

Shamrocks overpower Warriors in Division 1 game, 31-0

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For the last 365 days, all Catholic Central's football team could think about was returning to the state finals.

On Saturday, they'll do just that — with a little bit of added incentive.

The Shamrocks used a solid defense and an unlikely offensive display by Ryan Rogowski to beat Walled Lake Western, the team that KOD CC in the 1999 playoffs — 31-0 at South Lyon High School in the Division 1 semifinals.

And as a bonus, they'll face up with the team that eliminated them in the semifinals last year — Utica Eisenhower — in Saturday's 1 p.m. final at the Pontiac Silverdome.

"We've been thinking about this for a whole year," said Rogowski, who rushed for 133 yards, caught two touchdown passes and spent most of the day wreaking havoc on defense. "It's what we've been thinking about and our goal since we lost last year."

CC (10-3) set the tone from the start — intercepting a pass on the first play of a game, that would lead to the only points the Shamrocks would need.

"Since we started out 3-3, we went back to a brick-wall defense," said CC coach Tom



Scoring play: Senior Ryan Rogowski hauls in a TD pass for the Shamrocks.

FOOTBALL

Mach. "And in this run to the championship game, the defense has been the key to our success. At the beginning of the year, we weren't playing as well. But the last seven games, they've played great and today, it was a total team effort."

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The only points CC would need came in the first quarter. On the first play of the game, the Warriors (10-3) got cute with a half-back pass. Steve Bell lofted it down the field, but Ryan Wrobleski picked it off at the CC 30 and returned it 31 yards. A Western penalty gave CC the ball at the Western 26. The Shamrocks couldn't punch the ball in the end zone, but Jason Gingell's 29-yard field goal proved to be the game winner.

"We just played a good team," said Western coach Mike Zebrowski. "They capitalized on our mistakes early and they did a great job of getting good things done. On that first drive, I thought our defense did a great job of holding them to a field goal. But field position in the first half hurt us. We always

had to work out of a hole."

Western only got into CC territory twice in the game. The Warriors' first drive stalled at the CC 24 and eventually gave the Shamrocks the ball at their own 14. Then Rogowski took over. He gained 26 yards on one run, and coupled with a personal foul on Western, CC had the ball on the Western 45. Then Tom Jakacki hit Rogowski with a 20-yard pass, and two plays later, the two hooked up again for a 28-yard TD pass and a 10-0 lead.

CC made it 17 on its next drive as Mike Banaszak capped a nine-play, 32-yard drive with a 1-yard TD run. It stayed that way at halftime and through the third quarter until CC went on a 69-yard, 10-play drive capped by a 18-yard, Jakacki-to-Rogowski TD pass with 45 seconds gone in the fourth quarter.

On the following drive, Western

went on its only extended trip into CC territory, marching down to a first-and-goal on the CC 6. But the Shamrocks' defense never broke, stopping Western quarterback Jon Michaud on two straight, fourth-down plays (the second after a face-mask penalty). And to add

insult to injury, the Shamrocks marched down the field on a 99-yard drive, actually a 14-yard drive thanks to two penalties along the way — and Kevin McKeon went in from the 10 with the game's final score.

"Our line did a great job," said Mach. "I've said all season that we just needed the rope. And we got better and better. Our backs

did a great job today."

CC outgained the Warriors

-359-135. Jakacki only completed three of nine passes for 65 yards, but two were to Rogowski for touchdowns. Rogowski also had nine carries for 133 yards, while Banaszak had 14 carries for 50 and Derrick Brooks had 19 carries for 38 yards. Jakacki kicked in with 52 yards rushing.

"The other two backs (Banaszak and Brooks) have done a great job," said Rogowski. "But coach said they'd be keying on these two guys and wanted to keep them off balance."

Michaud was 7-of-12 passing for 27 yards, while Steve Van Nortwick had 16 carries for 67 yards as the Warriors had 108 yards on the ground.



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