

Sports Week

Section 2

Wednesday, September 4, 1996

Reds' Instructional League is next step for Oliver

By SCOTT CRISPELL
Sports Writer

DALLAS - With his rookie season in professional baseball under his belt, former Lake-Lehman High School athletic standout Johnny Oliver is enjoying some time at home.

It will be a short time, however, as the first round draft choice of the Cincinnati Reds has been invited to the Reds' Instructional League which begins September 10 at their spring training facility in Plant City, Florida.

"It feels good to be home and see my family and friends," said Oliver, who will leave for Florida Sunday. "I'm really excited about the opportunity to go to the Instructional League."

Oliver and the Princeton Reds concluded their Appalachian League sched-

ule with a 7-3 victory over the Bluefield Orioles, August 28. The Reds finished 28-40, 15 games behind first place Bluefield in the Eastern Division standings.

Oliver, who played all three outfield positions during the season, ended his rookie campaign on an upswing with two hits in the season finale, including his second home run as a professional.

"It was very important to have a good night in my last game of the year," said Oliver, who finished with a .203 batting average. "I wanted to end my first season on a good note."

His statistics during his first pro season also included 20 runs scored, five doubles and 13 RBI's. "I'm pleased with the way my first season went," said Oliver. "Obviously, I'd like my batting average to be higher, but this was a big step. I

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John Oliver
Dallas

learned the ropes and began to get an understanding of pro baseball."

With young flamethrowing pitchers dotting the rosters of the Appalachian League, Reds' scouts had warned Oliver that the league was not exactly hitter friendly.

"I was prepared to struggle at the plate," Oliver explained. "It was hard getting used to playing under the lights and most of the pitchers throw in the low 90's and

have good breaking balls. It was a big step in quality of pitching."

Despite having similar velocity to their major league counterparts, most of the Appalachian League's pitchers don't possess the pinpoint control to match and Oliver has the bruises to prove it.

"That makes it even more challenging," he said. "I got hit by seven pitches this year."

Although he experienced some struggles, Oliver says he enjoyed his pro season. "I'm glad I signed early and was able to play this season as opposed to some of the first-round picks who have signed in the last few weeks," explained Oliver. "We had a great group of guys at Princeton. Everyone was very supportive of each other."

With the regular season complete, Oliver is anxiously awaiting the Instruc-

tional League, where he will join 35 of the top prospects in the Reds' organization for six weeks of intensive hands-on instruction.

"The Reds' want to work on my swing as well as a few things on defense," said Oliver, who is learning to play left field and right field in addition to his customary center field position. "They want me to learn all three outfield positions and said it will increase my chances of reaching the big leagues. I'm willing to do whatever they want me to."

After the Instructional League, Oliver will return home, where he plans to begin preparation for spring training. "I'm going to lift weights and do aerobics all winter in order to prepare for the first spring training," he said. "I'd like to put on about 10 pounds of muscle in the off-season and get ready for spring training."

Black Knights' come back from depths for win

The Lake-Lehman Black Knights staged a comeback for the ages Friday night, when they scored twice in the final five minutes to eke out a 22-21 win at Riverside in the season opener.

