

PREP FOOTBALL WEEK 9

Bolton, Millington confident

Region battle has playoff implications

By DAVID HEALY
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The Bolton football team is on a four-game winning streak and Millington is coming off a loss, but both teams come into tonight's Region 7-5A showdown at Millington with confidence.

In their last four games, the Wildcats (5-3 overall, 4-1) have defeated Central, Houston, Overton and Cordova, and coach Joe Welch said it's not just the wins that have built his team's confidence, it's the way his team has played.

"We are feeling pretty good about ourselves," said Welch, who is in his second year. "Everything has started coming together. It's always a lot better when you win than when you lose."

The Wildcats defeated Cordova, 10-0, last week, and Welch said his team's offense, led by senior quarterback Jacob Connell, is becoming more and more balanced.

"We learned last year that eventually somebody is going to stop the run, and you are going to have to be able to throw the ball," he said.

Millington (6-2, 4-1 and ranked No. 12 in the Commercial Appeal's Dandy Dozen), is coming off a 10-7 home loss to No. 1 Ridgeway, on Oct. 6, in a game in which Ridgeway scored the winning touchdown in the last two minutes.

And although the Millington players and coaches said they don't play for moral victories, the loss did prove something to them.

This year's loss to Ridgeway was a big improvement from last season, when the Trojans lost two games to the Roadrunners by a combined score of 83-13.

"I think that when we play, we can play with anybody in the state," Millington coach Hank Hawkins said.

Tonight's game, which kicks off at 7 p.m., is for second place in Region 7-5A, and the team that finishes the regular season in second gets a home game in the first round of the state playoffs.

"Last year it came down to the same deal," said Welch whose Wildcats defeated the Trojans, 31-14, last season.

Millington offensive coordinator Chris Michael said his team respects the Bolton defense.

Bolton held Cordova to under 100 yards in total offense last week.

"They are fast," Michael said. "They run to the ball. They get off blocks well, and they are a good tackling team," Michael said.

Millington junior Travis Simpson leads the Trojans' rushing attack. Simpson, who rushed for 110 yards and a touchdown against Ridgeway, has run for 1,031 yards this season.

"In our offense he is the center point," Michael said.

"He is going to get the majority of the carries night in and night out."

Welch said he knows all about Millington's rushing attack.

"They may try and spread it out, but they are going to try and run the football," Welch said. "If they can run it, they will."

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File photo

Christian Brothers will be without standout freshman running back Eric Watson for tonight's game against Evangelical Christian School. Watson has torn cartilage in his chest.

Back to basics

CBHS coach Locastro rethinks philosophy, and now Wave on win streak

By COLIN DONOHUE
Special to The Commercial Appeal

Christian Brothers High School coach Kevin Locastro slumped out of Nick Coutrass Stadium on the grounds of Father Ryan High School in Nashville on an uncharacteristically cool September evening.

His Purple Wave, an admittedly flawed 2-0 coming into the game, had just been humbled 37-14. Locastro was disappointed with his team's effort, lack of focus and general inefficiency.

Still, the loss hardly surprised him. Despite a resounding victory the previous week against Carver, he could sense that his team was foundering.

"I didn't feel very good after the Carver game and that was the game leading into the Father Ryan game," Locastro said. "And looking back to it now, I think it was a prelude of where we were as a football team."

Locastro had to recapture his team's attention. He decided a return to basic, fundamental football would reinvigorate his players and reverse their fortunes.

"Sometimes, I think as coaches, we tend to think that more is better. The more you have in a game plan, the better your football team is going to be," he said. "But it boils down to execution."

Since Locastro's shift in philosophy, the seventh-ranked Purple Wave (6-2, 3-1 Division 2-AAA) have lost only one contest. CBHS will attempt to win its fifth in a row

"We know their coaching staff. A lot of our players run with their players. That makes it exciting. It's going to be a good night of high school football."

JIM HEINZ
ECS coach about Christian Brothers

tonight at 7 in a home game against No. 2 Evangelical Christian School (8-0, 3-0 Division 2-AA).

