Examiner Sports

Stopped in Their Tracks

Michael Ferrara and the Vikings Get Ousted in the Playoff Qualifier by Bronxville on Saturday Afternoon
Westlake Crushes the Bears in Sectional Qualifier

By Andy Jacobs

Westlake head coach John Castellano thinks his team has chosen a very opportune time to play its best football of the season.

"I think we're peaking at the right time," he was saying late Saturday evening, shortly after the Wildcats had demolished visiting Briarcliff/Hamilton 52-6 in a qualifying game for the Class B sectional playoffs. "I'm happy with what we're doing. We're getting better each week. We're starting to understand what we're trying to do offensively and defensively."

Castellano won't get an argument from the Bears, who found themselves trailing 32-0 with five minutes still remaining in the first half. By the time Briarcliff finally got on the scoreboard with a touchdown pass on the second play of the fourth quarter, the deficit had grown to 46 points.

"They're a very good team," said Bears coach John Consorti about the Wildcats. "It's a real hard matchup for us. It's just a rough night. Yeah, they were much more athletic than we are, much quicker to the hole, and made us look kind of slow. They really had a speed advantage on us, but we could do better. I was expecting a little more out of our guys."

The Wildcats, now 5-2 and preparing to host Bronxville on Saturday afternoon in a quarterfinal playoff game, had already asserted their superiority over the Bears in the first week of the season, winning 45-7. This time, on a cold and windy night in front of a large Homecoming crowd, it took until the latter stages of the first quarter before they finally began to take command.

"We don't look at the opponent," said Castellano. "We just look to get better each week. That's all we're looking at. We talked about it being the first round of the playoffs, that it's a whole different story than seven weeks ago. We had to make sure that we played our game."

The Wildcats drove 55 yards in seven plays on their first possession, grabbing a 7-0 lead on Jayson Kalle's touchdown run moments after scoring one of his three touchdowns on Saturday night. The Wildcats' Ryan Duffy tosses the ball to the officials after scoring one of his three touchdowns on Saturday night.

The Bears scored their only points after making a 20-yard field goal two minutes later, an interception by Greg Alfieri set the Wildcats up at the Briarcliff 25-yard line. Ryan Duffy took the handoff on first down and ran to his right for the first of his three touchdowns.

Briarcliff/Hamilton quickly went three-and-out, leaving Westlake just enough time to score again before the end of the opening quarter. Duffy concluded the Wildcats' five-play, 56-yard drive with a 20-yard touchdown run that left the Bears with a 20-point deficit after the first 12 minutes.

Three plays into the second quarter, Duffy contributed on the defensive end, snaring a halfback option pass on third-and-24 out of the air for an interception that gave Westlake the ball at the Bears' 37-yard line. Kalle needed just one play to get to the end zone and, even though the PAT was blocked, Westlake's lead was suddenly 26-0.

The Wildcat advantage grew to 32 points five minutes later after both teams had fumbled the ball away. Quarterback Tom Castro connected with Kalle on a 22-yard pass play on first down, then a 13-yard touchdown pass two plays later.

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Bronxville Overcomes an Early Deficit to Defeat the Vikings

By Andy Jacobs

It’s been a remarkable turnaround season for the Valhalla football team, which won all six of its regular-season games and arrived on Saturday afternoon in Bronxville for the start of the postseason hoping to add the hosts to its list of vanquished opponents.

But the Broncos proved to be too much of an obstacle for the upstart Vikings to overcome. After surrendering the game’s first touchdown, Bronxville dominated the rest of the way and went on to a 27-8 victory in the playoff qualifier that put an emphatic end to the Vikings’ quest to make some noise in the Class B sectional.

“We hadn’t given up the big play all year,” said Vikings head coach Stephen Boyer afterwards. “Today, we did.”

It was two long touchdown passes by Bronxville junior quarterback Brian DePaul in the second quarter that turned an eight-point Valhalla lead into a six-point Bronco advantage at halftime. The southpaw signal caller connected with Sam Connors on a 76-yard pass play early in the second quarter, then found Arman Vranka wide down the sideline for a 75-yard touchdown. DePaul, who completed 10 of 14 passes for 135 yards and a touchdown, ran up the middle for 18 yards on first down. Three plays later, he took off down the right sideline for a 75-yard touchdown. DePaul then took off and did a great job.”

