

SPORTS

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DAN O'MEARA, EDITOR
953-2141

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STEVE KOWALSKI

Smiley twins give opponents double trouble

The first day of classes arrived in late August and Tom Smiley was ready to get his senior year at Redford Catholic Central started, his twin brother Mike wasn't. Hasn't Tom always been a little more anxious? When the two were born Nov. 21, 1977, Tom arrived in the delivery room seven minutes before Mike.

Tom was a starting inside linebacker for the Class AA state champion Shamrocks, while Mike started at offensive guard and defensive end.

Appropriate enough. If Tom was a lineman, he might have a problem with jumping offside.

"I had to go get gas and he didn't want to wait," said Mike, recalling the first day of school. "I'm more laid back."

Tom got a ride from a friend down the street in their Livonia neighborhood. Turns out, the car in which Tom was riding in the back seat got in an accident.

He ended up on the dash board with severe pain in his neck. The driver and passenger were treated and released. Before long, Tom was lying in a hospital bed.

"At the hospital, Tom said to tell (defensive coordinator) coach (Rick) Coratti, 'I'll be at practice, but I'll be a little late,'" said their mother, Carol Smiley. "The doctor said, 'Let's see if your neck is broken first, then we'll decide if you can play' back."

Tom recovered in time to start the season opener.

If there is a characteristic they share more than any other, it's a will to compete.

"They are fraternal twins, not identical, and don't act alike off the field. Tom has blue eyes, Mike brown. Tom talks more than Mike. They don't even have the same blood type, which is odd for fraternal twins.

Tom likes country music. Mike is a little bit country, a little bit rock 'n' roll.

"I like Elvis (Presley), too," Mike said.

CC's 'Bruise Brothers'

Tom, 6-foot, 295 pounds, wore No. 47 because he said it looked good. Mike (6-0, 210) wore 66 because it was worn by future National Football League hall of famer Lawrence Taylor. He hopes it's because he plays like Taylor.

"That's stretching it a bit," says Tom.

The Smileys have had similar careers at CC, starting in football and also playing on the Shamrock lacrosse team. They even had similar scary football injuries.

Tom's junior year ended with a neck injury in the last game against Dearborn Fordson. He left the field on a stretcher in an ambulance.

How strong is this guy's neck?

"Mike suffers from a neck injury his freshman year and also was taken off on a stretcher. Problem was, the ambulance got stuck in the mud on the CC practice field.

If you've seen the practice field, you can picture an ambulance getting stuck. Someone should have timed it and sent it to America's Funniest Home Videos.

"They had to call for another ambulance," remembers their mother.

The Smileys back each other up on the field.

"If someone pushes Mike, I'll say 'That's my younger brother you're pushing,'" Tom said. "We want to let them know there are two of us. We're the 'Bruise Brothers.'"

Tom Smiley Success in the 'Dome

The Smileys attended St. Michael School in Livonia and played for the Class AA Catholic Youth Organization championship team in the Silverdome. Soccer was their sport until third grade when football became their passion after watching cousins Jeff and Mark Schwartz star on CC football teams in the mid to late '80s.

Their most loyal fan is grandfather Peter Grace, who travels more than an hour to all their games. His real estate agency sponsored the boys' Guss Macker Tournament basketball team, which won the Port Huron championship. Smiley's grade school pal and CC teammate Eric Gilbo even affectionately calls him "Grandpa."

"Grandpa calls us at 7 a.m. to tell us we're ranked in the USA Today," Tom said.

The Shamrocks were ranked 16th in the most recent national poll.

The Smiley's football careers and label of teammates will end after this year. Tom wants to attend Western Michigan University, Mike is looking at Michigan State.

"You don't want to be always associated with your brothers," Mike said.

Winning smiles: Redford Catholic Central seniors (from left) Judah May, Mike Smiley and John Spolsky hoist the trophy following the Shamrocks' 24-0 win over Holt in Saturday's Class AA football championship at the Silverdome.



TOM HAWLEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Shamrocks win AA title, 24-0

Redford Catholic Central finished an undefeated football season with a 24-0 win over previously undefeated Holt in the Class AA championship.

By STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

John Spolsky sat to the right of Redford Catholic Central football coach Tom Mach in the press room following Saturday's Class AA state football championship game.