CBHS, however, will have to play without freshman running back Eric Watson, who tore cartilage in his chest during practice this week. Junior Gilbert Johnson will start in Watson's place.

Locastro said he would have considered dressing Watson if this game had playoff implications.

"What we didn't want to do was have him play this week, get hit again and have him miss next week (against Brentwood Academy) and the state playoffs," Locastro said.

Watson's absence, though, doesn't mean the game is meaningless.

"We know their coaching staff," said ECS coach Jim Heinz. "A lot of our players run with their players. That makes it exciting. It's going to be a good night of high school football."

But every Friday night has been good to the Eagles. ECS has orchestrated a flaw-

less start, having beaten six of its eight opponents by more than 20 points.

"I'm happy with it, but I am a little bit surprised about it, too," Heinz said. "But I don't want to be negative toward our kids. We've prepared for each game the best we could, and these kids, they have found a way for eight games."

Heinz isn't utterly astounded with the Eagles success. He noticed a spark in scrimmages against Covington and White Station.

"Early in the season, our kids went out and matched two pretty good football teams and stayed with them in the scrimmage," Heinz said. "We felt like we ran well with those teams."

Those preseason returns against larger schools should encourage ECS tonight against CBHS.

The Eagles will need to slow accurate senior passer John Michael Skinner (no interceptions in 133 attempts), who may become a more active figure in the Purple Wave offense with Watson out of the lineup.

If that's the case, Skinner will have to navigate through an impressive ECS secondary, anchored by defensive backs Harrison Hunt and Trey Jamison.

"If you drew it up on paper, I don't think there's much difference between the two schools," Locastro said. "I think it's going to be one of those games that's going to come down to a turnover or a kicking game mistake, and that team's probably going to win the football game."

Roadrunners honor Cooley with victory

NO. 1 RIDGEWAY 14, CORDOVA 6

By ERIC SMITH
Special to The Commercial Appeal

Thursday night's cold rain put a damper on the tribute to Ridgeway coach John Cooley, but it couldn't stop the Roadrunners from grinding out another win.

Fueled by big plays on defense and special teams, Ridgeway overcame cold temperatures and sloppy field conditions for a 14-6 victory against Region 7-5A foe Cordova at Halle Stadium.

The game was preceded by a ceremony honoring Cooley, who is retiring from Ridgeway after 22 years as head coach. Former players were invited

to watch Cooley coach his final regular-season game at Halle.

The crowd was thin because of foul weather that didn't end until after kickoff. That didn't make the night any less special for the longtime coach.

"It's a big win for us, region-wise," Cooley said, "and doing it on this occasion means even more."

The Roadrunners (9-0 overall, 6-0 in 7-5A and No. 1 in the Dandy Dozen) got it done behind a suffocating defense, which they needed on a night when the offense struggled.

Midway through the first quarter, Joe Calvin returned an interception 40 yards for a touchdown to put the Roadrunners up 7-0. Calvin's first career touchdown came

thanks to pressure on Cordova quarterback Cameron Baker, who was being pursued by the Ridgeway front.

"Our defense plays hard all the time, through rain or whatever," Calvin said. "We try to hold our opponents to zero points."

Ridgeway couldn't get the shutout, however, because a second-quarter fumble deep in its territory gave Cordova (3-6, 3-3) a short field. Cedric Canada punched in a 6-yard touchdown for the Wolves, but the extra point sailed wide and Ridgeway led 7-6.

The Roadrunners, who held Cordova to 35 yards, sealed the victory with a blocked punt late in the second quarter. Dasmine Cathey came rushing in from right end and smothered the ball as

it was being kicked.

That gave Ridgeway first-and-goal at the Cordova 5-yard line. On the first play of the series, Patrick Oliver scampered around left end for the score.

Ridgeway relied on a simple game plan because of the muddy field. Quarterback Scott Raileanu handed the ball off to tailback Martelle Taylor 23 times, usually off left or right tackle.

ANOTHER GAME

South Side 34, Westside 20: Lequinton Montgomery ran for 168 yards and scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns in the South Side (3-6, 3-2 Region 8-2A) victory.

