

Old Shoe Game is about more than the trophy this year

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it may be kicker Matt Douglas, who booted a 54-year field goal earlier in the season, and who usually pins opposing teams in the end zone with booming kick-offs. "Douglas is a major factor," says Gorgone. But the Lehman coach knows there's always more to worry about when he goes up against the Mountaineers.

"They're super. They're big. They have a lot going for them," he says. To beat them, "You've got to play great defense, and mix up the offense." That's something Lehman hasn't needed to do often this year, as a solid running attack has lessened the need to pass. Three-year starting quarterback D.J. Kapson is throwing the ball less this year than in the past as backs Travis McRoy, Rich Patton and Josh Kuwaye have been pounding out the yardage.

McRoy and Kuwaye combined for nearly 300 yards against Crestwood last week, and the Black Knights' top-rated defense shut down the Comets' high-powered passing attack to preserve a 21-19 win.

Dallas is coming off a 48-0 thrashing of Meyers in which Matt Jackson reached the 4,000 yard

Dallas holds big lead in Old Shoe Games

There have been 51 Old Shoe Games, starting in 1948, when three Back Mountain high schools played. The trophy originally was presented to the team with the best record. Only later, particularly after school consolidation, did a single game determine the holder of the Old Shoe trophy.

There have been three ties, in 1956, 1982 and 1988. More than half the time, the losing team has not scored, and there was a streak of eight shutouts from 1989 to 1996. Three games have been decided by a single point; 1953, 1977 and 1980. The largest winning margin was a 50-0 victory by Dallas in 1972.

In the 13 years during which three teams played, Dallas won only once. Since then, Dallas has won 30 times, Lehman eight.

Scores of the Old Shoe Game

Year	Score
1948	Kingston Twp. 14, Dallas 0
1949	Lehman 7, Dallas 0
1950	Lehman 20, Dallas 0
1951	Dallas 20, Westmoreland 19
1952	Westmoreland 19, Dallas 0
1953	Lehman 21, Dallas 0
1954	Lehman 12, Dallas 0
1955	Westmoreland 6, Dallas 0
1956	Tie, Lehman, Westmoreland and Dallas each suffered one loss against the other teams.
1957	Lehman 13, Dallas 6
1958	Lehman 26, Westmoreland 6
1959	Lehman 37, Westmoreland 0
1960	Westmoreland 20, Lehman 7
1961	Dallas 18, Lehman 7
1962	Dallas 14, Lehman 0
1963	Dallas 19, Lehman 0
1964	Dallas 18, Lehman 6
1965	Dallas 31, Lehman 0
1966	Dallas 35, Lehman 14
1967	Lehman 25, Dallas 0
1968	Lehman 23, Dallas 0
1969	Lehman 28, Dallas 8
1970	Dallas 24, Lehman 14
1971	Dallas 45, Lehman 0
1972	Dallas 50, Lehman 0
1973	Dallas 34, Lehman 6
1974	Dallas 12, Lehman 7
1975	Dallas 15, Lehman 7
1976	Dallas 13, Lehman 7
1977	Dallas 7, Lehman 6
1978	Lehman 42, Dallas 14
1979	Lehman 14, Dallas 7
1980	Dallas 20, Lehman 19
1981	Dallas 34, Lehman 6
1982	Dallas 16, Lehman 16
1983	Dallas 16, Lehman 0
1984	Lehman 33, Dallas 0
1985	Dallas 7, Lehman 0
1986	Dallas 15, Lehman 2
1987	Dallas 27, Lehman 0
1988	Dallas 21, Lehman 17
1989	Dallas 6, Lehman 0
1990	Lehman 7, Dallas 0
1991	Dallas 42, Lehman 0
1992	Dallas 21, Lehman 0
1993	Dallas 21, Lehman 0
1994	Dallas 19, Lehman 0
1995	Lehman 9, Dallas 0
1996	Dallas 21, Lehman 0
1997	Dallas 20, Lehman 12
1998	Dallas 20, Lehman 0

"There's a lot riding on this game. There's a lot of scenarios with districts."

