



NEWS RELEASE

PLAYERS IN FOOTBALL TITLE GAMES HAVE STYLE, SUBSTANCE

PHOENIX, AZ (Dec. 3, 2009) – Keanu Nelson has style. He wore a pair of purple shoes, matching one of Tucson Sabino’s school colors, to an Arizona Interscholastic Association press conference on Tuesday that highlighted teams and players in Saturday’s Class 4A Division I and 4A Division II state championship football games.

Nelson also has substance, as evidenced by his play on the field this season.

The 5-foot-10, 170-pound senior has developed into one of the state’s most versatile all-around athletes.

He rushed for 1,166 yards, has 425 yards in receptions and nearly 400 more yards passing with 25 touchdowns for Sabino (11-2), which will face Sonoran rival Tucson Canyon del Oro (13-0) for the 4A-I championship at 6 p.m. at the University of Arizona Stadium.

Kickoff is 2 p.m. for the 4A-II title game between Glendale Cactus (12-1) and Tucson Santa Rita (11-2).

Nelson is bound for Stanford, but before he does that, he would like to help his team atone for a 34-21 loss to Canyon del Oro on Nov. 6.

“The state championship game is motivation in itself,” he said. “We just want to play football, not get caught up in the hype. We are playing our best football now, at the right time of the season. We have a lot of heart and fight in us.”

Nelson rebounded from a knee injury suffered in summer passing league to play running back, slot receiver, “quarterback” in the Wildcat formation, return kicks and punts and free safety.

“I have no preference where I play. A little bit of everything, whatever it takes,” he said.

Canyon del Oro’s big hitter

Nelson most certainly will encounter Canyon del Oro senior safety Josh Robbins on more than one occasion.

“They (Sabino) have a lot of good athletes and he is one of them. They were one of our toughest matchups this season,” Robbins said. “Now we have to try and make them make mistakes and capitalize on them.”

Robbins is the son of Randy Robbins, a former safety with the NFL’s Denver Broncos, the University of Arizona and Casa Grande High.

At 6-2 and 195 pounds, Josh Robbins has the same body type as his father, “built for defense,” Josh said.

“I think I can read the ball real easily, key off the quarterback.”

Robbins also plays wide receiver, but defense is his focus.

“I like to make the big hit or a fourth-down stop,” he said. “Defense is all about being the person who wants to get there and make the play.”

From out of the blue

Allen Woods was a backup running back to Mike Brown at Glendale Cactus in 2008. Woods knew he had potential, but never did he envision having the type of season he has had as a senior in 2009.

The 6-foot, 198-pound Woods has rushed for 2,550 yards and 37 touchdowns.

“Going into the season, I wanted to minimize my flaws and just get better each week,” Woods said. “I’ve gotten real good blocking from my (offensive) line.”

Woods says he is a north-and-south runner and likes to get through the hole quickly.

A state championship would be the culmination of four years of hard work.

“There was another Cactus team to win the title (in 2005) and we vowed to be like them,” Woods said. “It started with our freshman year and most of the guys have stuck with it.

“Playing in this game means a lot. Everything we do with our team is like family. We practice together, eat together, do stuff together. That’s what it’s all about.”

The Eagles will be ready

Santa Rita was unable to attend the press conference, but they will be ready to play after falling to Scottsdale Notre Dame Prep in the 2008 title contest.

The Eagles’ top player is Ian Garlets, a senior quarterback and defensive back.

He has thrown for 1,148 yards and 15 touchdowns and rushed for 322 yards and five TDs. He also has a pair of interceptions on defense.

The other three team captains are senior receiver-defensive back Chris Correa, senior two-way lineman Jaquari Kountz and senior lineman Reggie Ewesuedo.

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