Derek Richard caught two passes for 88 yards and a touchdown to lead Westside (1-8, 0-5 8-2A).

THIS WEEK'S GAMES

Starkville (5-3, 3-1 in MHSAA Region 1-5A) at No. 4 Olive Branch (7-1, 3-1)

Time: 7 p.m.
Storylines: If you're Olive Branch, you'll want to avoid turnovers tonight against a Starkville squad that intercepted Southaven six times last week in a 14-3 region win over the visiting Chargers. Olive Branch had little trouble with Horn Lake in a 55-16 region win over the Eagles last Friday in which the Conquistadors rolled up 430 total yards (199 rushing, 231 passing). Tonight Olive Branch, which finishes out its regular-season schedule at Columbus and vs. Tupelo at home, can take sole possession of second place in the region standings with a victory combined with a Tupelo loss to Grenada.

No. 6 Wooddale (7-1, 4-1 in Region 8-5A) at No. 11 Germantown (5-3, 3-2)

Time: 7 p.m.
Storylines: Both teams are looking to bounce back from tough region losses last week. Wooddale was a 21-20 loser to undefeated White Station last Friday despite

piling up over 350 yards of total offense. Germantown, meanwhile, has lost two straight, including a 27-24 overtime loss to Region 8-5A foe Houston last week that's left the Red Devils needing a victory tonight to remain in the hunt for home-field advantage in the playoffs. In order to get it, Germantown will have to contain Wooddale senior QB Jeremy Perry (1,560 passing yards, 22 TDs) and his favorite target, senior WR Roderick Davis (745 receiving yards, 11 TDs).

Mountain Home (2-5, 2-2 in Class 6A East) at No. 8 West Memphis (6-1, 4-0)

Time: 7:30
Storylines: Mountain Home shocked Marion, 39-34, last week thanks in part to senior FB William Dyer's 136 rushing yards and two TDs. The Bombers figure to need another big performance from Dyer tonight against a West Memphis team that shut out Jonesboro, 7-0, last week to remain perfect in conference play. Blue Devil senior Dominique Hamelin was the star, rushing for 127 yards and West Memphis' lone touchdown while also forcing two Jonesboro turnovers on defense.

Crockett County (8-0, 4-0 in Region 7-3A) at No. 9 Covington (7-1, 3-1)

Time: 7:30 p.m.
Storylines: It doesn't get any bigger than this for Covington, which got a combined 296 rushing yards and two touchdowns last week from RBs Thomas Hall and Rodney Gude in a 20-6 Region 7-3A victory over Ripley. Tonight the Chargers take on an undefeated Crockett County squad that scored 28 first-quarter points last Friday in a 49-20 beatdown of Dyer County. Keep an eye on Crockett County QB Craig Massey, who completed 14-of-17 pass attempts for 249 yards and two touchdowns in the Trojans' victory last week.

Bolton (5-3, 4-1 in Region 7-5A) at No. 12 Millington (6-2, 4-1)

Time: 7 p.m.
Storylines: This one appears to be for second place in Region 7-5A with both teams tied in the region standings behind undefeated Ridgeway. Millington enters this one with the area's eighth-most productive offense, averaging 348.3 total yards per game. Bolton, on the other hand, has won

four straight on the strength of an improving offense and a defense that's allowed just 191.8 yards and 14.1 points per game this season.

