

GOAL LINE

THE WEEKLY AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW SECTION

Cavaliers square off against undefeated Eagles



Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard

Coldwater quarterback Brody Hoying is nearing a second straight 1,000-yard rushing season after a 215-yard performance against Huron.

By GARY R. RASBERRY
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The matchup on paper between Coldwater and Liberty-Benton looks to be a mismatch in the Cavaliers' favor.

The undefeated Eagles, though, bring an experienced lineup to Saturday's Division V regional championship game at Spartan Stadium in Lima. L-B is in the playoffs for the fourth straight season and has made nine post-season appearances since 2003, including a Division V state runner-up appearance in 2008. The Eagles won the Blanchard Valley Conference's Blanchard Division with a 5-0 record, earned wins over six teams that made the play-offs in the regular season and out-scored their opening two playoff opponents 69-20.

Unlike the previous two play-off opponents Chippewa and Huron, Coldwater will face a team that runs a run-skewed balanced offense that works out of a spread Wing-T formation.

Leading the run attack for the Eagles is senior Austin Combs. The 6-1, 230-pound senior rushed for 1,336 yards during the regular season and scored 126 points, each third-best in the BVC behind Pandora-Gilboa's Jacob Basinger and BVC Offensive Player of the Year Austin Rettig of Arlington.

The front line for the Eagles will be one of the bigger lines in terms of average size the Cavaliers have seen this season. Led by All-BVC lineman Justin Iott (6-0, 220 pounds), L-B's line averages 232 pounds with tackles Grant Kisinger (6-0, 270) and Jake Rozelle (6-1, 230) and guards Allan Hartley (6-0, 240) and Jacob Schimoeller (6-2, 200).

"The key (to L-B's offense) is Combs and their O-line. They just try to pound you," Coldwater coach Chip Otten said. "Then the quarterback (Nathan Craft) does a good job of hiding the ball a little bit and putting in the fakes."

Craft runs the offense at quarterback. Craft, no relation to former Liberty-Benton and Ohio State basketball standout Aaron Craft, threw for 1,136 yards and 12 touchdowns during the season and rushed for 579 yards and five touchdowns. Craft is 19-0 in regular season games and 2-1 in the postseason.

B.J. Lawson was voted the top wide receiver in the BVC this season, leading the team with 648 yards on 30 catches and five touchdowns.

"Those three guys (Combs, Craft and Lawson) are kind of a three-headed monster, so to speak," Otten said. "They give you some different formations and come right at you. We're not



Nick Wenning/The Daily Standard

Coldwater's Malave Bettinger, 71, takes down Huron's Kyle Kovach during last Saturday's game in Tiffin. The Cavaliers take on unbeaten Liberty-Benton Saturday night in Lima for a berth in the Division V state final four.

a big stout defense, so that's a concern."

Defensively, the Eagles, running the 4-3 defense, allowed just 84 points in 10 games during the regular season. Leading the way is BVC Defensive Player of the Year Alec Rhodes at linebacker. Rhodes recorded 105 tackles and 11 tackles for loss during the season. Kissinger was the BVC's Defensive Lineman of the Year after recording 44 tackles and five sacks.

Combs is potent on defense as well, leading the team with four interceptions.

One advantage the Cavaliers could have is that Liberty-Benton has nine payers that play both sides of the ball, most notably Iott, who also plays middle linebacker.

"It's all the same guys," Otten said. "They're a physical team. One thing we can take advantage

of) is our speed versus their stoutness and hopefully wear those guys out. We'll really try to mix it up with the spread (offense), spread them out and make them chase our fast guys around. Hopefully, we can spread the wealth like we've been doing."

The Cavaliers are coming off their most competitive game since the Marion contest. Coldwater led 21-7 at the half and did not put the game away until two fourth-quarter scores made it 40-14 at the final whistle.

The hard-hitting may have taken a toll, though, as defensive tackle Mitch Fullenkamp and outside linebacker Collin Seitz were both banged up in the win and their status for Saturday is unknown.

"The concern is with Mitch and Collin. Hopefully (they'll) be all right, but you never know," Otten said.

Division V Regional Finals



Liberty-Benton
(12-0)

Vs.

Coldwater
(11-1)



Spartan Stadium, Lima
Saturday, 7 p.m.

