

Western gridders meet similar foe

By BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

When Walled Lake Western (10-0) and Romulus (8-2) meet at 1:30 p.m. Saturday in the Class A Region 3 football final at Western, it will appear each team is looking in a mirror.

"These are two very similar programs," said Romulus coach Dan Henry. "I played all my seniors on varsity as sophomores and so did they. They play good defense and we play good defense. They have a good kicking game and we have a good kicking game."

Western coach Chuck Apap agreed.

"They come out hitting like we do," he said. "They play physical football like we do. They run the ball the majority of the time like we do. They have good defense like we do. They have a good kicking game like we do. We match up very well against them. It's almost like two clones."

Let's compare notes. Western's leading rusher is 5-foot-10, 205-pound senior Arnie Gillert, who averages 7.2 yards per carry with 26 touchdowns. The Eagles' leading rusher is 5-11, 170-pound junior Philip Franklin, who averages 7 yards per carry. Western's place kicker Travis Macqua is dead on 40 yards away and is Romulus kicker Jon Devereaux. The Warriors average about 30 points per game while Romulus is averaging 21.

Defensively, the Warriors give up an average of just 11 points per game. Western beat Northville last week, 23-6, in the state tournament opener. The Eagles have recorded three shutouts in their last four games including a 34-0 waxing of Highland Park in the tournament opener.

So who has the advantage in this one? That depends.

Romulus has the edge in emotion. The Eagles starting flanker, Chris Evans, died last month in a motorcycle accident. They have dedicated their season to his memory.

"The kids have had to overcome a lot of adversity," Henry said.

On paper, Western has the edge. Not only are the Warriors

defending their home turf, but they have a definite size advantage up front. Western's offensive line is made up of four seniors and a junior and averages 230 pounds. Senior center Steve Bigham (238 pounds) anchors the line. Seniors Dwayne Lucas (205) and Derek Lindsay (232) are the guards while senior Norm Garmen (228) and junior Tom Adkins (248) are the starting tackles. Garmen, Bigham and senior Matt Loebig (232) anchor the defensive line.

The Romulus front line is anchored by senior two-way starter Mike Grube (225) and Rob Graham (185) and junior Tom Welch (225).

"We don't have those 240-pound guys like they do," Henry said. "We have to be quicker than them and get to the ball. Northville did not get good pursuit of the ball. We have to get to the ball or Gilbert will get his usual 200 yards."

The Warriors will also have to overcome a bit of adversity themselves as three starters will be on the sidelines at game time.

Hard hitting senior linebacker Zack Budden — Western's field general on defense — broke his arm three weeks ago and remains sidelined with a cast. Senior left tackle Greg Garback suffered a neck injury two weeks ago and is unable to play. Senior tightend Tracy Coughlin sustained a severe cut on his hand last week and is lost for the remainder of the season.

"I would feel a lot better if we had our three regulars in line," Apap said. "But we'll be ready to go. We have good kids that will fill in and get it done."

Junior Eddie Wood has taken over the field general position for Budden and has matured into a solid middle linebacker.

Adkins has filled in admirably for Garback and senior speedster Matt Engott and reliable junior Scott Palmer will step in for Coughlin.

"Dan Henry is a good coach and he has brought a lot of discipline to their program," Apap said. "It will be a great football game. They are No. 2 in the region and we are No. 1. We'll find out just how good we are."

Shamrocks have rematch with Colts

By STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Ray Dawood said he was just a "little guy" in 1985, the last time Troy and Redford Catholic Central met in a Class A football playoff game.

Come to think of it, Dawood is still a little guy — but this time he won't be watching the Troy-CC playoff matchup from the stands.

Dawood, a 5-foot-8, 176-pound tailback/defensive back, will be a key performer in Saturday's 1:30 p.m. Class AA Region 3 final against favored CC at Pontiac's Wisner Stadium.

Dawood's brother, Brian, was one of the defensive heroes in Troy's 10-0 upset win over CC in the '85 Class A playoff semifinal. So talking to his big brother last weekend was as good as any scouting report Ray will receive.

CC, which will outweigh Troy at almost every position, won the Class AA title in 1990 and last year lost in the championship game to Saginaw Arthur Hill. Both teams bring 10-0 records into the game.

"I talked to my brother after the Detroit Henry Ford (playoff) game (a 17-6 victory) and he said 'Just cause they're big doesn't mean they're unsteppable,'" said Ray, who has gained 1,189 yards

"I don't know what it is. We just play with our hearts. We have no size, so we fly to the ball like piranhas. That's what coach (Gary Griffith) calls us."