Rich Gorgone
Lake-Lehman head coach

milestone in rushing. Jackson ran for 116 yards and a touchdown in the first half before sitting out the rest of the game with a sore shoulder.

But Gorgone isn't intimidated, even if he is a little surprised with this team's performance this year.

"We're pleased to be here," he says, knowing that the Knights weren't that highly regarded when the season began. But he's been here before, and so have many of his players.

"They've had some playoff experience," Gorgone says, especially his seniors, most of whom played on the 1997 district championship team.

Jackson says his teamwork has put his squad on top of the Division II standings. "It's a good bunch of kids, very close-knit," he says. "That's our strength; they all want each other to do well."

Of course, it doesn't hurt to have two of the league's best runners and a sophomore quarterback who can throw or run with equal ease. "We've thrown the ball more than we have in the past," Jackson says, because not only can quarterback Chuck Suppon - only a sophomore - handle the ball, he has a couple of good targets in Randy Knappman and Jason Race.

Still, in games like the Old Shoe, "Not beating yourself is the key."

What the players think

They may be fierce opponents when they take the field in the 52nd Old Shoe Game, but three local high school seniors worked together seamlessly at Grotto/Pizza Sunday night.

The trio, Matt Douglas of Dallas and Dave DeLong and Matt Kehler of Lake-Lehman, were on the evening kitchen shift Halloween night. Kehler has been working at Grotto for about a year; Douglas and DeLong have been working together for about four months. "We get along pretty well," says DeLong.

Douglas has had a memorable season already. Aside from getting the chance to play outside linebacker in place of injured Jeff Parrish - "It's fun," says the Dallas senior - Douglas booted a 54-yard field goal that set a conference record and was only four yards short of the best ever by a high school player. His advice for the Mountaineers? "Watch out for McRoy," the big (5-10, 225 lb.) fullback.

Kehler was quick to point out there's a lot more to the Black Knights than big, tough running backs. The team is the top-ranked defense in the Wyoming Valley Conference. Beating Wyoming Area "pretty good" was a highlight for the 250 lb. tackle.

This season's success has come about through hard work, he said. Kehler was a sophomore when Lehman won the district championship in 1997, and remembers giving that team's seniors a good workout in practice. He sees the same thing this year; a good group of sophomores who put the upperclassmen through their paces during the week.

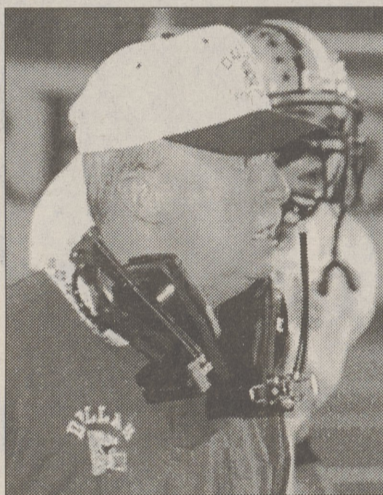
DeLong has been the starting



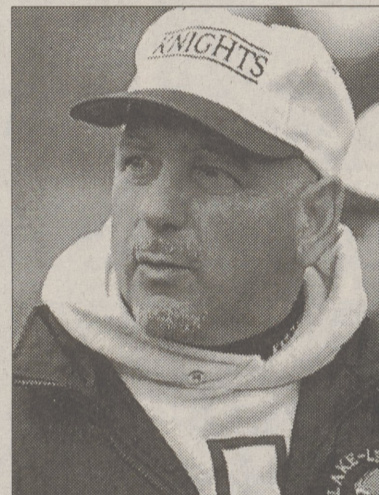
Travis McRoy, left, has been nearly unstoppable out of the Lake-Lehman backfield. But so has Matt Jackson, right, who set the Dallas all-time rushing record, and topped 4,000 yards last week.