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Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard

Marion Local's Hunter Wilker has 21 touchdowns this season and is closing in on 1,000 receiving yards. The Flyers face Lehman in the regional final on Saturday at Wapakoneta.

Flyers renew ties with Cavs

By COLIN FOSTER
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It'll be No. 1 versus No. 2 when the Marion Local Flyers and Lehman Cavaliers step onto the turf Saturday night at Wapakoneta's Harmon Field in the Division VII, Region 26 final.

Both clubs enter the game on big-time winning streaks. Lehman reeled off 10 straight wins after starting the season 0-2. The Flyers extended theirs to 34 games dating back to October 2012 with a 35-0 victory over Fort Recovery in the regional semi.

"Talent," said Marion Local coach Tim Goodwin on what it's taken to sustain that success. "We've got some really good players now and they're humble. You know, it's easy for outsiders to talk about a win streak or whatever, but those of us inside know there are certain things you've got to do each week to prepare, and our kids are humble enough to do that."

Marion defeated the Cavs 24-3 the last time the two met in the 2009 playoffs. The Flyers hold the all-time edge 26-11. Against common opponents (Minster and Anna), Marion is 2-0 and Lehman is 0-2.

The Cavaliers started the year with losses to Anna (41-7) and Minster (49-28). They followed by going unbeaten in Northwest Central Conference play and outscored league opposition 281-93 in the process. For the year, Lehman has outscored teams 472-221.

Lehman defeated Covington 42-7 in the first round of the playoffs and Troy Christian 31-0 in the regional semi to land in the final.

Quarterback Nick Rourke (139-of-240 passing for 2,358 yards) has been dangerous with his arm all season. The senior has 30 touchdowns and just three interceptions. His highest passing output was 467 yards against Minster. Rourke's most efficient effort came in a 48-6 win over Upper Scioto Valley, when he completed 8-of-10 passes for 293 yards and six touchdowns.

Goodwin added that Minster quarterback Josh Nixon is a decent comparison to Rourke. The Flyers faced the Wildcats during the regular season and won 56-28. Rourke's also has some good weapons to distribute the ball to in Greg Spearman and Mitchell Slater.

Spearman, a senior, has caught 43 passes for 831 yards and 11 touchdowns. Slater, who likewise has 43 catches for 831 yards a matching 11 TDs, is the other go-to receiver. Spearman (939 yards, 11 touchdowns) spearheads the Cavalier rushing attack. Only Anna held the Cavaliers under 10 points in their 41-7 season-opening loss.

"They're very, very diverse offensively," Goodwin said. "They've got some skill kids that are playmakers and a quarterback who does a nice job."

The Flyers (12-0) have won 17 straight playoff games since losing to Minster in the regional semi in 2010. MAC Player of the Year Jacy Goettemoeller has scored seven postseason touchdowns, including four in a 35-0 win over Fort Recovery last week.

The Marion defense has shut out each of its first two playoff opponents and now has four consecutive wins dating back to the

Division VII
Regional Final

Lehman Catholic
(10-2)

Vs.

Marion Local (12-0)

Harmon Field,
Wapakoneta
Saturday 7 p.m.

secutive wins dating back to the

"We're excited about where we're headed as a team more than anything," Goodwin said. "We've been playing really good football over the last couple of weeks, but I think there's still some things we can do better."

Wildcats ready for Tigers



Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard

Sam Dues has been solid out of the backfield for Minster this season. The Wildcats will look to advance to their first state final four since 1989 when they face West Liberty-Salem in the regional final on Friday in Piqua.

By COLIN FOSTER
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The Ohio Heritage Conference against the Midwest Athletic Conference in the playoffs.

Sound familiar? The West Liberty-Salem Tigers, seeded fourth in Region 22, will be the second team from the OHC to play third-seeded Minster this postseason when the teams hook horns on Friday night at Piqua's Alexander Stadium/Purk Field with a Division VI state semifinal berth on the line.

The OHC is 0-19 all-time against MAC schools. West Liberty's conference mate Mechanicsburg took a crack at the Wildcats in the first round, but Kaleb Romero's two-point conversion rush attempt was stopped an inch shy of the goal line and Minster survived with a 42-41 double OT win.

