

## Sparta sweeps Ellsworth

Panthers play some of their best volleyball in losing effort

By Sean Scallon  
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SPARTA, Wis. — As an underdog in Friday's WIAA Division 2 regional semifinal volleyball match, Ellsworth played with nothing to lose against the higher seed Sparta.

That attitude allowed the Panthers to play the Spartans even in Game 1 and take a five-point lead in Game 2.

But it didn't allow for victory, as the Spartans won 25-23, 25-19, 25-6 and advanced to today's regional final in Durand, Wis.

Ellsworth coach Margie Biel thought her team played some of its best volleyball of the season in the first two games.

The Panthers had the first game tied at 23-23 after an ace by junior Kayla Christopherson, only to watch the Spartans score the final two points on Ellsworth mistakes.

In Game 2, the Panthers had leads of 9-5, 12-9 and 14-9.

They covered well at the net and they got kills from a variety of different players.

Christopherson, senior Rachel Anderson and jun-

ior Allison Freier all had four kills.

Senior Carlie Melstrom added nine set assists.

"We have nothing to hang heads about when it came to our effort tonight," Biel said.

But in both Games 1 and 2 the Panthers were not able to sustain their momentum to the end and allowed the Spartans to storm back.

In Game 2, Sparta received six straight service points from Haylee Kirking that put the home team in front again 15-14.

Kelsey Berz scored five points from the line to

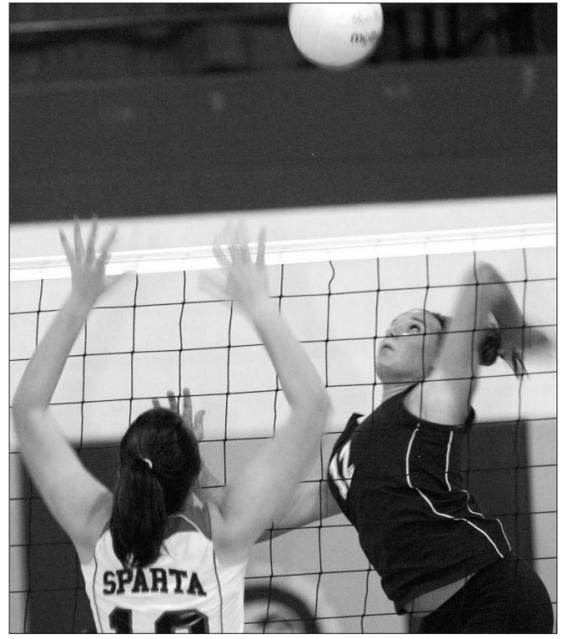
give Sparta a 20-15 lead. Ellsworth would get no closer than 23-19 on a kill by Christopherson.

In Game 3, Sparta's Aletra Nading came off the bench to serve up 11 points in a row for a 16-3 Spartan lead.

Jamie Kenyon had another six serving points to send the Spartans on their way to the win.

"Volleyball is all about momentum and once they got it they never let it go," Biel said. "They're a very good team."

Ellsworth closed out its season with a 16-10 overall record.



Sean Scallon/RiverTown Newspaper Group  
Ellsworth's Kayla Christopherson hits a spike Friday over Sparta's Haylee Kirking.



Heather Rule/Contributor

Don Whitebear's life revolves around cars. He has raced stock cars for the last 11 years and he has worked as a salesman at Red Wing Chevrolet for the past five. "I love racing cars," he said. "I love selling cars. This job fits right in with what I do."

## Cars rev his engine

Consistency and clean driving lead Whitebear to championship

By Heather Rule  
Contributor

Most everyone has a hobby or two. For some, it's being a sports enthusiast, for others it may be collecting stamps. But for Don Whitebear, his hobby involves an 85 mph straightaway.

Whitebear, 54, has raced stock cars for 11 years. On Sept. 13, he became the 2009 track champion in the Hobby Stock division at Raceway Park in Shakopee, Minn.

"It's not every day somebody wins one of these," Whitebear said. "We were very consistent. Consistency is what won us the championship this year."

The pieces fell into place as Whitebear was the points leader for most of the 19-race, five-month season.

It came down to the final race to

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**DON WHITEBEAR**  
Stock car racer

become a champion in the 36-driver field. When the checkered flag flew, Whitebear had his second feature win of the season and the championship title.

"This year was special," he said. "All the hard work paid off. And everything just went as planned."

Whitebear's crew chief, Eric Blom, said winning the championship was "surreal."

"He's come a long way as a driver," Blom said. "I'm glad that we were able to get him a championship."

Whitebear's clean driving style helped him to the title.

"Believe me, I pride myself in being a clean driver," he said. "I think I've earned the respect of a lot of drivers out there by them knowing that if they're going to pull up alongside me, we're going to race. It's not a demo derby."

His passion for racing goes back to his teenage years, watching races Saturday nights at the former dirt-track Hiawatha Speed-

Turn to **WHITEBEAR**, page 9A

## Panthers go winless

BY R-E SPORTS STAFF

**WISCONSIN FOOTBALL**

Wait until next year. That's when Ellsworth will have the opportunity to break its 20-game losing streak. The Panthers lost their final 2009 game 31-6 at Prescott.

The opening action was symbolic of the season.

Prescott drove the length of the field in first few minutes, but Ellsworth's defense stopped it on downs at the 19-yard line.