Unfortunately for the Vikings, their lead didn’t last very long. Just two plays later, on second-and-eight, DePaul threw to his left to Connors behind the Viking secondary and the Broncos’ senior running back outraced everyone down the sideline for a 75-yard touchdown. DePaul then took off and did a great job.”

Vikings quarterback Ralph Gonzalez was soon sacked for a loss on third down and Valhalla was forced to punt. Bronxville took over at its own 45-yard line and DePaul, who completed 10 of his 14 passes for over 200 yards, connected with Thomas King for 18 yards on first down. Three plays later, his 25-yard touchdown pass to Vranka left Valhalla playing from behind the rest of the sunny autumn afternoon.

“As they say, everything’s a learning experience,” said Boyer, “and the kids actually, after those two big plays, they just buckled up and kept going and forced Bronxville to have to play the last quarter and a half.”

A 41-yard field goal try by the Broncos with 43 seconds left in the half sailed just wide, so the Vikings’ deficit remained six points when they walked off the field at intermission. They got the ball to start the third quarter, but standout junior Kevin Williams was banged up returning the kickoff to his own 33 and senior lineman James Flaherty was forced out of the game for good with an injured ankle a few plays later.

Bronxville got the ball for the first time in the second half at its own 30-yard line and promptly went 70 yards in seven plays, scoring on a four-yard touchdown run up the middle by Anthony Napolitano, who finished the day with over 200 yards on the ground. Though the extra-point try by Connors was no good, the Broncos still had a 20-8 lead midway through the third quarter.

An interception by Ferrara at the Vikings’ 13-yard line put an end to a Bronxville drive with just under three minutes left in the period. The quarter ended with another Bronco turnover, this time a fumble by Napolitano at the Valhalla 24. But, again, the Vikings couldn’t take advantage and, despite a 55-yard punt by Cho, the Broncos soon put an end to any suspense about the outcome.

They went 85 yards in four plays, starting with a 56-yard run by Napolitano on first down and concluding with Jack Gelinas scampering 13 yards for the touchdown that enabled the Broncos to stretch their lead to 19 points with just 8:18 left on the clock.

The Vikings’ last gasp came when they failed to move the ball following a 30-yard run by Matt Garcia down to the Bronxville 11-yard line. The Broncos took over on downs and ran out the game’s final four minutes.

“They’re disappointed now, but our season’s because of them,” he said. “They got us here and they worked hard in the offseason. You know we’ll put our helmets on and, with what bodies we have, we’ll play next week. I think the kids’ll rebound from this and we’ll get ourselves focused on our next opponent.”
Lauren Neff of Greeley surveys the field as she controls the ball in the Quakers’ win over Fox Lane last week.

Fox Lane’s Lile Ruggiero gets set to serve in the Foxes’ three-games-to-none sweep of Greeley last Thursday.

Greeley’s Emily Mason sends the ball past Fox Lane’s Sorvina Carr in last Thursday’s match.

Fox Lane’s Brooke Shepherd tips the ball over the net in the Foxes’ victory at Greeley last Thursday afternoon.

Emily Tomlinson of Fox Lane (right) slams the ball over the net as Greeley’s Bianca Whittington tries to block it.

Horace Greeley’s Lindsay Hauptman chases after the ball in the second half of the Quaker win over visiting Fox Lane.

Horace Greeley’s Jackie Hoffman (left) and Jesse Saltzman try to block the ball in last week’s home match vs. Fox Lane.

Fox Lane players celebrate after scoring a goal in Wednesday evening’s 4-4 tie against visiting Mahopac.

Above: Greeley’s Nikki Potter and Fox Lane’s Bridget Connors pursue the ball in last Tuesday’s 4-1 Quaker win.

Above Left: Fox Lane’s Kayla Gallagher keeps her eyes on the ball during last Tuesday’s game at Greeley.

Left: Greeley’s Megan Graham is about to score a goal in the second half of last Tuesday’s home win over the Foxes.

