

CC, Rice collide — again

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

Here we go again. Back on Sunday, Oct. 11, prep football fans just assumed that longtime rivals Redford Catholic Central and Birmingham Brother Rice would be meeting again 12 months later, around the same place at the same time.

But in a little over a month the two Catholic League Central Division rivals will be going at it again, and this time the stakes are much higher.

It had to be hard to imagine that Walled Lake Central High School would be playing host this Saturday to these two Titans.

Usually the gathering place for these Boys Bowl foes is Wiser Stadium in Pontiac, or the Silverdome for the Catholic League title.

Rice comes into Saturday's Class A semifinal (game time 1:30 p.m.) seeking its fourth trip to the state finals. Rice captured the coveted crown in 1977, 1980 and 1983.

But history may be on CC's side. The Shamrocks will be seeking their second state title (CC won in 1979) under coach Tom Mach, who ironically is one of the few coaches around who can claim a winning percentage over Rice coach Al Fracassa.

MACH CAN'T EXPLAIN why he has a 7-6 record over Fracassa. Including a 10-7 double-overtime victory over Rice this year's Boys Bowl. In 1981 CC beat Rice twice, once during the regular season and again in the Catholic League finals.

football

(Rice, however, leads the series, 14-11, with one tie.)

But when it comes to Rice-CC, no matter what sport, the teams usually prepare a little longer and concentrate a little harder. Mach and his team are no exceptions to the rule.

This week, CC practices started around 3 p.m. and lasted until dark. "We're approaching this game like any other game, but you always want that little extra," said Mach. "We're always aiming at them. We're taking them as our arch-rivals and that means a little more. The game usually generates a lot more in-school publicity and it creates a lot of excitement around school."

But Mach doesn't really notice his players' mood changing, despite the fact that it's Rice again. "We've had good practices all year," he said. "I think we're pretty intense every week. This team always does a real good job of preparing mentally and physically."

"I think we'd get the kids' attention anyway at this time of the year (the playoffs). You don't have to work as hard to get them motivated."

AS FOR THE upcoming game, Mach predicts "a little more scoring."

During the regular season dou-

ble-overtime battle, CC had five first downs and Rice only two. But Rice outgained CC in total yardage, 136-70.

It was a real defensive battle. "I think Rice will do more throwing this game," Mach said. "But they won't change as far as running the ball. The key to their success is still using Jason Wolf."

In the first meeting, Wolf, a breakaway threat, was held to less than 80 yards.

"They'll throw to him in the backfield and use him in different ways," Mach said. "They'll still use him 95 percent of the time."

CC's offense, meanwhile, has pored up in the past two weeks. The Shamrocks threw for 133 yards in last week's 10-7 win over Sterling Heights.

Three players — Ted Rieple, center Kurt Ross and Mike Firestone — are unsung heroes on an offensive line who are joined by two blue-chip, Division I-caliber linemen in Toby Heaton and Pete Dankert.

"THOSE THREE aren't quite as well-known, but they're workmanlike and get the job done," Mach said. "They're intense when they have to be and just do what they have to do."

"We've been able to move the ball against some real tough defenses and they've done a real good job all year even though they don't get much recognition."

But what concerns Mach more than anything is Rice's defense.

Former Hawk assumes starting role for Central

By Steve Kowalski
special writer

On more than one occasion during his senior year at Farmington Hills Harrison, Dave Delekta met Michigan State coach George Perles and Michigan coach Bo Schembechler.

That's where the Big Ten's courtship of Delekta ended. Perles and Schembechler were more interested in Delekta's teammate John Miller, now a starting defensive back at MSU.

Instead, Delekta, a 1985 graduate of Harrison, was coveted by most Mid-American Conference schools. He chose Central Michigan over Eastern Michigan and this year is one of the mainstays of the CMU defensive line.

The Chippewa defensive unit is first against the rush in the MAC, allowing a mere 128 yards per game. Delekta has 26 total tackles this year and, for his performance earlier this fall against Kent State (a 24-21 loss), was named CMU's defensive player of the week.