This team from the OHC, however, is a completely different beast on offense. Mechanicsburg was primarily a running team with two lethal threats in the backfield. The Tigers, though, can run and pass very well, with a 1,000-yard running back in Trevor Anderson and a 2,000-yard passer in Brandon Upton.

Upton (138-of-234 passing for 2,300 yards and 28 touchdowns/nine interceptions) and Anderson (189 carries for 1,583 yards and 21 touchdowns) headline an offense that has put up 39.3 points per game on the year.

Upton also has a bevy of receiving talent to whom to distribute the ball in Landon Williams (39 catches, 622 yards, nine TDs), Kameron Evans (27 catches, 663 yards, five TDs) and Trent Thomas (35 catches, 510 yards, eight touchdowns).

"They're incredibly balanced," Minster coach Geron Stokes said. "They can do it all offensively. They

have so much skill that allows them to do so many different things. Their offensive line is pretty good. They're big and physical. It's one of the best offenses we've seen.

"We've got to be really good defensively. We've got to keep the ball in front. We've got to tackle really well and we've got to create some turnovers."

The Tigers have surrendered 14.3 point per game defensively. Ben Brurden is the leader with 148 tackles, 3 ½ sacks and two fumble recoveries. Dylan Leopard is tops on the team in sacks with 4 ½.

It's the second consecutive season the Tigers have reached this point. Last year, Mechanicsburg defeated WL-S 34-28 in double overtime to earn a trip to state.

The Tigers are tied with Mechanicsburg for the most all-time OHC football titles with five. This season, the Tigers, Indians and Greeneview Rams shared the conference crown with matching 6-1 records. West Liberty defeated Mechanicsburg 42-38 on Oct. 10 but lost to Greeneview 21-14.

To reach the regional final, West Liberty defeated Cincinnati Country Day 29-7 and then ousted top-seeded Tri-County North last week, 21-14. Tiger coach Dan McGill is 21-4 since taking the helm of the program two years ago.

Like McGill, it's Stokes' second year at Minster. Stokes has gone 15-7 with the Wildcats.

Quarterback Josh Nixon threw for three touchdowns and ran for two more in the Wildcats' 45-19 drubbing of Versailles in last week's regional semifinal. The Minster defense intercepted Versailles four times — including three straight times coming out of the locker room and capitalized on the mistakes each time.

Nixon has thrown nine touchdowns and run for two more in

Division VI
Regional Final

West Liberty-Salem
(11-1)

Vs.

Minster (9-3)

Alexander Stadium
Piqua
Friday 7:30 p.m.

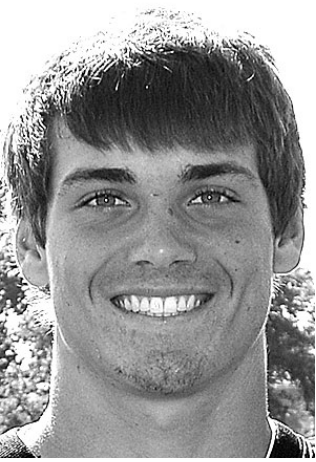
Minster's playoff wins. Receiver Eli Wolf has gone over the 100-yard mark in each of those games. Minster has scored more than 40 points in the wins to land in the regional final for the first time since 2010.

Stokes said the key will be stopping the 'Tigers' high-powered offense this week.

"We got just a big-time challenge being able to defend these guys," he said. "Our focus is strictly on how can we stop West Liberty."

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

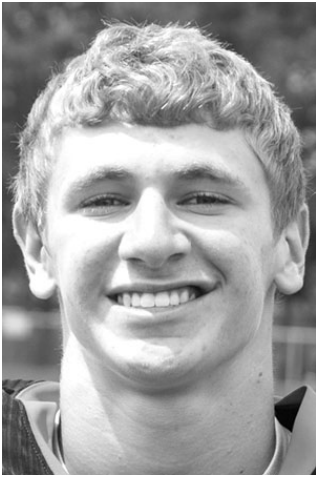
OFFENSE



Brody Hoying, QB
Coldwater

24 carries for 215 yards and four touchdowns, 150 yards passing and a touchdown in the Cavaliers' 40-14 win over Huron.

DEFENSE



Jared Thobe DB
Minster

Two interceptions in the Wildcats' 45-19 win over Versailles.