Other games

Rossville Christian (3-4) at Arlington (6-1)
Davidson Academy (7-1) at Bishop Byrne (5-2)
Senatobia (4-4) at Byhalia (2-5)
St. George's (7-1) at David Brainerd (1-7)
Trezevant (4-4) at Brighton (5-3)
Kirby (0-8) at Collierville (4-4)
Lafayette Co. (6-2) at DeSoto Central (2-6)
Whitehaven (4-4) vs. Hamilton (2-6) at Fairgrounds
Lexington (5-3) at Fayette-Ware (5-3)
SBEC (4-3) at First Assembly (4-4)
Northside (0-7) vs. Frayser (1-6) at Greenhill
Hillcrest (1-7) at Hardin Co. (4-4)
Fayette Academy (6-0) at Harding (6-2)
Columbus (2-5) at Horn Lake (1-6)
Craigmont (3-5) vs. Overton (1-7) at Halle
Raleigh-Egypt (2-6) at Jackson Central-Merry (3-5)
St. Benedict (3-5) at Jackson Christian (5-3)
Sylvan Hills (2-5) at Marion (4-3)
Mitchell (7-2) vs. East (4-4) at Melrose
Kingsbury (1-7) at Memphis University School (3-5)
Westwood (2-6) vs. Treadwell (1-7) at Raleigh-Egypt
Southaven (3-5) at South Panola (8-0)
Hernando (4-4) at Tunica Rosa Fort (3-5)
Oakhaven (1-7) at Washington (8-0)
DeSoto School (6-2) at West Memphis Christian (4-3)
Bartlett (0-8) vs. Central (2-6) at Whitehaven

— Jason Smith

SHELBY-METRO STANDINGS

(Through Friday's games)

STANDINGS

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Ridgeway	5	0	8	0
Millington	4	1	6	2
Bolton	4	1	5	3
Cordova	3	2	3	5
Central	2	3	2	6
Craigmont	1	4	3	5
Overton	1	4	1	7
Bartlett	0	5	0	8
*Arlington	0	0	6	1

REGION 8-5A

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
White Station	5	0	8	0
Wooddale	4	1	7	1
Houston	4	1	6	2
Germantown	3	2	5	3
Whitehaven	2	3	4	4
Collierville	1	4	4	4
Hamilton	1	4	2	6
Kirby	0	5	0	8

REGION 8-4A

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Melrose	4	0	7	1
Fairley	3	1	7	2
East	2	2	4	4
Raleigh-Egypt	2	2	4	6
Kingsbury	1	3	1	7
Northside	0	4	0	7

REGION 8-3A

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Sheffield	3	0	6	2
Trezevant	2	1	4	4
Mitchell	2	2	7	2
Frayser	1	2	1	6
Hillcrest	0	3	1	7

REGION 8-2A

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Washington	5	0	8	0
Carver	4	1	4	5
South Side	2	2	2	6
Westwood	3	2	2	6
Oakhaven	1	3	1	7
Treadwell	1	3	1	7
Westside	0	4	1	7

DIVISION 2-AAA

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Chatt. McCallie	3	0	7	1
Brentwood Aca.	3	1	7	1
CBHS	3	1	6	2
Chatt. Baylor	2	2	6	2
Nash. Father Ryan	1	2	4	4
Nashville MBA	1	2	4	4
MUS	1	3	3	5
Briarcrest	0	4	2	7

DIVISION 2-AA

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
ECS	4	0	8	0
Pope John Paul	3	1	5	3
Harding	2	2	6	2
Knox. Webb	2	2	5	3
St. Benedict	1	3	3	5
Franklin BGA	0	4	0	8

DIVISION 2-A

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Davidson Aca.	5	0	7	1
St. George's	4	1	7	1
Bishop Byrne	4	1	5	2
FACS	3	2	4	4
SBEC	2	3	4	3
Tipton-Rosemark	1	4	1	7
David Brainerd	1	4	1	7
St. Andrew's	0	5	1	7
*Ross. Christian	0	0	3	4

MHSAA REGION 1-5A

Team	Region		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
South Panola	4	0	8	0
Olive Branch	3	1	7	1
Starkville	3	1	5	3
Tupelo	3	1	4	3
Grenada	2	2	6	2
Columbus	1	3	2	5
Southaven	0	0	3	3
Horn Lake	0	4	1	6

OTHERS

Team	W	L
Fayette Academy	8	0
Covington	7	1
West Memphis	6	1
Mumford	6	1
Fayette-Ware	5	3
Brighton	5	3
Marion	4	3
West Memphis Christian	4	4
Hernando	4	4
Senatobia	4	4
DeSoto Central	2	6
Manassas	2	7

*—Not eligible for playoffs

STAT LEADERS

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Crawford, Ridge	108	1110	185.0	13
Sims, WMC	96	1014	169.0	14
Hunter, Kingsbury	148	107		