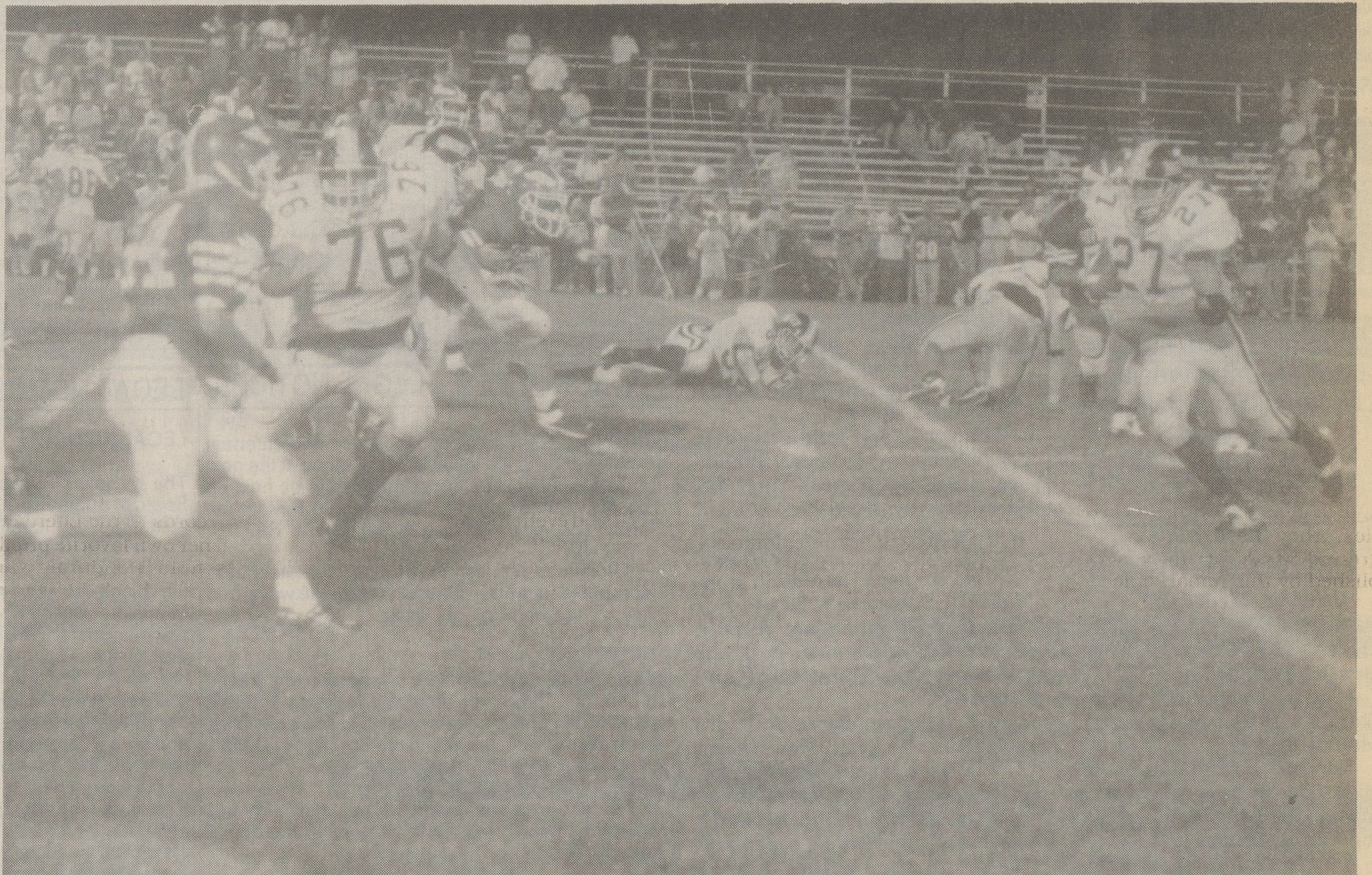
Mick Konigus ignited the rally by blocking a Vikings punt, giving Lehman the ball on the Vikings' 14-yard line. Quarterback Mike Woronko bucked over the goal line for a touchdown five plays later, and followed with a two-point conversion on a pass to Marc Ronczka.

That was only the beginning. Roy Holcomb recovered an onside kick at the Riverside 40 to set up the Black Knights' final score. Ronczka rumbled in from four

yards out for the TD, and Woronko split the uprights with the point after to put Lehman on top 22-21.

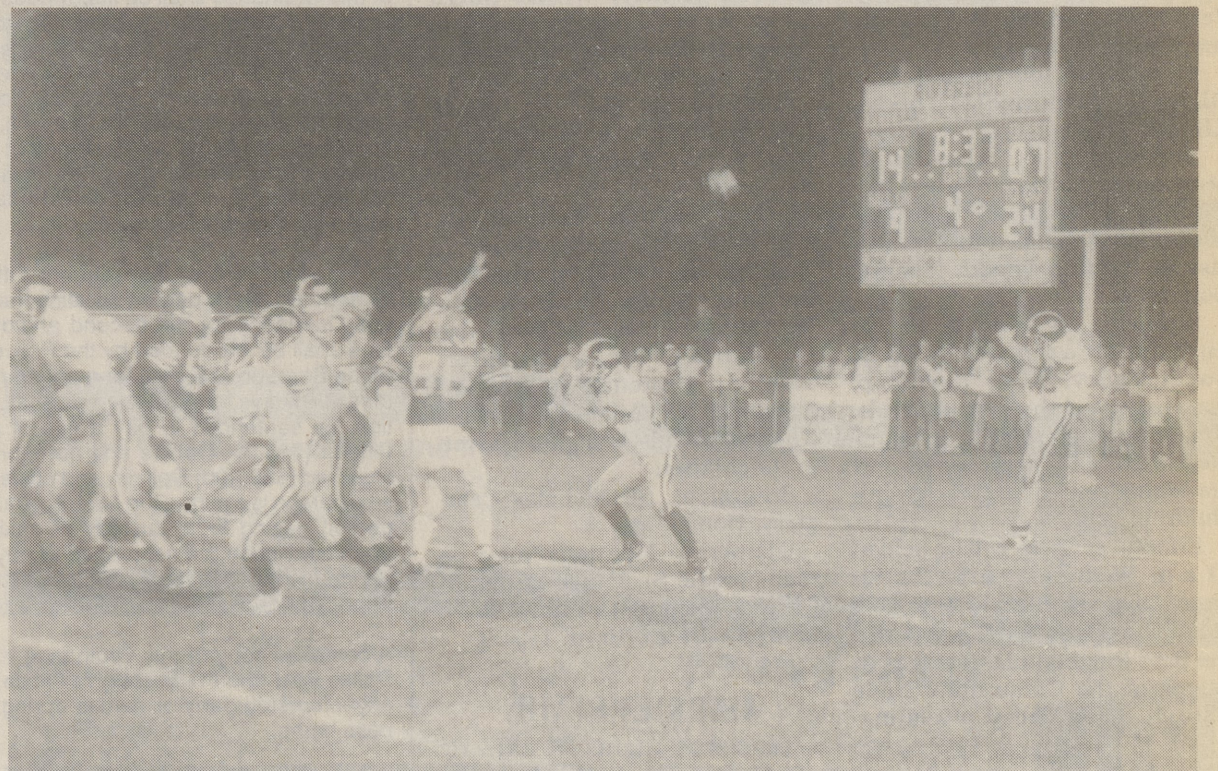
Except for quarterback sacks, the game was as even statistically as the score. Both quarterbacks completed 50 percent of their passes, and Lehman claimed the only interception. Riverside nearly doubled Lehman's ground yardage, but Woronko won the passing duel.