This Weekend's State Regional Playoff Games

Division I – Games at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22

Region 1
1 Hudson (12-0) vs. 4 Mentor (11-1) at University of Akron InfoCision Stadium – Summa Field

2 Lakewood St. Edward (10-2) vs. 3 Westerville Central (11-1) at Mansfield Arlin Field

Region 2
16 West Chester Lakota West (7-5) vs. 5 Huber Heights Wayne (11-1) at Dayton Welcome Stadium

2 Cincinnati St. Xavier (10-2) vs. 6 Cincinnati Archbishop Moeller (9-3) at Mason Dwire Field at Atrium Stadium

Division II – Games at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21

Home Team Listed First

Region 3
1 Bedford (12-0) vs. 2 Mayfield (11-1) at Solon Stewart Field

Region 4
1 Grafton Midview (12-0) vs. 2 Macedonia Nordonia (12-0) at Brunswick Judy Kirsch Field at AutoMart Stadium

Region 5
1 Lewis Center Olentangy (12-0) vs. 7 Dublin Scioto (8-4) at Westerville Central Warhawk Field

Region 6
1 Cincinnati LaSalle (11-1) vs. 2 Cincinnati Mt. Healthy (12-0) at Mason Dwire Field at Atrium Stadium

Division III – Games at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21

Home Team Listed First

Region 7
1 Hubbard (12-0) vs. 2 Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary (10-2) at Ravenna Gilcrest Field at Portage Community Bank Stadium

Region 8
1 Toledo Central Catholic (10-2) vs. 2 Clyde (10-2) at Millbury Lake Community Stadium

Region 9
4 The Plains Athens (12-0) vs. 7 Columbus St. Francis DeSales (10-2) at Logan Chieftain Stadium

Region 10
1 Wapakoneta (12-0) vs. 3 Trotwood-Madison (11-1) at Sidney Memorial Stadium

Division IV – Games at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21

Home Team Listed First

Region 11
1 Cleveland Benedictine (11-1) vs. 7 Bay Village Bay (8-4) at Parma Byers Field

Region 12
4 Kenton (10-2) vs. 3 Wauseon (12-0)

at Findlay Donnell Stadium

Region 13

1 Columbus Beechcroft (11-1) vs. 3 Steubenville (9-3) at Zanesville Sulsberger Stadium

Region 14

1 Kettering Alter (12-0) vs. 2 Clinton-Massie (12-0) at Monroe Fighting Hornet Stadium

Division V – Games at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22

Home team listed first

Region 15

1 Canton Central Catholic (12-0) vs. 3 Youngstown Ursuline (8-4) at Uniontown Lake Alumni Field

Region 16

4 COLDWATER (11-1) vs. 2 Liberty-Benton (12-0) at Lima Spartan Stadium

Region 17

1 Bishop Hartley (10-2) vs. 2 Wheelersburg (11-1) at Chillicothe Herrnstein Field

Region 18

1 Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy (12-0) vs. 6 West Jefferson (8-4) at West Carrollton Dayton Outpatient Center Stadium

Division VI – Games at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21

Home Team listed first

Region 19

1 Loudonville (12-0) vs. 3 Kirtland (12-0) at Medina Ken Dukes Stadium

Region 20

1 Tinora (12-0) vs. 3 Wynford (11-1) at Dial-Roberson Stadium at Ohio Northern University, Ada

Region 21

4 Centerburg (10-2) vs. 2 Lucasville Valley (10-2) at Gahanna Lincoln Stadium

Region 22

4 West Liberty-Salem (11-1) vs. 3 MINSTER (9-3) at Piqua Alexander Stadium, Purk Field

Division VII – Games at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22

Home team listed first

Region 23

1 Norwalk St. Paul (11-1) vs. 2 Berlin Center Western Reserve (11-1) at InfoCision Field at Copley Stadium

Region 24

1 Arlington (11-1) vs. 3 Columbus Grove (8-4) at Findlay Donnell Stadium

Region 25

1 Shadyside (11-0) vs. 2 Glouster Trimble (12-0) at Bylesville Meadowbrook Eugene Capers Field

Region 26

1 MARION LOCAL (12-0) vs. 2 Lehman (10-2) at Wapakoneta Harmon Field

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