

Sports Week

- School news
Calendar
Classified

Mountaineers go for district title

By DAVE KONOPKI
Sports Writer

Ten days ago, the Wyoming Area Warriors did the Dallas Mountaineers a favor. This Saturday morning, Dallas will try to say "thank you" in an unusual way.

The Mountaineers (10-1) and the Warriors (10-1) will meet for the District 2 Class AA title Saturday morning at 11:00 at Lackawanna County Stadium. The winner of the game will advance to the PIAA Class AA state playoffs.

Dallas advanced to the title game with a 14-6 win over Dunmore, which was ranked number two in the state when the teams met last Friday. Wyoming Area, the state's top-ranked Class AA team, made it with a 40-20 win over Lake-Lehman.

But if it weren't for a decision made by the Warriors less than two weeks ago, this game would not be taking place.

Wyoming Area head coach Paul Marranca decided to take his team into the District 2 playoffs instead of the Eastern Conference playoffs. Had the Warriors decided to play in the EC, there was a possibility Dallas would have been forced to play in the D-2 tournament without Wyoming Area and Dunmore and, therefore, would have lost the chance to advance to states.

But the decision was not made out of charity by the Warrior coach. If they had gone EC, Wyoming Area may not have been top seed, may have not played a home game and most likely, would have played Dunmore at Dunmore.

But the decisions were made, the games played, and the stage has been set for a classic matchup.

People have been pointing to the possibility of this game since mid-October, when Dallas was running roughshod over Wyoming Valley Conference Division II foes and the Warriors were doing the same in Division I.

There are some striking similarities between the two teams. Both are coached by highly successful men, both teams have one loss (Dallas lost to Tunkhannock, 14-0, while the Warriors lost to Berwick 21-7) and both teams have dominating defenses.

Wyoming Area surrendered a division-low 91 points during the regular season while Dallas limited 11 opponents to just 40 points this year.

"They're a heck of a football team," said Dallas head coach Ted Jackson of the Warriors. "They have great skill people and the best running back in the area. He has tremendous speed and great power."

Jim Pizano, Wyoming Area's tailback, who has run for more than 1,700 yards this season. The

5-11, 180-pound senior is coming off a 235-yard performance against Lehman last Friday night.

But Dallas has faced their share of outstanding running backs this season and has more than held their own. Coughlin's Baldo Vincarelli, Nanticoke's Mike Vnuk, Crestwood's Mike Graham and Bishop Hoban's Nick Quaglia all gained more than 1,000 yards this season. But none of them gained more than 75 yards against the Mountaineers.

Here is a look at the offensive and defensive matchups in the game followed by this week's prediction. After a 2-0 record last week, the prognostication record now stands at 19-5 for the season.

Dallas running game vs. WA against the run

If there has been an Achilles Heel on the Mountaineer offense this season, this has been it. In their two close games this year, Tunkhannock and Dunmore, the Mounts have run for less than 75 yards. Combined.

But junior Buddy Rhodes has shown lots of promise and fullback Rich Butcofski, who scored on an eight-yard run against Dunmore, is as tough as they come. Senior Ed Mattie may be the best blocking fullback to ever wear a Dallas uniform. But if Dallas doesn't run the ball well against the Warriors, the Mounts may be in trouble.

Don't forget, the Warriors have some outstanding athletes, including Pizano and quarterback Tim Herron in their defensive backfield to match Dallas's corps of receivers. Mountaineer tackles Greg Nazdan (6-5, 250) and Marty Straigis (6-4, 245) along with linemen John Howe (6-0, 210) and Ed Langdon (6-1, 250) must step forward. EDGE: WARRIORS

Dallas passing game vs. WA against the pass

If their running game gets untracked, this is where the Mounts can do some damage. While the stats may not show the true story, quarterback Brian Brady had an outstanding game against Dunmore. His 35-yard pass to Jared Cooney while eluding a Dunmore rush was a thing of beauty.

Junior receiver Mike Viglone showed why he is one of the area's best receivers with his 61-yard touchdown reception when he broke at least five tackles on the way to paydirt. Sophomore Ted Jackson has seen increased time at the wideout spot, has made some key catches and is a threat to go deep. WA has some great athletes in their defensive backfield, but if the Dallas offensive line gives him time, Brady can do the damage. EDGE: DALLAS



CALLING THE PLAYS - Dallas quarterback Brian Brady led the Mounts to a win over Dunmore last week. They play for the district title Saturday morning at Lackawanna County Stadium.