Chris Bath scored the first Lake-Lehman touchdown on a 60+ yard pass play, with Woronko making the kick. Bath hauled in seven receptions on the night, and Ronczka snared two. Ronczka was the workhorse on the ground, carrying 21 times.



Lake-Lehman's Marc Ronczka (27) turned the corner against the Riverside defense behind blocking from Ebin Walter (76), top photo. At left, Ronczka again, with Bob Gallagher (59) trying to come to his aid. The Black Knights were in deep, at right, when Mike Woronko was forced to punt. But Lehman came back to win 22-21.

POST PHOTOS/JIM PHILLIPS



Disputes, miscues make for Mounts' bad day

A stunning first play from scrimmage turned out not to forecast the rest of the afternoon, as the Dallas Mountaineers fell to Marian Catholic 39-19 in a non-conference season opening game.

Dallas tailback Frank Valvano ran 80 yards for a touchdown on the first play of the year, but a few minutes later was banished from the game after arguing with a Marian tackler and officials. Coach Ted Jackson joined the argument, which held the game up for 20 minutes, but didn't get Valvano back on the field.

The Mounts took a 13-0 lead in the first quarter when quarterback Bill Puchalsky scored from two yards out. Marian answered

with two touchdowns in the second quarter, but Dallas responded with its third score on a four-yard run by Eric Jancik, who replaced Valvano.

It was all Marian after that, as quarterback Brent Andrew riddled the Mountaineer secondary for three touchdowns and ran for the final score.

Dallas dominated on the ground, but that wasn't enough to overcome Andrew's day. The Mounts also fumbled three times, losing two of them, and didn't recover Marian's lone fumble.

Both teams were heavily penalized: Dallas 10 times for 106 yards and Marina eight times for 77 yards.

Fish and Boat Commission selling patches

To mark 1996 as the 130th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, a commemorative patch featuring the American shad has been issued. When the Commission was established in 1866, one of its primary missions was to restore migratory fishes like the shad to state waters.

The patches sell for \$5 plus 30¢ sales tax, with a limit of five patches per customer. The patch is a limited edition, with only 5,000 created, and may be purchased at Fish and Boat Commission Headquarters in Harrisburg or by mail.

Mail orders should include an additional \$1 per patch for shipping and handling. Checks should be made payable to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and directed to: Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission - Patches, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

Run/Walk for Tyler Hospital Sept. 28

Tyler Memorial Hospital, Tunkhannock will hold its annual 5K Run/Walk on September 28, beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the hospital.

The race, partially funded by a grant from the PA. Attorney General's Office, promotes a drug and alcohol-free approach to good health.

Trophies will be awarded to the top male and female finishers and medals to the first three runners in a number of age groups. All registered entrants receive a T-shirt.

Proceeds benefit Tyler Memorial Hospital's campaign to purchase a new Mobile Intensive Care Unit. Registration is \$10 before race day and \$12 the day of the race. For more information, contact Teena and Garry Thatcher, 836-3850.

SPORTS THIS WEEK

DALLAS	LAKE-LEHMAN
Football Fri., 9-6 @ Meyers	Football Fri., 9-6 @ Nanticoke
Girls' Field Hockey Wed., 9-4 @ Wyo. Seminary	Girls' Field Hockey Wed., 9-4 Coughlin
Fri., 9-6 Tunkhannock	Fri., 9-6 @ Hazleton
Mon., 9-9 @ Abington Heights	Mon., 9-9 Wallenpaupack
Wed., 9-11 Lake-Lehman	Wed., 9-11 @ Dallas
Boys' Soccer Wed., 9-4 @ Lake-Lehman	Boys' Soccer Wed., 9-4 Dallas
Fri., 9-6 Crestwood	Fri., 9-6 @ Abington Heights
Tues., 9-10 @ Meyers	Tue., 9-10 Hazleton
Girls' Volleyball Thur., 9-5 @ Meyers	Girls' Volleyball Thur., 9-5 Wyo. Valley West
Mon., 9-9 WS Vo Tech	Mon., 9-9 Meyers
Golf Thur., 9-5 Pittston, Irem	Wed., 9-11 @ WS Vo Tech
Mon., 9-9 Wyo. Sem, Huntsville	Golf Thur., 9-5 Tunkhannock
Cross Country Wed. 9-11 @ Crestwood	Mon., 9-9 Coughlin
All dates weather permitting	

Send your sports reports to:
The Dallas Post, 45 Main Rd., Dallas PA 18612