

Suits starting to get tight

BY CHRIS MAYER
STAFF WRITER

Saying there is a lot riding on Saturday's Birmingham Brother Rice-Orchard Lake St. Mary's football game is a huge understatement.

Playoff berths, division championships and state records all come into play when the Catholic League Central Division rivals take the field at 1 p.m. in Orchard Lake.

The Warriors (4-1, 3-0) are coming off an overtime loss at Detroit Country Day, while the Eagles (6-1, 2-1) have won three straight contests following a Week 3 loss to Detroit Catholic Central.

"It's a big game, no question," OLSM head coach George Porritt said. "Our league is so difficult and this is a great game to play. (Brother Rice) has an outstanding team and program and we believe we've reached that point, too."

"We have no easy games in this league," Brother Rice head coach Al Fracassa said. "Orchard Lake St. Mary's is a very good football team, they have been state champions the past two years, and they are playing very well right now. We respect that."

Here are some of the more intriguing elements surrounding Saturday's game:

■ The picture concerning the Central Division race and the upcoming Catholic League playoffs is becoming clear.

Brother Rice is the Central Division champion with a win over St. Mary's.

A tie would then exist for second place between OLSM and U-D Jesuit, but the tiebreaker favors St. Mary's, however, a three-way tie between Catholic Central (3-1, 2-1), St. Mary's and U-D Jesuit favors CC. The Shamrocks could move to 2-2 in the division with a victory over Warren DeLaSalle on Saturday night.

If the Eagles win Saturday, they would be Central Division co-champions and the division's top seed entering the Catholic League playoffs. Brother Rice would be seeded second.

The top two teams in the Central

PREP FOOTBALL

tral and AA divisions advance to the league semifinals, with the winners advancing to the Prep Bowl's A-B Division championship game at the Pontiac Silverdome.

"I think the league championship is the thing for us right now," Porritt said. "Brother Rice is already in (the Catholic League playoffs), but we need to win this game. If it doesn't happen for us, then we'll have to focus on getting into the state playoffs."

■ Fracassa gets another chance at becoming the state's winningest high school coach. It was somewhat of an upset that he even needed another shot.

He was in search of his 309th career victory last Saturday, but the Warriors fell 16-13 at DCD when Yellow Jackets tight end Adam Goslin recovered a teammate's fumble in the end zone.

Fracassa is currently tied with Lee "Smoke" Boyd (Saginaw Neuve) at 308 career wins.

■ The winner automatically qualifies for the 2001 Michigan High School Athletic Association state playoffs.

Brother Rice, which has an eight-game regular-season schedule this year, is the defending Division 2 state champion; OLSM has captured the last two Division 4 state titles.

"I'm sure St. Mary's wants to get that sixth win and we want that fifth win," Fracassa said.

"So from that standpoint this could be a very good game."

■ The Warriors and Eagles have staged some entertaining games in recent seasons. OLSM has captured two of the last three regular-season meetings, winning by scores of 23-14 in 2000 and 34-13 in '98, while Brother Rice posted a stunning 63-44 triumph in '99.

St. Mary's trounced Warren DeLaSalle (2-4, 0-3) by a score of 43-10 last Saturday.

The Eagles rushed for 406 yards - senior John Payne had 133 yards and a touchdown and junior Marc Sisson contributed 121 yards and three scores -

during the homecoming win in which Eagle QB Troy White was making his third consecutive start.

"We need to run the ball well and have no turnovers," Porritt said. "I think our offensive line is really doing a nice job right now and we've rushed the ball very well the last three games."

Brother Rice watched its season-opening four-game winning streak come to an end against DCD. Tied 10-10 after regulation, the Warriors got the ball first at the 10-yard line and settled for a Ross Ryan field goal and a three-point lead.

Tim Miller (20 carries, 90 yards) had a 7-yard run on DCD's first offensive play in OT. Miller carried again on the next play and he fumbled before reaching the goal line, but Goslin recovered it and rolled into the end zone.