Right: Fiona Grant of Horace Greeley passes the ball past Fox Lane’s Olivia Dey in last Tuesday’s game, won by the host Quakers.
Alicia Bracco of Fox Lane hits a serve during her doubles match as the conference tournament last Thursday.

Taylor Cutroneo hits a forehand return in a singles match at last week’s conference tournament at John Jay High School.

Pleasantville’s Kiernan McCarthy settles the ball in front of Westlake’s Brianna Rodemeyer during last Wednesday’s game.

Fox Lane doubles player Ally Hewitt connects on a forehand return last Thursday at John Jay High School.

Greeley’s Greg Ginsberg heads for the goal in the Quaker home win over Ossining.

Pleasantville’s Kiernan McCarthy settles the ball in front of Westlake’s Brianna Rodemeyer during last Wednesday’s game.

Matt Neuberger of Greeley sends a pass past a pair of Ossining players in last Tuesday’s game, won by the Quakers.

Greeley’s Carly Levitz belts a forehand during her singles match last Thursday at the Conference 1 tourney.

Pleasantville’s Kiernan McCarthy settles the ball in front of Westlake’s Brianna Rodemeyer during last Wednesday’s game.

Above: Greeley’s Danielle Boilen (right) wins a race for the ball in last Tuesday’s home game vs. Mamaroneck.

Left: Stella Schwartz of Greeley watches her shot head toward the goal in last week’s game vs. the Mamaroneck Tigers.

Far left: Remi Manna of Pleasantville goes airborne to head the ball toward the Westlake goal in last week’s game.
By Justin Thomas

The Pace University football team is young and inexperienced, so for the time being some growing pains should not be surprising.

On a cold, windy Saturday at the new Pace Stadium, the young Pace offense struggled to get hot and the Setters fell to the Pioneers of LIU Post, 30-7. The loss drops the Setters to 1-6 on the season, 0-6 in conference play.

It was a tight game in the first half, with both teams holding the other scoreless for the first 11 minutes of the contest before Post broke through on a quarterback draw by Jeff Kidd for the game's first touchdown.

After a mishap on a screen pass led to a safety for Pace, giving the Pioneers a 9-0 lead, the Pace defense, specifically its secondary, stood tall.

Senior strong safety Jamir Gee took matters quite literally into his own hands with an interception he took all the way back to the Post 31-yard line, giving the Setters their first play in enemy territory.

Until the Gee interception, Pace had been forced to start each of its drives deep within its own territory. Freshman quarterback Dan Anerella and the Pace offense was only able to manage eight yards on the ensuing drive and missed the field goal opportunity. But the Pace secondary was determined to give the offense another chance, and Jahlil Nichols did just that.

In his first-ever start for the Setters, the sophomore cornerback made an acrobatic interception on a deep pass into the end zone to give Anerella and the offense the ball back at the 25-yard line.

Pace head coach Andrew Rondeau couldn't have been more pleased with the play of his defense, which forced three huge turnovers to give the Setters a chance.

“Our guys compete,” Rondeau said. “And the defense really showed up more so today, and the defense gave us an opportunity to play well into the second half.”

Anerella and the Pace offense were able to draw within two points after a 60-yard touchdown pass to Mohamad Masoud, but they were unable to capitalize on any of the three turnovers the defense forced.

“We’ve got to be able to capitalize on that right there and we struggled over that stuff today,” Rondeau said. “I put it under that general category of: we’ve just got to grow. And when you look at our average combined age of every guy out there, there’s a lot of young bucks out there.”

Around this Pace program, that seems to be the theme: youth and growth. With nearly half of the 22 starters being underclassmen, it isn’t hard to see why youth and growth are in the forefront of the mindset of Coach Rondeau, but he knows that with growth comes growing pains.

“There’s a lot of young guys who learn in spurts,” Rondeau said. “We take two steps forward, and sometimes take a step backwards….There’s a lot of meat left on the bone...so we work all year long for 11 opportunities, and where you end up taking that mentality is where you end up taking it. There’s so much time left for us to go and grow.”

Despite the loss, this Pace football team has its eyes on the future, and the Setters are going to do their best to take as much meat off the bone as possible in their pursuit of growth the remainder of this season.
Somers Overwhelms the Bobcats in the Sectional Qualifier

By Andy Jacobs

It didn’t take very long for the players on the Byram Hills football team to realize they were in for a very long night at Somers High School on Friday evening.

