

CC wins Division I battle with Canton

BY PAUL BEAUDRY
STAFF WRITER

For a while, it was like watching two dinosaurs going toe-to-toe in the tar pits, waiting for the other to fall.

Once Redford-Detroit Catholic Central got the advantage Saturday, it never let Plymouth Canton get up again.

The Shamrocks were down the Chief to capture a Division I district tournament title at Kraft Field, 24-7.

"We came up with a solid defensive plan for them," CC coach Tom Mach said after his team improved to a 10-1.

(Defensive coordinator) Rick Coratti has been with me for 27 years, and he came up with a sound game plan.

"We didn't want to go into a 5-2 front, but we had eight men up front to balance out their tight T formation."

The plan worked as Canton (9-2), a team that has lived by the run all season, died by it, gaining just 89 yards on the ground and 59 more in the air.

Don't get the idea CC moved the ball at will, however. Canton's defense was almost as stingy, holding the Shamrocks to 127 yards on the ground and 79 in the air.

But four plays told the tale in this game.

The first was, of all things, a 23-yard halfback pass from CC's Derek Brooks to Jeff McMichael with 1:16 left in the first half, giving the Shamrocks a 10-0 lead.

The second came on the last play of the half, when Darnell Tyson, Patrick Clark and Brian Hanley combined to sack Canton quarterback Dave Nicoloff.

Nicoloff hit the turf awkwardly, wound up with a dislocated shoulder and was sidelined for the rest of the game.

"The touchdown pass might have been the backbreaker," Canton coach Tim Baechler said. "They didn't trick us with the play. (McMichael) just did a better job of getting the ball than (our defensive back) did."

The third was a fumble by Canton's Reggie Joyner early in the fourth quarter at his own 17 and recovered by CC's Drew Amble. While the Shamrocks failed to score on the drive, they also ran four minutes off the clock and kept the ball deep in Canton territory — keeping the Chiefs' main offensive weapon — the rushing game — never got untracked. Joyner was held to just 47 yards on 22 carries, while Corey Rutledge had 22 yards on eight carries and Devin Thomas had 9 yards on four attempts.

"It was a strange game, I thought," said Baechler. "It was

kind of surreal. It never seemed like we were out of it. But we are the kind of team that, if we score first, we're flying high. But we didn't get that score. And once Dave went out, it limited our offense from 46 plays to 26."

CC's offense didn't exactly dominate either, thanks to a fine effort from the Chiefs' front, but it played well enough to win. Dave Thomas completed 5-of-9 passes for 56 yards, while Derek Brooks gained 65 yards on the ground on 18 carries. Randall Means had 23 yards on seven carries and Thomas added 27 yards on six carries.

CC's Jason Gingell opened the scoring with a 37-yard field goal in the first quarter, then Brookes pass to McMichael gave CC a 10-0 halftime lead. Brooks made it 17-0 in the third quarter, when the Canton defense

went left and Brooks went right 23 yards for the score.

"I thought they played very well," said Mach. "Their defense was very aggressive and it took us time to find out what worked."

While Mach praised Canton's play, Baechler was not as complimentary toward the Shamrocks.

"They have an all-star team every year," Baechler said. "Public schools take time to build a program and they have this every year. It's a crappy situation. The Catholic schools shouldn't be in with the public schools."

"Their state championships mean nothing. We don't respect them. They're a damn good team, but they're not the best team in the state. Call it sour grapes if you want."

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Rice gears for another playoff rematch

BY MARTY BUDNER
STAFF WRITER

For the second straight week, Birmingham Brother Rice's football team is involved in a playoff rematch.

Brother Rice (9-2) will host Warren DeLaSalle (8-3) 1 p.m. Saturday at Birmingham Groves High School in a Division 2 regional championship game. The Warriors and Pilots, members of the Catholic League's tough Central Division, met in Week 5 of the regular season with Rice posting a 28-12 victory.

Last week, in the district championship game, Brother Rice was forced to defeat Farmington Hills Harrison for the second time this season. Rice defeated Harrison in the season opener and grounded the Hawks in the rematch, 28-7.

The game featured two storied football programs and was

the weekend's showdown highlight. The Warriors shocked the host Hawks with three first-quarter touchdowns and were in control most of the game.

Brother Rice coach Al Fracassa knows his team can't afford a letdown against DeLaSalle after the emotionally-charged triumph over Harrison.

"You always worry about letdowns because it was such a big victory," said Fracassa. "You have to get the kids focused again and you have to get them in the proper attitude. A letdown is certainly a concern."

"But we've had games all year where we had to come back the next week with another big game. Now it's more of the same in the playoffs," he said.

"At this point we're just glad we get to keep playing. This is our third week and we're still in the playoffs. We're happy about that."

DeLaSalle opened the play-

offs with a huge upset triumph over Rochester Adams, the regular-season Oakland Activities Association Division 1 co-champions who were ranked No. 1 earlier this year.

The Pilots captured the district championship last week with a hard-earned 14-0 victory over Warren Cousino in the first ever match-up between those neighboring Macomb County schools. It was DeLaSalle's first district title and marks the first time the Pilots have ever won two playoff games in one season.

DeLaSalle likes to play a ball-control offense with its formidable rushing attack. Senior tailback Bradley Sabo, subbing for injured starter John Novak, was DeLaSalle's main ground weapon against Cousino.

DeLaSalle's quarterback is junior Matthew Lewis.

Defensively, the Paul Verska-coached Pilots have been stellar all season, allowing just 129

points. In their last three games, DeLaSalle shut out Detroit Country Day and Cousino, and held high-scoring Adams to just 10 points.

The defense is led by linebackers Brian Scharf, Novak and G. Barrett Henson, linemen Anthony Nichols, Christopher Kiehl and Anthony Valtaggio, and back Anthony Sorgi.

"We had to beat Harrison twice, and now we have to do it again with DeLaSalle," said Fracassa. "DeLaSalle is a much improved team from the first time we played them. They have a very good defense and a good running game."

"They beat Adams and they're a team that just doesn't quit. They're a very determined team," he said. "We have to beat a very good football team Saturday."

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Published: November 14, 2002

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