



NEWS RELEASE

5A FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP STORYLINES

PHOENIX, AZ (Dec. 9, 2009)

CHAPARRAL LINEMAN RAHAV READY TO MAKE ONE BIG FINAL PUSH

There are senior football players who will use this weekend's Class 5A Division I and 5A Division II championship games as a stepping stone to bigger and better things in college.

There are other seniors who will be playing for the last time, and perhaps that is why these games mean even more to them.

Put Scottsdale Chaparral's Jono Rahav in the latter category.

The 6-foot, 270-pound left guard is one of the main reasons for the success of the Firebirds' prolific offense that will be on display in Friday's 5A-II title game against Tempe Marcos de Niza. Kickoff is 7 p.m. at Arizona State University's Sun Devil Stadium.

Rahav does not plan to play college football. Instead, he will pursue a degree at ASU's WP Carey School of Business.

He acknowledged the importance of his final game, adding, "They're a really good football team and we have to have the same mentality we've always had."

Linemen often don't get the credit they deserve, but that is fine with Rahav.

"I'm not the type who needs recognition," he said.

What makes his job easier, he said, is blocking for two of the state's top running backs, Dwayne Garrett and Cole Tyree, and a promising young quarterback in sophomore Connor Brewer.

Rahav watches a lot of college football in an attempt to pick up little things he can do from some of those linemen.

"A lot of those teams run the same spread offense that we do, to it's good. Our coach (Charlie Ragle) says to watch their feet, watch them keep their feet. If you do that, you can keep your balance and do just about anything," Rahav said.

He looks as much the part of a good student as he does football player, wearing thick, black-frame glasses. He said he used to wear goggles for games earlier in his career, but abandoned those for contact lenses.

"They (contacts) work pretty good," he said. "Just so long as I can look up to see the final score."

MARCOS DE NIZA NOSE GUARD "CAN OVERCOME JUST ABOUT ANYTHING"

When Tempe Marcos de Niza nose guard Aaron Pavlenko was asked this week how big he is, he said, "About 5-foot-11 and 215 pounds."

A teammate who was standing nearby struggled to keep from laughing.

OK, well, maybe Pavlenko is a bit smaller. But does it really matter?

What *does* matter is the results he gets, whether he can outmaneuver his bigger opponents to make a sack or slide along the line of scrimmage to track down the ballcarrier.

He plans to do just that on Friday when the Padres face Scottsdale Chaparral in the Class 5A Division II state championship game at Arizona State's Sun Devil Stadium. Kickoff is 7 p.m.

When opponents first see Pavlenko, they think they will have it easy.

"Yeah, that's what (Peoria) Centennial was thinking," he said, referring to Marcos de Niza's 16-14 stunning upset in last week's semifinals.

"I have faced that kind of thing (size discrepancy) all my life," Pavlenko said.

Pavlenko also is one of the top wrestlers in the nation, having won the state championship at 215 pounds last year as a junior after finishing third in his first two seasons.

"I feel I can overcome just about anything," said Pavlenko, who has committed to wrestle at Northern Colorado. "I have that same mindset in football as I do in wrestling. I can use my quickness, and use my hands a lot to get away from the guy across the line."

That doesn't mean that Pavlenko can't play with a physical style.

"If we go out and hit people, we have a chance. That's what we do best," he said.

The Padres cleared a big mental hurdle with the victory over Centennial. But Pavlenko and his teammates know their job is not finished.

"It was just another stepping stone for us to get to where we want to be," he said. "We have to go out and play every team with the same attitude, be aggressive."

NOT MUCH ESCAPES GRASP OF HAMILTON DEFENSIVE LINEMAN HOOD

The first decade of the new millennium is about to wrap up, and Chandler Hamilton has been the program by which most high school football teams are measured.

Hamilton has been in the Class 5A state championship game seven times, including this season, and has won four times, going for No. 5 this time.

The momentum begins to build long before preseason practice arrives amid the swirling monsoons in August. There is spring practice, followed by running, weightlifting and summer passing leagues. Excellence doesn't happen automatically.

"We lift and run daily. We do things as a team. There are no individuals," said senior Tevin Hood. "You play as a team. You play for the man next to you."

The 6-foot-1, 275-pound Hood has held up his end of the bargain. He has developed into one of the top defensive linemen in the state, and will be patrolling the line of scrimmage on Saturday when Hamilton

faces Mesa in the 5A Division I state championship game at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale. Kickoff is 5 p.m.

Hood's strength and quickness are virtually unmatched. He is averaging 7.8 tackles per game and has 17 sacks. He has drawn attention from colleges (he also is a very good student), but has yet to sign his name on the dotted line.

He said he likes "the violent nature of the game, going against guys to see who is the best."

Hood saw a lot of time on the offensive line as a freshman, then moved to the other side of the ball and has been there ever since.

"I enjoy attacking the offensive line, shutting them down, making the big hits," he said.

Hamilton defeated Mesa 43-22 earlier in the season in a Fiesta Region game. Hood said it is possible Mesa might try something different this time, but could also could rely on the same approach, preferring to try to do things better.

"We have to study them some more and be ready for anything," Hood said.

Hood is the son of former Arizona Cardinals defensive lineman Eric Swann, but prefers to be his own man. And what a man he has become. He has the work ethic and the results to prove it.

FAMILY ATMOSPHERE FUELS MESA HIGH FOOTBALL RUN

It takes talent to win a football championship. Another big factor is a team's cohesiveness.

Mesa High's Jackrabbits have used both to earn a spot in Saturday's Class 5A Division I state championship game opposite Fiesta Region rival Chandler Hamilton. Kickoff is 5 p.m. at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale.

Kelley Moore, in his third year as coach, knows all about Mesa's long tradition.

He said, "It's only been 17 years" since the school last won the title, in 1992.

"We are humbled and honored to be here," Moore said.

Moore, his staff and players have worked to form a family type atmosphere.

"We are one faith, a lot of different colors. We are all brothers in football," he said. "We play hard and fight tooth and nail. We want to be a beacon for our community. There are a lot of kids who help their families with payments (bills), and they have to balance all of that with school and football."

Devontae Kellybrew, a senior fullback and linebacker, is grateful to his paternal grandmother, with whom he lives and who serves as a stabilizing influence in his life.

"With all of the things that are going on in our lives, some guys have kids, some guys are working, I don't think people realize how hard we work," Kellybrew said.

Kellybrew caught a touchdown pass that was the difference in last week's 14-10 semifinal victory over Phoenix Mountain Pointe. He has rushed for 675 yards and scored seven touchdowns and caught 25 passes for 292 yards and four TDs.

As fun as offense is, he likes playing defense better.

“You have a little more freedom to move around and make plays. It’s been fun, even more fun in the playoffs,” he said.

The fact that Mesa had reached the state title game didn’t sink in at first, but now it has and Kellybrew and his teammates are ready to go.

So is his grandmother, who attends every game.

“She didn’t really know much about it at first, but now she’s got the hang of it. She tells me things we are doing, asks me sometimes why I didn’t run faster or whatever,” he said, laughing.

Hamilton is the defending state champion and defeated Mesa 43-22 earlier this season. Mesa isn’t afraid, Kellybrew said.

“It’s all mental,” he said. “The first time, we thought, ‘Aw, big, bad Hamilton.’ They beat us mentally. This time, we’re not going to let it get to us. We have the confidence we can play with anybody.”

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