Ray Dawood
Troy football player

rushing and scored 19 touchdowns. "For the Henry Ford game, we were just kind of going through the motions, but CC, it's exciting to be playing them. CC is supposed to be the team to beat but I think we can beat them."

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CC beat Mumfords 28-12 in a first-round game to reach the Region 3 final. Mumfords' offensive line averaged about 300 pounds and included tackles that weighed 360 and 340 pounds, respectively.

If the Shamrocks considered them giants, then the Colts are midgets. Troy's biggest offensive lineman is senior tackle Aaron Mestri, who is 6-foot-2, 240 pounds. The rest of the Colts line includes guard Joe McKay (5-10, 170), center Clayton Swenson (5-

9, 165), guard Ajay (5-7, 205) and tackle Nick Truza (6-1, 185).

Troy's defense hasn't allowed a touchdown in 10 quarters and is led by linebacker Jeff Fisher (6-9, 190). Another active defender is tackle Carl Barnes (5-7, 140), who is smaller than any of CC's defensive backs.

"I think we hit our peak (growth) in seventh grade," Dawood said.

CC averages about 240 pounds across the offensive line and is led by senior guard Joe Suhajda (6-3, 245) and two-way tackle Aaron Babiez (6-2, 240). The Shamrocks rarely throw and feature tailback Freddie Taylor and fullback Jason Krueger to go with two-year starting quarterback Chris Barabara in the backfield.

Taylor, who gained 157 yards and scored four times last week, leads the Shamrocks with 847 yards.

Troy capitalized on six CC turnovers in winning that playoff game seven years ago but CC coach Tom Mach said this year's team is "probably the best we've ever had at not giving the ball up."

The Shamrocks have 10 fumble recoveries and 13 interceptions. They have fumbled only four times, losing two, and Barabara has thrown three interceptions.

Defensive backs Brady Pankow and Jeff LaChapelle lead CC with three interceptions each.

"We haven't turned the ball over all year — knock on wood," Mach said. "Troy looks like a real good football team and it has one of the better defensive units we'll face. They're very quick and handled themselves well against Henry Ford."

Griffith said the Colts must utilize their speed and aggressiveness and the leadership of senior quarterback Bill Helst (24 of 50 completions, 322 yards).

"Their strength is in the offensive and defensive line," Griffith said. "We don't match up physically with them, they have great tradition and a coaching staff second to none. We have to make the field as long as we can for them. We have to have good special teams work and no turnovers."

Ex-players recall last CC-Troy game

By STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

The players' names have changed but the circumstances look awfully familiar.

Saturday's Class AA Region 3 football playoff final between Troy and Redford Catholic Central is a rematch of a 1985 Class A semifinal playoff game played at Allen Park High School.

Troy will be an underdog Saturday at Pontiac's Wisner Stadium, just as it was seven years ago when the two teams met for a berth in the Class A final at the Pontiac Silverdome.

CC had more tradition, more all-state players, more size — but when the final gun sounded, the Shamrocks also had more turnovers (six to two) and less points.

Troy, limited to negative yards rushing, won 10-0, scoring in the

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first quarter after a pair of early CC turnovers.

"It was a cold, windy day," said Troy's '85 quarterback Kurt Schram, reached Tuesday at his job at the Chicago Board of Trade. "CC had 25 pounds on us at every position. They were good; they hit, but we hit just as hard. Their cheering section did all its chants, clapping, turned their backs on us. But our defense stuck it to them."

CC had several all-stars, including lineman Dan Nash (Stanford) and Nick Varajon (Toledo) and wide receiver/defensive back

Ken Wandzel (Michigan State).

"It was a great season, we just didn't have a great game," Varajon said Tuesday night. "As soon as I saw the scouting report, 'I said, we're going to roll.' They were so much smaller than us, I came out there to play. I wanted to abuse this team. (To lose) was the worst feeling in the world."

CC's famed "Brick Wall Defense" didn't suffer many cracks but the turnovers were too much to overcome. Troy scored on a 9-yard pass from Schram to Eric Jenkins and a 35-yard field goal by Scott Kania.

"You put on that (CC) uniform and feel you just can't be beat,

and up to the last 30 seconds I thought we could win," Wandzel said Tuesday. "That's the way I felt, but they made me a believer — that they were giant killers. They beat all the top teams and had good athletes."

"When we made turnovers, they made the best of them. When they made turnovers, we couldn't capitalize."

Said Jeff Rioux, a defensive back/wide receiver and punt returner on the '85 CC team: "We thought we had the team to win it all. No one wanted to get on the bus, we all wanted to go back and play the game we should have played."

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