Don't forget about WA fullback Bob Wagner, though. He's a big reason Pizano has been so successful. But the Dallas defense has risen to the occasion before under Jackson. Just ask Raghib "Rocket" Ismail (32 yards rushing in 1986). While Nazdan, Straigis, Mattie and Steve Button clog up the middle and the "Treacherous Trio" make the big hits in the back, Dallas linebackers Butcofski, John Howe, Matt Williams and Pat O'Neil have patrolled their area like no others. Button and Mattie are coming off outstanding performances against Dunmore.

Playing on the turf may increase Pizano's cutting ability and quickness, but taking a pounding play after play could take its toll. The obvious choice is to take Pizano and the Warriors but, if they play with intensity, there is no better group than the Mounts at stopping the run. EDGE: EVEN

Intangibles

Both teams are playing for a district title and a spot in the state playoffs, so there will be no need to get them ready to play emotionally. Both teams are experienced, having played in the playoffs last season and both are led by terrific senior leadership. But the separation here comes in history, where the Warriors hold a decisive edge. While they do not play on a regular basis, the Warriors haven't lost to Dallas in more than 15 years. EDGE: WYOMING AREA

PREDICTION: This is about as close as it gets. Two outstanding teams with talent, pride and excellent coaching. In close games like this, special teams usually play an important role. But even the kicking matchup is a close one with WA's John Dymond and Dallas's Jeff Kunkle being two of the best in the WVC. The Mounts' Charlie Siglin will have to punt like he did against Dunmore and keep the ball away from Herron and Pizano.

I've talked to people who believe this game will end in a scoreless tie after regulation. Others believe it will be 7-0, either way. I disagree.

Although I'll stop short of predicting an offensive shootout, I think both teams will get into the endzone at least two times. Pizano will probably get his yards between the 20 yard lines, but the Mounts have to keep him under control and stop the big play.

I went against Dallas once this season, picking Coughlin to beat them. They showed that pick in my face with a 38-0 whipping of the Crusaders. As the Monkees sang, "I'm a Believer". DALLAS 21 - WYOMING AREA 17

Table comparing Dallas Mountaineers and Wyoming Area Warriors stats for 1993. Includes columns for offense and defense, player names, positions, height, weight, and year.

WA passing game vs. Dallas against the pass

With one of the best running backs in this part of the state, the Warriors don't have to pass much. But when they do, they've been effective. In fact, Herron has the highest efficiency rating of any QB in the area. Pizano is a threat to catch the ball out of the backfield and Joe Karcutskie is a fine

tight end. They may not be the best coverage men in the region, but Dallas's "Treacherous Trio" of defensive backs (Brady, Cooney and Brian Ford) hit harder than any DB's around. Just ask Dunmore's Brian Dempsey. After making a crucial third down reception, Dempsey was belted by Ford. He wasn't heard from the rest of the

game. If you catch it, you will pay. EDGE: SLIGHT EDGE DALLAS

WA running game vs. Dallas against the run

There is a good chance this matchup will decide the game. And what a matchup it is. Pizano is as good as they come and playing on the artificial turf won't hurt. He's fast, strong and experienced.

Greg Nazdan excels in classroom and on the field

By DAVE KONOPKI
Sports Writer

His pre-game ritual is simple. While his teammates work themselves into an emotional frenzy minutes before kickoff, Greg Nazdan takes a few minutes to spend some quiet time with his best friend.

Mike Nazdan was more than just a father to his youngest child. He was a motivator, a role model, an inspiration and a friend.

Now, more than one year after losing his father to a long illness, Greg Nazdan takes a few minutes before each game to remember.

"Before every game I say a prayer and dedicate the game to him," said Nazdan, a 6-4, 250-pound two-way tackle for the Dallas Mountaineers. "He was a great influence on my life. He never forced me to do anything. He always encouraged me to do what I wanted. He's my true motivation to play. He loved football."

That motivation has helped turn the 17-year-old senior into one of the most sought-after college recruits in the Wyoming Valley Conference. His play and quiet leadership have helped lead Dallas to an 11-1 record and a berth in this Saturday's District 2 championship game against Wyoming Area.

