

A quarterback's atypical ballgame

By C.J. Rieak
staff writer

Saturday's game with Albion College was not a typical performance for Albion quarterback Bruce Crosthwaite.

Indeed, very little of the game was typical. For starters, Adrian won, upsetting the defending Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association champions 24-10 at Adrian.

The junior from Rochester had thrown for 1,289 yards in the first seven games, an average of 183 yards per game. He had 15 touchdowns and 89 completions in 158 attempts (56.5 percent) and was ranked eighth in NCAA Division III passing efficiency through six games.

It figured that against Albion, the best defensive team overall and against the run — allowing just 43 rushing yards per game — in the MIAA, the Bulldogs would have to throw the ball effectively to win.

Crosthwaite began as if to carry out that strategy. He completed his first six passes, four in an opening drive that resulted in a 20-yard field goal. His first three earned first downs for Adrian.

But the game plan switched on the Bulldogs' second possession. They started running the ball. And they made it work. Ten consecutive running plays moved the ball from Adrian's 13 to the Albion 11. On fourth-down-and-2 from there, Crosthwaite threw his only pass of the drive, a 4-yard completion to Robert Banks.

Wayne Roedel's 4-yard run put Adrian up 10-0. It also put a different perspective on Adrian's attack. "I'll tell you what," Crosthwaite said afterwards, "Our offensive line played their best game since I've been here."

The Bulldogs' proficiency on the ground was reflected in Crosthwaite's passing statistics. After his quick start, he finished with a meager (by his standards) nine-for-14 passing for 88 yards. He had two passes intercepted.

Crosthwaite did something else unusual — he ran the ball, and he did so effectively. A first-drive 11-yard gain on a bootleg was a key play.

"We just put that in this week," he said of the bootleg run in the opening scoring drive. "I would rather (run) I like carrying the ball."

But Adrian's coaches don't agree. Crosthwaite's arm and head are his most valuable commodities. He throws well and can read defenses better than most.

Against Albion, he spotted openings in the middle of the line, openings no other team had been able to capitalize on. The Britons were hurt when two interior defensive starters were injured.

"That was definitely a factor in the game," admitted Crosthwaite of the key injuries. "But we knew we were going to move the ball against them."

Another factor in Adrian's favor was Banks. The wide receiver has combined with Crosthwaite to make a deadly, fast-strike weapon. His 31 catches and nine TDs going into the game proved that. It also convinced the Britons to double-cover Banks.

"They moved their strong safety over to cover him, too," said Crosthwaite. That's all the junior quarterback needed to see. "That took one more player out of the middle," he said.

SO THE BULLDOGS ran the ball, gaining 243 yards on 59 carries. Their two long scoring drives were accomplished by slugging it up on the ground. Following a missed Albion field goal with 11:52 left in the first quarter, Adrian traveled 80 yards in 17 running plays for the clinching TD.

"I didn't think we were going to run at them like that," admitted Crosthwaite. It seemed apparent Albion was intent on containing Crosthwaite, and the Britons did that well. Crosthwaite's first interception, by safety Mike Grant, came after he had guided Adrian to the Albion 11.

He wasn't supposed to be there, he explained of the miscue. Albion took over at the 20 and drove for a touchdown to tie it 10-10 at half.

Crosthwaite's second interception was nearly as costly. Adrian had forged ahead on Alan Jakubowski's blocked punt and 3-yard runner for a third-quarter TD. After the Bulldogs stopped Albion on a fourth-and-1 play and took over at their own 34, Crosthwaite threw a wobbly pass into a throng of players along the sideline.

PAUL ELDER intercepted it and Albion had the ball at the Adrian 41.

"I was in between throwing that one out of bounds and trying to put it in there," explained Crosthwaite. But Albion's tenacious pass coverage documented its respect for Crosthwaite, the MIAA's leading passer last year, and Banks, who still caught five passes. The prettiest came in the second quarter. Crosthwaite pump-faked, freeing the defensive backs for an instant, then lofted a pass toward Banks.

Banks sliced between the two Albion defenders covering him, leaped and pulled in the 27-yard pass for a first down at the Albion 13.

"He does that once a week," Crosthwaite said of Banks. "He's just a great receiver."

The win had major consequences for both teams. They are tied for second in the MIAA at 3-1. Adrian plays at Kalamazoo College (1-3) in the MIAA Saturday while Albion hosts league-leader Hope. Wins by Albion and Adrian would result in a three-way tie for first.

As Crosthwaite put it, "Now, I'm rooting for Albion."

Engineer skid continues

The hard times continue for the Plymouth-based Hennessey Engineers North America hockey team.

The losing streak has hit five, and the margin of defeat is growing wider. Last Friday, the Engineers lost 8-4 to North American Junior Hockey League-leading Compuware at the Plymouth Cultural Center Ice Arena.

