I hesitated for a second and thought "what the hell, let's do it". The play essentially counts on the defense over pursuing the football, and Rutland had certainly been doing that all game. This same play that failed us miserably against Chittenden South the week before worked to perfection against Rutland. Tobey threw the perfect pass, Hazen ran the perfect route, Hazen tossed it perfectly to Mason, and Mason caught and ran the ball perfectly. In fact, as soon as Mason caught the toss, everyone on the sidelines was already celebrating the touchdown even though Mason was still 15 yards away from the end zone. Arizona caught Rutland complete off guard.

Our next game is at home! Finally! It will be nice to be back at the friendly confines. We play Colchester this week and they are a team that has struggled. However, we cannot take them lightly because a lot times it is about matchups and we honestly do not know at this point how we match up. As I have stated before, we need to show improvement each week. To do that this week, we need to focus on what we can control, and that is always about the effort we put in. Once you do that, other things take care of themselves as we saw this past week with Rutland. As always, we have nothing to lose which will allow us to play like we have everything to lose.

Let's leave it all on the field Chargers and play loose. Let's bring it to Colchester.

This week's Charger Highlights

Charger Highlights:

Talon and Max – Thank you for reminding me about Arizona. What a great memory!

Hazen – Converted on a critical 4th and 5, ran Arizona perfectly, and had a great 2 point conversion catch in the end zone to put us ahead.

Mason – 21 total tackles! Are you kidding me! Enough said.

Colby and Michael – Both did a great job as pulling tackles making our tackle trap play effective against Rutland. Keep up the good work!

The Team – Only 18 kids out of our total of 33 made it to the game this past Saturday. I think that the whole group that made it needs a huge shout out. Many had to play through a lot of pain to allow us to be successful. Great grit all around! I would encourage the kids that did not make it to try to make the trip next time. Everyone would have seen playing time and we could have certainly used the depth. Not to mention, you missed an incredible Charger comeback that we will be talking about for years.

That is it for now. I hoped you all enjoyed a little peak into the week that was. See you all next week!