Country Day

Country Day (6-1) took a 10-7 lead midway through the third quarter on Ernie Jackson's 1-yard sneak. Ryan, however, kicked a 37-yard field goal early in the fourth quarter to tie the score.

"Our kids are still getting better and we're becoming a team," Fracassa said. "But who knows what the future holds. We just to have prepare for each game as it comes."

Catholic Central is in very real danger of missing its first trip to the state playoffs since 1994, after losing to University of Detroit-Jesuit on Saturday night, 26-21.

On the other hand, even with the loss to the Cubs, the Shamrocks have a better shot at returning to the Prep Bowl at the Silverdome than U-D does.

The Shamrocks ran into a fourth-quarter buzz saw with the Cubs' offense and quarterback Marc Zera - who led U-D to 19 points in the final period for the win.

The loss drops CC to 3-3 overall and 1-2 in the Central Division, and will need to win its final three games to insure a playoff spot.

Ironically, even with the win, the Cubs can't qualify for the

CHSL playoffs, despite improving to 4-2 overall and 2-2 in the Central.

An Orchard Lake St. Mary win over Brother Rice on Saturday would leave those two teams advancing to the playoffs.

If Rice beats St. Mary and CC beats 2-4 DeLaSalle, a three-way tie between CC, U-D and St. Mary sends the Shamrocks to the playoffs.

But if CC loses to the Pilots, the league and state playoffs are out.

How CC did

Derrick Brooks opened the scoring for CC with a 39-yard TD run on the second series of the game. The Cubs came right back as Zera hit Sean Caselman with a 4-yard scoring pass to tie the score at 7-7.

After a scoreless second quarter, Ryan Rogowski gave CC a 14-7 lead as he stopped a U-D drive by picking off a Zera pass on the CC 5 and returning it 50 yards. He scored five plays later on a 3-yard run.

Zera started the fourth with a 16-yard run to tie the game, but CC came back with a 16-play, 64-yard drive with Brooks going the final 16 yards for the score and a 21-14 lead.

Zera led U-D again, using a four-play drive and hitting Lonnie Hurst for a 37-yard touchdown. But Landon Langham deflected the extra point and CC held a 21-20 lead.

The Shamrocks had to punt on their next possession and the Cubs took over on their 16.

Thirteen plays and 84 yards later, Sean Roland ran in from the 5 to give the Cubs the touchdown and win.

The Cubs outgained CC, 368-247, with Zera completing 17-of-32 for 227 yards.

Derrick Brooks led CC in rushing with 16 carries and 82 yards, while Rogowski had 42 yards on four carries.

Tom Jakacki was 5-of-12 for 76 yards, completing three for 49 yards to Ryan Wroblewski and two more to Rogowski for 27 yards.

Rogowski also led the way on defense with 12 tackles, while Blaine Naysmith had eight.

Sept. 28 Farmington results
North Farmington 29, Farmington 7
Farmington Harrison 61, Northville 20

Hawks take golf win

Farmington Harrison finished 19th in a field of 24 teams Monday in the Oakland County Tournament at Pontiac Country Club.

Matt Lee was the Hawks' lowest scorer, shooting a five-over 77 as Harrison totaled 327 strokes.

Junichi Miura and Joey Graves each shot an 82, Dave Koch had an 86 and John Kluka was at 97.

On Sept. 28, Harrison defeated Livonia Stevenson, 147-162, at San Marino. Lee and Koch shared medalist honors with 1-under 35s as the Hawks improved to

4-5 with their lowest score of the year.

"We're playing very well right now," Coach Bill Spencer said.

Dru Girard was low for Stevenson with a 37. Right behind were Matt Bartnick and Scott Wolfe, each at 38, while Matt Courtright shot a 39. Non-scores for the Spartans were Andy Byberg (39) and Jason Fischer (40).

Harrison had Matt Kjolhede at 39 and Graves at 39 to round out its four scorers. Chris Fitzgerald shot a non-scoring 40 while Ian Chornoby was at 47.

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