Saturday, undefeated Compuware drilled the Engineers 10-0 at the Oak Park Compuware Arena.

"Friday night we played well but couldn't cash in on our chances," said first-year Hennessey coach A.J. Baker. "Saturday we were extremely flat and Compuware could do no wrong."

On Friday, the Engineers got two goals from Darrell Sattler and one from Leif Gustafson and Jeff Smith.

Baker is optimistic the skid will end soon. Like Friday night, The Engineers will host winless Chicago at the Cultural Center (game time 8:20 p.m.).

HOMETOWN TALENT: The NAJHL players from the Plymouth-Canton community are enjoying some success in the early going of the 1986-87 season.

• Scott Warden, Falcons. After six games he had two goals, four assists, one game-winning goal (vs. the Engineers) and 25 minutes in penalties.

• Chris Belhart, Engineers. After six games he had three goals and two assists.

• Eric Kapelanski, Engineers. After six games, three goals and two assists and he has yet to see the penalty box.

• Tom Yockey, Falcons. One goal, two assists in two games.

• Bill Pye, Falcons. Goalie has appeared in two games and allowed eight goals. He has faced 71 shots and has a 1-1 win-loss record.

The Engineers' leading scorers continue to be linemates Larry Pilut and Leif Gustafson. Pilut has three goals and 10 assists while Gustafson has five goals and seven assists.

—Chris McCosky

By C.J. Rieak
staff writer

In a nine-game college football season, one play rarely amounts to much. Sure, there are plays that rate the label "big." But what Matt Santilli did for Adrian College in its 24-10 upset of Albion College Saturday probably won't even rate an honorable mention in a season-long list of key plays.

It probably should. But if there was a Big Play of the Game award to be presented, it would go to Al Jakubowski for blocking a punt and returning it 3 yards for the go-ahead touchdown in the third quarter.

But for Jakubowski's block to remain a turning point in a pivotal Michigan Independent Athletic Association (MIAA) game, Adrian had to retain the lead. That's where Santilli stepped to the forefront.

"We did some things for them during the week," the senior defensive back from Canton said. "Albion's not a real good passing team. And when they get behind, they don't play catch-up well."

BUT THE BRITONS had a big chance early in the fourth quarter Saturday. They trailed 17-10, but an

Santilli lace

Canton grad helps bolster solid Adrian defense

people in sports

Interception had given them the ball at Adrian's 41. Seven plays later, they faced third down and 8 at the 13.

Obvious passing situation. Don't think Santilli didn't know it. Albion had Bryan Crosby split wide, outside of tight end Brad Colar, on the left. Santilli was lined up opposite Crosby. Briton quarterback Dave Yaw took the snap and rolled left, looking for Crosby near the goal line. Yaw pumped but didn't throw. Crosby was blanketed by Santilli. Yaw misfired over the middle.

Incompletion. And to further ruin a golden scoring chance, kicker Ken Slesak's 32-yard field goal attempt missed. Albion never again came close to scoring.

That's the play we covered against all week," said Santilli. "Both the tight end and the wide receiver come off the line hard, then the wide out cuts it to the corner. The coaches picked it up in the films. I just recognized it."

If the game were that simple,

there wouldn't be a place in it for 5-foot-8, 170-pound defensive backs. Which is Santilli's size. It should also be noted that Crosby, the Albion wide receiver he covered, stands 6-4.

SANTILLI ADMITTED he never thought he'd play college football when he graduated from Canton. "Not at all," he said. "For me it's a dream come true. A lot of my friends were getting all sorts of offers and I wasn't getting anything. Coach (Bob) Khoohe helped me a lot."

No doubt Adrian supporters are happy he did. The play Santilli made against Albion came at a key time, and insured an upset that could garner Adrian a share of the MIAA crown. Should the Bulldogs beat Kalamazoo (1-3 in the MIAA, 1-7 overall) and if Albion can knock off unbeaten league-leader Hope Saturday, there will be three teams tied at 4-1 — including Adrian.

"This was one of the best," he said of the win over Albion. "This one

might be the best (of my college career)."

It's hard for Santilli to believe, but Saturday was his last home game for Adrian. The Kalamazoo contest will be his last game. He leads the team with two fumble recoveries this year. And he's second among current players in career tackles with 97. He has 33 this season.

"This is it for me," he said. "I can't believe I've been here four years, and I've played my last game in this stadium."

BUT WHAT a last game. Adrian's defense kept the Britons in check throughout, concentrating on stopping all-MIAA running back Lance Brown. Brown did gain 101 yards rushing, but it took 26 carries. And he never did break a long run.

"All our defenses were designed to push (Brown) inside," said Santilli. "Last year he broke a big play against us. That's what we were doing today — everything concentrated on him."

What Santilli left unsaid was what that brand of defense dictates to a defending back. Slack a defense to stop an opposing runner and there's a weak link somewhere.

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