Rice overcomes mistakes to beat Allen Park, 24-7

BY CHRIS MAYER
STAFF WRITER

The deeper a team gets into the playoffs, the more the focus becomes just finding a way to win.

Birmingham Brother Rice encountered adversity Saturday in the form of three first-half turnovers – including a fumble on the game's opening kickoff – and a new rash of injuries.

But the Warriors' poise shined through and they parlayed a quick-strike offense and a relentless defense into a 24-7 Division II semifinal victory over Allen Park at Hurley Field in Berkley.

The Warriors (11-2) advanced to Friday's state championship game against Lowell (12-1). Allen Park ended its season at 11-2.

"Defense wins championships and I have to give our boys a lot of credit," Brother Rice coach Al Fracassa said. "We have a few boys who got hurt and weren't playing. Those other boys that came in stepped up and they took the starters' places and did a great job.

"That team (Allen Park) ... this is the first time they've gone this far and we respect them an awful lot. Even though they lost today, I give them a lot of credit. I thought they were a very good football team."

Rice's laundry list of injuries grew Saturday. With senior Brian Mahler on crutches and several Warriors playing hurt, senior Al Gioutsos and senior defensive back John Ashford left with injuries in the first half.

The game didn't start on a positive note for Rice as Anthony Jackson fumbled the opening kickoff following a long return.

Allen Park's James Klos recovered at the Jaguars' 38-yard line, but the ensuing drive ended when Karl Eschbach and Ryan Brittain trapped running back Bryan Brighton for a 3-yard loss on a fourth-and-1 play at the Allen Park 47.

The Warriors reached the Allen Park 18-yard line late in the opening quarter, but Brandon Sinnott intercepted Doug Pickens' fourth-down pass and the two teams settled into a defensive struggle.

All that changed, however, when Jackson found a crease off the left side and sprinted 69 yards for a touchdown with 10:23 left in the second quarter.

Jason Horton then got behind a pair of Allen Park defenders and Pickens found him for a 44-yard TD pass just over two minutes later. Brian Balzerini kicked both extra points and the Warriors walked off at halftime leading 14-0.

"I think it got us going," Jackson said of his TD run. "We had a lot of great blocking on that play, and it showed us that we could play with these guys. They had a lot of games where they beat people by like 35, 40 points, and that play showed us we were just as good.

"I was a little nervous when I first came out," he added. "I might've had the jitters, but I don't know what it was. But we had to put it together, because we had a lot of people get hurt and we just had to step up."

Allen Park took the second half kickoff and marched 72 yards in 13 plays – the Jaguars managed 73 yards total offense in the first half – with quarterback Anthony Grose tossing a 5-yard touchdown pass to Christian Sinnott.

O & E STAFF'S FOOTBALL PICKS

WEEK 14 SATURDAY	Jim Toth	Marty Budner	Tim Smith	Dan Stickradt	Ken Abramczyk	Dan O'Meara
Birm. Brother Rice vs. Lowell	Brother Rice	Brother Rice	Brother Rice	Brother Rice	Brother Rice	Brother Rice
LAST WEEK	1-2 (.333)	1-2 (.333)	1-2 (.333)	1-2 (.333)	2-1 (.666)	2-1 (.666)
SEASON TOTAL	129-52 (.713)	133-48 (.735)	120-61 (.663)	123-58 (.680)	130-51 (.718)	134-47 (.740)

Brother Rice last team standing in '02 season

Prep Grid Picks

Jim Toth

Give it up to all Observer & Eccentric area playoff teams who put up the fight of their lives since the end of the regular season for the opportunity to play inside the Silverdome this weekend.

After four weeks of postseason competition, the lone O&E area participant still standing is Birmingham Brother Rice.

Coach Al Fracassa's troops will be looking to bring home the school's sixth state championship Friday in the Division 2 finals against Lowell. The matchup will be one of four scheduled games that day.

(Last week's picks: 1 right, 2 wrong. Season's mark: 129 right, 52 wrong.)

Lowell (12-1) vs. Birmingham Brother Rice (11-2) at Silverdome (1 p.m. Friday): Hopefully, the Warriors save some of this week's feast for Friday. In the Red Arrows, the Warriors face a team riding the high of a 10-game unbeaten streak and the prospects of bringing home the school's first state football championship. A balanced attack could pose problems for a banged up Warriors squad seeking to regain the Division 2 crown. The health of wide outs Jeff Stachowiak and Brian Mahler and defensive stalwarts John Ashford and Al Gioutsos is huge, but not a hurdle too much for the Warriors to overcome. The offensive has been productive and will once again.

PICK: BROTHER RICE

RICE

FROM PAGE D1

Ottawa-Kent Conference White Division with a 5-1 record, have outscored their opponents, 418-179, this season.

The Warriors have won four consecutive games since a 45-21 loss to Muskegon in Week 9, outscoring their playoff opponents, 122-48.

Brother Rice's defense has dominated foes in the playoffs, and the Doug Pickens-led offense continues to turn in big plays in the running and passing games.

The Warriors also won Class A state titles in 1977, 1980, 1983 and 1990. They were Class A runners-up in 1991.

KENNETH E. KONOP, Attorney, 840 West Long Lake Road, Suite 200, Troy, Michigan 48098

STATE OF MICHIGAN, COUNTY OF OAKLAND

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Trust Estate

Estate of HARRIET M. WALSER, Deceased. Social Security Number 363-580-5356

TO ALL CREDITORS:

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Harriet M. Walser, who lived at 1300 Northlawn, Birmingham, Michigan died October 6, 2002. There is no probate Estate.

Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the Harriet M. Walser Trust Agreement dated September 4, 1978, as amended, will be forever barred unless presented to: Comerica Bank, Jeffrey Reitmyer, 500 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Comerica Bank, Jeffrey Reitmyer, 500 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226, Telephone No. (313) 222-3383.

Attorney: Kenneth E. Konop, P16140, 840 West Long Lake Road, Suite 200, Troy, Michigan 48098, Telephone No. (248) 879-3000

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