POST FILE PHOTOS



Head coaches, Ted Jackson of Dallas, left, and Rich Gorgone of Lake-Lehman.



They know how to win

center for two years, and also was on the district championship team. He thinks the Black Knights need to "keep pounding the ball" as they have all year to have a shot at winning Saturday. Kapson hasn't taken a snap in the shotgun position all year, DeLong says.

Douglas echoes his coach when asked what it will take to keep the Old Shoe trophy at Dallas. "Low turnovers, and a good solid game," he says.

Lehman will have one advantage; the game will be played on their field. "Home field will help out," says DeLong.

"It's going to be a good game," says Randy Knappman, a two-year starter at split end and defensive back. "They don't pass too much. We've got to stop the run before we stop the pass."

Knappman thinks the Mountaineers have some work to do in that area. "We've been letting

people score too many points," he said, although that wasn't the case Saturday.

"We've become more of a team by overcoming adversity," he says, especially filling the gap left when veteran linebacker Jeff Parrish was lost to injury for most of the season.

Matt Jackson is a three-year starter in the Dallas backfield, and the leading rusher in the conference this season. The son of the Dallas coach is diplomatic when asked about the Old Shoe matchup. "They're a good team. I hope we can be a little better that day," he says.

Jackson shares the credit for his success with his key blockers, especially fullbacks Matt Aciri and Jeff Mattie. A safety on defense, Jackson says he won't key on anyone in particular on the other side. "You have to look out for everybody," he says.

Ticket information

Tickets for the Dallas vs. Lake-Lehman game to be held Saturday, Nov. 6, at 2 p.m. at Lake-Lehman will go on sale at times listed below: **Dallas High School** - Athletic Office, Thursday, Nov. 4, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; Friday, Nov. 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. **Lake-Lehman High School Office**, Thursday, Nov. 4, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; Friday, Nov. 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

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Ted Jackson
Dallas head coach

Defense could do it

Besides sharing the top of the Division II standings, Dallas and Lake-Lehman have a lot in common this year. Both teams have one loss in the division, both rely on a potent running attack, both have quality quarterbacks who can put the ball in the air as necessary, or tuck it in and take off.

But the most striking similarity may be the defenses. The two teams have allowed only a combined 204 points this year - 99 for Dallas and 105 for Lehman. The next best figure in Division II is GAR's 140 points allowed. On offense, the Back Mountain teams are the leading scorers by far, with Dallas tallying up 263 points and Lehman 243.

The wild card could be Dallas kicker Matt Douglas, who has enough foot to hit a late-game field goal if one's needed.

Given all this, the game could turn out any way you might imagine, but it's usually a good bet that defense prevails when these teams get together. The winning team hasn't topped 21 points in the past seven years, and don't be surprised if that's as far as anyone can get Saturday.

Then again, if Kapson and Suppon air it out ...

Last game?

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according to those, Lehman would move up to AAA next year. That's because this year's freshman class has an exceptionally large number of boys, about 125 compared to 75 to 80 in past classes, said Rich Gorgone, head football coach. So, if the ranges stay about the same, the two schools will compete in the same class the next two years.

Even at that, Dallas and Lehman will have new challenges next season, because the present Wyoming Valley Conference will be merged into the new Northeastern PA Football Conference. That will mean AAA and AAAA teams in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties (plus Williamsport, which is AAAA) will play a 10-game schedule among the two classes. Dallas and Lehman, with just over 300 boys, would be in the same league as Hazleton, with 1,100 boys.

At the same time, there would be few AA teams left in the area, so local teams would play AA and Class A teams from the Scranton area. A game like the Old Shoe, which this year matches AA Lake-Lehman and AAA Dallas, would not fit in the schedule.

Playoffs would still be conducted in each of the four classes, with post-season play determined by a points system that takes into account the strength of schedule.

"It's just a crazy scenario," said Wolensky.

Gorgone thinks so, too, and he believes the so-called superconference won't succeed if it eliminates traditional rivalries like the Old Shoe Game.

by Ronald Bartizek

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