With a berth in the Class A playoffs up for grabs, the host Tuskers scored touchdowns on their first four possessions and went on to rout the Bobcats 55-27 in a sectional qualifying game that was never really in doubt after the opening quarter. Somers junior halfback Messiah Horne rushed for 120 yards and three touchdowns as the Tuskers overwhelmed a Bobcat team that was still in the playoff hunt despite a one-win regular season.

“We just got off to a rough start,” said Bobcats head coach Scott Saunders in the aftermath of the Somers demolition. “Obviously we put ourselves in a hole early and, you know, Somers is Somers. They’re a great team and you can’t do that with a team like that.”

Before the game was even two minutes old, the Tuskers had already found the end zone, using a 39-yard pass play from Kevin Olifiers to Jason Holland to set up Horne’s three-yard touchdown run. Not even five minutes in, Somers fullback Antonio Vierra bolted 19 yards for another touchdown to conclude a four-play, 62-yard drive that left Byram facing a quick 14-0 deficit.

A 25-yard pass from Lou Filippelli to Matt Grotta moved the Bobcats down to the Somers 30-yard line, but the Byram Hills drive was stopped by three successive incomplete passes. The Tuskers took over at their own 32 and, six plays later, Olifiers connected with AJ Butlien down the left sideline for a 37-yard touchdown pass. With 1:40 remaining in the opening quarter, the Somers lead had ballooned to 21-0.

“We put ourselves in bad field position, in bad spots, and it was just tough to climb out of that,” said Saunders. “Hey, credit to them. Somers had a great game plan going in.”

The Tuskers got the ball back again in the final seconds of the first quarter and proceeded to march 55 yards over the next three minutes, highlighted by a 32-yard run by fullback James Lucadamo to the Byram 3-yard line. On the next play, Lucadamo powered through the middle for the fourth Somers touchdown.

The Bobcats’ Daniel Friedman turns up the field after catching a screen pass in Friday’s game.

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It was Silvester who kept the Bobcats pinned deep in their own end throughout the night by sending one kickoff after another into the end zone for touchbacks.

“I mean, he’s a weapon for ‘em,” said Saunders. “Obviously any team that has a weapon like that, you play the field-position game every time and you’re forcing a team to go 80 yards. It’s tough. Even when you’re on offense and he’s gotta punt, the kid’s got a leg. He’s the real deal.”

Soon after Silvester’s field goal, a Filippelli pass under pressure was picked off by lineman Erik Hagenah, who chugged 42 yards for another Somers touchdown that stretched the lead to 38-0. Late in the half, Filippelli collected five of his season-high 25 completions during a 13-play, 80-yard drive that ended with Grotta running off right tackle for a six-yard touchdown that finally got the Bobcats on the scoreboard.

But Silvester added a 32-yard field goal that easily cleared the crossbar as time expired in the first half, sending the teams off the field at intermission with Somers holding a commanding 41-7 lead.

“Not a lot of screaming and yelling,” said Saunders about what transpired at halftime. “None of that, just about fighting. It’s about fighting and being there for each other and getting through it. Obviously we played a much better second half. I thought our captains, Andrew Zaccagnino, Tommy Addio and Lou Filippelli, they rallied the guys and just told ‘em to fight and play for the ‘BH’ on the chest.”

The second half began with another 80-yard Bobcat drive, this one ending with a Filippelli pass to Zaccagnino, who dove across the goal line for a 19-yard touchdown. But the Somers lead grew to 48-13 on the first play of the final quarter when Horne ran right up the middle for a 23-yard touchdown.

Byram Hills did manage to add two more touchdowns in the fourth quarter, both on short runs by Filippelli. But by then, it was mere window dressing for the Bobcats, who will have to wait another week for their second win of the season.

“Our guys, we’re young,” said Saunders. “We fought. We battled. We’re proud of the effort. We’re just not happy with the result, obviously.”

Small News is BIG News
Jason Kalle and the Wildcats Crush Overmatched Briarcliff in Saturday’s Playoff Qualifier