



AIA FEATURE STORY By: Don Ketchum

FOR HAMILTON LINEBACKER, THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMING

PHOENIX, AZ (December 9, 2008) – There are players on Chandler Hamilton’s football team who are bigger, faster and stronger than Justin Rosales. Some of them will go on to play at the NCAA Division I level.

Yet it is Rosales, a 5-foot-9, 180-pound senior linebacker, who is referred to by Hamilton coach Steve Belles as “a rock. No one knows about him because these other guys are going D-I, but he is our defensive leader, without question.”

Rosales will be in the middle of all the action on Friday night at 8 p.m., when Hamilton (12-1) faces Phoenix Brophy Prep (11-3) for the Class 5A Division I championship at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale.

And to think Rosales almost didn’t play this season.

He also is an outstanding second baseman for the baseball team, and helped lead Hamilton to the state championship in May. Shortly thereafter, he suffered a high-ankle sprain at a summer-league tournament in Prescott.

“I was thinking that I probably would rehab (rehabilitate) the ankle over the summer and concentrate on getting ready for baseball again,” Rosales said Tuesday at the championship media day at the Arizona Interscholastic Association headquarters in Phoenix.

No football? In wide receiver Drew Terrell’s mind, that was not an option.

“He is in my English class, and he kept telling me to come back and play football,” Rosales said. “The more I thought about it, the better the idea became.”

Rosales made the decision to return about 10 days before Hamilton left for Miami, Fla., for its season opener against Miami Washington. He did not make that trip, but was back in the lineup before too long.

That was against Brophy, on Sept. 5. Rosales helped Hamilton record a 10-0 victory, and he said, “it was like I didn’t even miss a step.”

Rosales went on to average seven tackles per game with a season total of eight sacks, along with a fumble recovery and an interception.

“He knows his assignments, and he will strike you,” Belles said. “For a smaller guy, he packs a lot of thunder.”

Winning is the primary objective and involves a lot of hard work, but Rosales wants to have fun doing it.

“I’m playing with a great bunch of guys, on and off the field,” he said. “I’ve also had a lot of support from my coaches, especially my linebacker coach (Lane Reynolds) and my trainer (Keith Poole).”

Rosales would like to play football in college, but he is realistic. He believes his future will be in baseball, at a junior college and maybe beyond.

To help Hamilton win a title in baseball and football, which would be better?

“They both would mean a lot,” he said. “I have played baseball my whole life, but to win a championship in football would be great. I could have another ring for my collection.”

Have a Story Idea:

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at dketchum@aiaonline.org.