Fitting, because if ever a player qualified as a coach's right-hand man it's Spolsky, the inspirational leader on both sides of the line of scrimmage for the Shamrocks.

Spolsky softened up Holt with inside yardage, gaining a AA finals game record 109 yards on 22 carries, as the Shamrocks won their fourth state title, 24-0, before 17,692 at the Pontiac Silverdome.

The Shamrocks led 6-0 at halftime and added two touchdowns and a field goal in the second half.

They scored on a two-yard run by Spolsky, a four-yard run by junior

fullback Rich Deptula, a 13-yard pass from quarterback Greg Call to tight end Eric Gilbo and a 26-yard field goal by Eron Kosmowski.

CC's scoring drives covered 63, 66 and 51 yards. The Shamrocks had a 313-49 edge in total yardage and had a time of possession of 32 minutes, 43 seconds to Holt's 15:17.

"I kept telling myself before the game, don't think of fancy plays, just give it to John," Mach said. "He was the man we rallied around. We needed to give it to him."

The Shamrocks finished 13-0, duplicating what the 1992 team accomplished when it defeated Baginew Arthur Hill in the AA final.

The seniors on this year's team did not lose on the freshman or junior varsity level, either.

Holt's speedy tailback Justin Dungey gained 10 yards on his first carry, and finished with only 11 yards on eight carries.

"Holt is a very good team and I'm happy at the way we went after them," Mach said. "We were tough defensively and offensively tried to keep it as long as we can and put it in."

Spolsky's inside running opened up the outside for junior quarterback Greg Call, who finished with 66 yards on 13 carries. Junior tailback Greg Alcalá added 72 yards on 12 carries with a long of 28.

It was Spolsky whom the Rams feared most. The Rams were no slouches, bringing a defense that shut out three teams and limited opponents to 72 points in 12 previous games to the Silverdome.

"He ran a lot, even if he got hit, he kept his legs moving," said Rams quarterback/defensive back Paul Anthony. "We didn't wrap him up very well."

CC finished with 19 first downs, which ties a AA finals game record, and held the Rams to five, a new AA record.

CC sacked Anderson four times, led by junior defensive end Chuck O'Connor with 1½. Deptula had one sack, while Spolsky, Gino DiGiandomenico and Bryan Jeffords finished with a ½ each.

Call and Brian Teeffey each had one interception.

CC kicker Eron Kosmowski, named to the Associated Press all-state first

team, missed field goal attempts of 40 and 29 yards in the first half.

Call's interception at the CC 37 led to the Shamrocks first scoring drive, which took 16 plays and 7:13 off the clock.

Kevin Quay's run up the middle for seven yards was the longest play of the drive, which was capped by Spolsky's two-yard run with 1:00 left in the half.

Kosmowski's extra point was wide, however, leaving the Shamrocks with a 6-0 halftime lead.

The Shamrocks took the opening kickoff of the second half and drove 66 yards in nine plays, taking 8:11 off the clock before scoring on a four-yard run by Deptula on fourth and two. The Shamrocks decided to give the ball to Deptula because Spolsky, who had 27 yards on four carries during the drive, had a minor leg injury.

"If you look at Rich (6-9, 230), he's not much smaller than John, so I said 'Let's give it to Rich,'" Mach said.

The Shamrocks forced the Rams to punt after Jeffords and O'Connor combined to sack Anderson on third

See TEAM, 4C

CC linemen share in team's success

By DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

If you had to give a Most Valuable Player award in the Class AA football championship game Saturday, you'd need to hand out several.

One for each of the Redford Catholic Central offensive linemen.

They tipped the scales in favor of the Shamrocks, who managed to control the ball and grind out a 24-0 victory over previously-unbeaten Holt at the Pontiac Silverdome.

"I can't say enough about the offensive line," CC fullback John Spolsky said. "They don't get a lot of recognition, but we know what they can do. We recognize them and appreciate them."

The all-senior front of Jim McFarlane, Jeff Monette, Mike Smiley, Matt Eyl, Nick Lachapelle, Eric Gilbo and Eron Kosmowski made it possible for the Shamrocks to dominate the clock and outgain the Rams, 300-11, on the ground.

"This is the best offensive line we've had, as far as controlling the football, since I've been at Catholic Central," said CC coach Tom Mach, who ended his 20th year with a fourth state title. "Actually, the backs and the line did a great job of controlling the ball and more so the tempo of the game. It's frustrating for the other team, because you're pounding the ball on them and they can't get it back."