There have been a lot of changes in this era of "political correct-

ness", but one stereotype that remains is the image of the "dumb jock". Especially when it comes to linemen.

But Greg Nazdan tackles the classroom like he does a slow-footed running back, with intensity and conviction. In doing so, he's put to rest that stereotype.

This son of Mike and Chris Nazdan scored more than 1,300 on his SAT's last year as a junior and is looking forward to taking them again next month. Nazdan is ranked second in his class of 156 students with a grade-point average of 3.60 and is also the president of his senior class.

That kind of success, coupled with his prowess on the gridiron, has gotten the attention of colleges across the country, including a number of Ivy League schools. Nazdan is struggling with a decision on where to attend school.

But one thing is certain, academics come first.

"I want to be a doctor," said Nazdan, who maintains his outstanding class ranking while taking three sciences (Chemistry 2, Human Physiology and Physics), advanced calculus and a fourth year of German. "I also want to be able to play football. I want to be able to do both. My goal is to play football while at the same time get a degree from an excellent academic institution."

Nazdan's success on the football field has come rather quickly

for the young senior (he will not turn 18 until June). His parents didn't want him to play mini-football and he didn't start playing until ninth grade.

It was a rude introduction. "I got a telephone call from (Dallas head coach Ted) Coach Jackson and he asked me to come to the varsity practice," explained Nazdan, who has a brother Tony, 21 and sister Amy, 19. "I took a beating. I was going through double-sessions with the high school and then going to practice at the junior high. The (upper-classmen) got their licks in but I got in a few as well."

It was about that time when Nazdan decided to dedicate himself to becoming a good football player and was befriended by former Wyoming Valley West, University of Maryland and St. Louis Cardinal lineman Mark Duda, who got Nazdan into a weight-training program.

"Mark got me on the right track," said Nazdan, who now bench presses 325 pounds. "That's just what I needed. I saw how good my brother (Tony, a former Dallas standout) was and I didn't know if I could accomplish those things. I needed a little bit of reassurance and guidance. I got both."

One person who doesn't doubt Nazdan's chances for success is Jackson, who found an extra assistant coach in Nazdan.

"Greg is going to be successful in whatever he does," said

Jackson. "He's the type of kid who's going to be an asset to any school he attends. He hasn't even physically matured yet. I think he can carry 275 pounds on his body. He's only going to get bigger and stronger."

"He's a student of the game," added Jackson. "He recognizes things very well. He helps us as coaches by telling us where guys are playing. He's highly, highly intelligent."

Nazdan hasn't made up his mind where he will attend college but schools like Syracuse, Virginia, North Carolina and the Ivy League schools have shown interest. He expects to make a decision before the national letter-of-intent signing day in February.

Until then, the National Honor Society member and can't miss all-conference tackle will continue to battle both his opponents and his schoolbooks with reckless abandon. He'll do it with the support of his family and with someone watching over him.

"My family has always been very close," said Nazdan. "When my father died, we all had to pull together. That helped a lot."

And he'll continue to dedicate his football games to his best friend.

"I've dedicated every game to my father," said Nazdan. "We're 11-1 and in the championship game. I guess someone up there is listening."



GREG NAZDAN

Hillary Cave heads to festival

Two College Misericordia field hockey players have been selected to participate in the United States Field Hockey Association national festival, November 24-28 at the University of California-Riverside. Seniors Hillary Cave of Dallas and Kathy Gulbush of Gillette, NJ, will play on the USFHA Mid-East Team.

This marks the fourth consecutive year that Cave has qualified for the USFHA national tournament while Gulbush is making her third appearance.

Cave and Gulbush led Misericordia to a 10-6 record and a runner-up finish in the Pennsylvania Athletic Conference this year.

Tracy Krupa is all-conference

Three College Misericordia volleyball players, including former Lake-Lehman High School standout Tracy Krupa, were recently honored by the Pennsylvania Athletic Conference.

Krupa, a freshman setter, was named second-team all conference. Senior Kirsten Myers was named to the first team while freshman Beth Elfner was also named to the second team.

Krupa led the team in service aces (74) and assists (168). Myers was the team leader in kills (112) and also excelled on defense where she had a team-high 192 digs.