DELEKTA'S progress at CMU has impressed defensive line coach Jim Schulte. Two years ago, Delekta was a 220-pound red-shirted freshman who spent Saturday afternoons watching from the sidelines. Delekta tips the scales at 250 pounds today.

"Dave has become a legitimate Mid-American Conference defensive lineman," Schulte said. "Dave is still a young player in our program, and



Dave Delekta

he has worked very hard up to this point. I'd say he's beaten the time table a little bit.

"I think it shows that hard work pays off," he added. "Dave is one of those players that had nice credentials at a highly successful high school whom we projected to get bigger."

Delekta said CMU's winning tradition attracted him to the Mount Pleasant school. The Chippewas have not won a MAC title since 1980, but are 74-29-4 in 10 years under coach Herb Deromedi.

DELEKTA became accustomed to winning at Harrison, losing just two

games in three years at the varsity level.

Harrison won the Class A state championship in 1982 and, during his senior year in 1984, made it to the Class B state semifinals.

The Chippewas are 3-4-1 overall this year, 3-3-1 in the MAC, entering the season finale Saturday at Bowling Green.

Delekta is getting a bit restless waiting for a MAC championship ring.

"It just keeps eluding us," he said. "We know we have a lot of talent here. It hurts a lot to lose games."

"I still have two years to win a MAC title. I know I'll try my hardest, and I know the guys I'm playing with will try their hardest."

"LIKE COACH Deromedi says 'You have yet to play your best game.'"

Delekta's strong suit is his play against the rush, Schulte said. He had one sack this year, and Schulte said his pass rush is improving.

"If you asked Dave what his weakness is it would be his pass rush," Schulte said. "But he has become adequate in rushing the passer."

"I'm very confident having him in there, and on films I'm starting to see him around the quarterback a lot more when he's throwing the ball."

Delekta has two years of eligibility remaining at Central, and Schulte looks forward to continued progress.

"I'm excited to see where Dave will be next year and the year after that," Schulte said.

Ocelots eye national championship

By C.J. Riesak
staff writer

Pardon Nick O'Shea if he is beginning to feel snakebitten as a soccer coach. It's a feeling he's earned.

O'Shea took over for Ed Dudek as girls soccer coach at both Livonia Churchill and Schoolcraft College early this year. Both are contenders. Churchill made it to the state finals before losing to Plymouth Salem last spring.

SC is doing just as well on a higher level. The Lady Ocelots are ranked second in the NJCAA; they have a realistic chance of bringing SC its first-ever national team title when they travel to the eight-team NJCAA tournament, which starts Thursday in Trenton, N.J.

But it won't be easy. Because — just as Churchill had to battle its

soccer

way through an extremely tough draw, playing the top five ranked teams in the state to get to the finals. SC must now wade through the most difficult draw in the tournament if it is to capture the championship.

"I must be some sort of jinx," a frustrated O'Shea said.

THE LADY OCELOTS are the second seed in the NJCAA tournament with a 4-1-1 mark against junior college teams. They are 10-2-3 overall. Nassau (N.Y.) CC is the top seed with a 9-0-3 JC mark. Meramec

(St. Louis) CC is seeded third at 3-0-0, and Essex (Baltimore) CC is No. 4 at 8-0-0.

So far, so good, right? Problem is, the bottom half of the draw isn't seeded. First-round games are drawn. And SC drew, as its first-round opponent, defending NJCAA champ Monroe (N.Y.) CC.

"I can't believe it," said O'Shea. "With Churchill I had to play the top five teams in the state, now I draw the defending national champions."

Wait — that's not the worst of it. Should the Lady Ocelots survive their opening-round game, they will meet the Meramec-Mitchell CC winner Friday. Meramec, a heavy favorite to win its opener, is the only JC team to beat SC this season.

Wins in those two games would put them into Sun-Jay's finals for a possible showdown with Nassau.

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