The advantage up front for CC was subtle. Going against another big, strong running team like Holt, the Shamrocks had few long gainers but kept chipping away and moving the ball.

"They had a very tough line, one of the best we've faced," Mach said. "I'm not surprised we held the ball because we've done every game without the ball. We averaged 300 yards rushing a game, the most since I've been at CC. That's a lot of yards for a high school team."

The Shamrocks ran behind Smiley and Eyl on

the left side early and Monette and Lachapelle later as they adjusted to Holt's defense.

"Smiley and Eyl did a great job because we ran there an awful lot," Mach said. "They were shifting to our right because we tend to be right-handed, so we shifted to our left, and that helped us move the ball more consistently."

One of the biggest assignments went to Monette, who lined up against Holt's all-state candidate Steve Robodeau (6-2, 265).

"Jeff did a great job blocking him," Mach said. "I was worried about putting a 265-pound tackle on Jeff who is 215. I was really concerned whether he could handle him, and he did."

The Rams recognized CC's blocking ability as well.

"I was getting double and triple teamed," said Robodeau, who had five tackles. "When I got through, the ball carrier was already gone."

Call makes right decisions

By STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

A reporter from the Lansing State Journal suggested to Redford Catholic Central senior fullback John Spolsky that Michigan State University coach Nick Saban might show an interest in him this winter.

Spolsky, who has always wanted to attend the Air Force Academy, seemed flattered by the question. Spolsky is built a lot like MSU's Scott Greene, but prior to the playoffs, not even Spolsky thought about playing in the Big Ten.

He said he is keeping his options open.

"I went to Space Camp as a kid and I've been into that, I still am," Spolsky said of his interest in Air Force. "I would think about it (attending Michigan or Michigan State). I don't know if they're thinking about me. To go on in college would be a real privilege."

The two-point conversion pass has become a high-percentage play for the Shamrocks, thanks to the athletic ability of junior quarterback Greg Call.

Call completed a two-point pass to Spolsky in last week's 29-10 win over Sterling Heights Stevenson. He rolled out and found senior Steve Hendry on a two-point pass to give the Shamrocks a 14-0 lead with 0:47 left

NOTEBOOK

In the third quarter against Holt.

"That's a crazy play," Call said, meaning he enjoys it. "I just kind of run around and can make things happen. Monday did a good job getting open."

Call kept the Rams guessing all afternoon on the option play, finishing with 66 yards on 10 carries.

He was especially difficult to read on the Shamrocks' first two scoring drives.

He had 16 yards on three carries on their first scoring drive of 63 yards in the second quarter.

On a third down and eight play, he ran left three yards before pitching to tailback Greg Alcalá for another nine yards and a first down on a 66-yard drive at the start of the second half.

"(Right and Eric) Gilbo did a great job getting me to the corner all game," Call said.

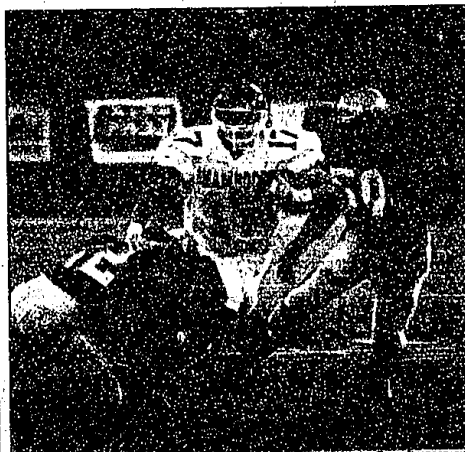
CC kicker Eron Kosmowski had one of his worst games of the year and still made it into the Michigan High School Athletic Association record book.

Kosmowski had a miserable first half. His 40-yard field goal attempt in the first quarter was wide left. He also shanked an extra point attempt and a 29-yard field goal try.

But his 20-yard field goal with 8:53 left in the fourth quarter was the longest in the history of Class AA finals games.

That seems too short to be a record, but it must be noted that this was only the sixth.

See NOTES, 4C



TOM HAWLEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Turning the corner: Holt had trouble stopping Redford Catholic Central quarterback Greg Call (No. 17) on the option.