On Ellsworth's first possession, the Panthers fumbled and gave the ball right back to the Cardinals. A few plays later Prescott's Cole Geiger scored on a 7-yard run.

"It's the transition play of a transition year," Ellsworth coach John Groh said. "... It's the kind of plays that happened to a team that doesn't have a lot of success. You make a big stop on defense and you give the ball right back to them without so much as gaining a yard. That's sums up our struggles right there."

Another missed opportunity came when Ellsworth failed to convert a fourth-and-one play at midfield. Prescott converted its opportunity by capping a scoring drive with a 2-yard touchdown run up the middle by Mark Nahorniak.

Geiger scored on the home's team first possession of the second half on a 27-yard run. Ellsworth then fumbled the ensuing kickoff and Prescott capitalized with a 5-yard run by Mark Nahorniak for a 28-0 lead. Prescott's Nick Jacobsen add a field goal in the fourth quarter.

Ellsworth's Tanner Eggenberger scored on a 12-yard run on his team's next possession.

"We kept playing hard and I think our fans saw that and appreciated it," Groh said.

**Plum City 50, Cornell 13**

Plum City wrapped up yet another conference title, winning its fifth in a row. The Blue Devils also pushed their regular-season winning streak to 47 games in their huge victory over Cornell.

Plum City once again dominated the ground game, grinding out 391 rushing yards on 46 carries. Tim Wayne had 160 of those yards on 21 carries and scored a pair of touchdowns.

Gabe Rodriguez racked up 80 yards on just 10 carries in the contest.

Perhaps the most noteworthy accomplishment the Blue Devils had Thursday night was holding the state's third leading rusher, Cody Olson, to 81 yards, including just 26 going into the fourth quarter.

The Blue Devils got on the scoreboard quickly as Shawn Ingli connected with Tyler Churchill for a 6-yard touchdown. Ingli threw two touchdowns, both to Churchill, and had 56 yards passing.

Wayne scored his two touchdowns in the second quarter, with both of them being 3-yard runs.

Also scoring for the Blue Devils were sophomore Chase Luebker (11-yard run) and senior Alex Hartung (5-yard run).

The Blue Devils stingy defense forced three fumbles, only one of which was recovered by Cornell.

Plum City improved to 9-0 overall and 7-0 in the South Lakeland Conference. The Blue Devils received a No. 1 seed in the Division 7 playoffs and will play host to Turtle Lake (5-4 overall) Tuesday in Ellsworth.

**Pepin-Alma 40, Prairie Farm 8**

Nathan Stein rushed for 152 yards and two touchdowns — including a 78-yard scoring run in the first quarter — on 12 carries to lead the Eagles to victory in Pepin.

As a team, P-A rushed for 250 yards on 27 carries. Quarterback Jacob Lerum threw for another 98 yards.

The Eagles scored the game's first 40 points. After Stein's run, Lerum connected with Travis Heit for a 31-yard scoring play.

Stein scored again before halftime on a 4-yard run. In the third quarter, Sam Wieland scored on a 4-yard run and Lerum added a 1-yard touchdown run.

The P-A defense had a solid night, holding Prairie Farm to 134 rushing yards on 38 carries and 44 passing yards.

P-A improved to 6-3 overall and 5-2 in the South Lakeland Conference with the win. It will play host to Frederic in the Division 7 playoffs Tuesday in Pepin. The Eagles received a No. 3 seed.

## Fans, family sway Kelly's commitment

By Ryan Nilsson  
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Kelly

When Pat Kelly visited the University of Nebraska in May 2008, he watched the Huskers baseball team play Texas A&M. The game went 16 innings and got over at midnight.

Yet, many of the 8,708 fans remained until the end to see the Aggies win 6-3. Their loyalty to the Huskers made a strong impression on Kelly and is one of the primary reasons the Red Wing junior provided Nebraska baseball coach Mike Anderson with a verbal commitment Monday.

"They don't really have a pro team down there to

support or anything so everyone just kind of supports the Huskers. It's pretty cool," said Kelly.

There also was a familial factor in his decision. Kelly's dad, Jim, attended the school on a football scholarship. A knee injury prevented Jim Kelly from playing a down for the Huskers.

Kelly and his dad returned to Lincoln last weekend. Before the Oct. 17 Nebraska football game, Anderson offered Kelly a scholarship.

Kelly caught the atten-

tion of Nebraska assistant Eric Newman in August at the Area Code Games in Long Beach, Calif. Kelly, one of the few juniors-to-be invited to the game, played every infield position except first base during the six-game showcase and didn't commit an error. He finished with two hits and hit many balls hard.

His ability to wield a bat makes Kelly an alluring prospect, according to Wingers baseball coach Jim Bohmbach.

"He really stays inside the ball and hits with tremendous power to the opposite field, which is really hard to get anybody to do," Bohmbach said.

Kelly showcased that power during the Section 1AAA tournament in May when he hit a massive home run against Rochester John Marshall.

"It was unbelievable," Bohmbach said.

There's much more to Kelly than power and a 6.7 time in the 60-yard dash, though.

He possesses an unmatched intensity and work ethic. Kelly wants to field ground balls before and after practice.

"He's always up at the cages hitting," Bohmbach said. "I think I saw him just a couple days ago up there. I drove by the Ath and there he was in the

Turn to **KELLY**, page 11A