

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2022 SPORTS ** STAR TRIBUNE • C11

PREPS EXTRA
FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

Running Back Nicholas Waisle runs right through a facemask penalty for a clutching touchdown.

CLASS 5A SEMIFINALS MANKATO WEST 14, ROGERS 10



CLARENCE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Mankato West quarterback Barton McAninch pulled into the end zone with the go-ahead touchdown run in the third quarter of the Scarlets' Class 5A semifinal victory over Rogers at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Late goal-line stand propels Mankato West

By DAVID LA VAGUE
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Mankato West stayed in stride as it walked toward a second consecutive state championship.

The Scarlets edged Rogers 14-10 in Mankato's Class 5A state tournament semifinal at U.S. Bank Stadium.

The Scarlets stretched their winning streak to 31 games, will face Elk River in the final.

The victory sends Mankato West (2-0) back to the Prep Bowl, waiting in Elk River. Kickoffs is scheduled for 4 p.m. Dec. 3.

"We felt coming in it was going to come down to one or two plays," Rogers coach Marc Frazee said. "Those guys had a positive attitude and comported."

West (2-0) back to the Prep Bowl, waiting in Elk River. Kickoffs is scheduled for 4 p.m. Dec. 3.

"We felt coming in it was going to come down to one or two plays," Rogers coach Marc Frazee said. "Those guys had a positive attitude and comported."

A year ago, the Scarlets stumbled to the crown. Graduation losses meant different faces and different strengths. Results stayed the same. They have a 26-game winning streak dating to 2000.

Quarterback Barton McAninch provided two rushing touchdowns. The second came after Rogers lost a fumble at its 28. Trailing 10-7, the Scarlets were eager to take advantage of an opportunity, especially having been stymied since their first drive of the game.

"We knew we had to score because we had faith in our defense," McAninch said. Faith was tested as Rogers (0-4) recovered a fumble at the Mankato West 14-yard line. Having watched the Scarlets convert a takeaway into a touchdown, the Royals focused on returning the favor.

The team was feeling relaxed, quarterback Reece Darvorn said. "We thought we had a good chance of putting it in."

"That had me nervous," McAninch said. "But they came through as always."

Running back Anthony

ROUNDUP

DGF advances to Class 3A final

STAFF REPORTS

The Tigers' opening possession set the tone in a six-touchdown first half as they defeated Deer River in the first Class 3A semifinal at U.S. Bank Stadium. Springfield (0-2) scored a season high in points and amassed more than 500 yards of offense.

"Obviously you don't expect your first 30-point game of the season to come in the state semifinals," Springfield coach Adam Meyer said. "But again, that's a credit to our kids making big plays and striking from all over the field."

Springfield junior quarterback Jabeo Nuckert threw five touchdowns passes and completed 20 of 24 passes for 339 yards. Five players scored touchdowns, including two each for Ashton Toib, Mar'cay Krick and Carter Olson. Krick hauled in 76-yard and 55-yard passes for a couple of the longest plays of the day.

Deer River (13-3) tried to keep the game within one or two scores, but it got away, coach Brent Schmeck said. Deer River was also down 14-0 early in the state quarterfinal against Mahanomen before winning 36-14.

"We knew that Springfield could put up points quicker than Mahanomen," Deer River quarterback Sam Rabher said. "So we couldn't grind away like we wanted to end."

It is the first Prep Bowl berth the Tigers since winning their only title in 2005.

HEATHER BUELL

Minnesota 24, Fillmore Central 27, Minnesota nearly watched its three-touchdown lead evaporate completely.

But the Vikings, in their 26th football state tournament, stopped one last drive in the final 60 seconds of regulation to defeat Fillmore Central in the second Class 1A semifinal.

"I think I saw some wide-open eyes a little bit at the end of this game today, but that was even myself," Minnesota coach Chad Johnson said. "I don't know if you can always say experience prepares you for everything that you have to deal with, especially in a game as tight as this one."

Fillmore Central converted a fourth-and-30 with a 35-yard lateral passing play with 22 seconds remaining but fell short of the end zone as time ran out.

"We just knew that we just had to hang in there and it took was one big play," Minnesota running back Zack Far said. "Toward the end there, we got a key block and a couple steps that put the game away."

The Falcons (12-1) scored three unanswered touchdowns in the second half but a two-point conversion attempt after their last score failed and left it a 28-27 game with 3:15 left in regulation.

Even before the Falcons scored on that drive, they knew they were going to go for two. Fillmore Central coach Chris Menstak said.

"We're going for the win," Menstak said. "We didn't come here to tie."

Fillmore Central, playing in its first state tournament, suffered its only loss of the season.

The Vikings (12-2) got rushing touchdowns from quarterback Isaac Puhlin, Anthony Rybinski and Ryan Mesinger, all from fewer than 5 yards out.

HEATHER BUELL

CLASS 3A SEMIFINALS NEW LONDON SPICER 31, WATERTOWN MAYER 28



CLARENCE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
New London Spicer's Byron Christensen boogie free for his team's first touchdown in Saturday's Class 3A semifinal victory over Watertown-Mayer at U.S. Bank Stadium.

No rally needed this time

New London Spicer is in first Prep Bowl since 2014.

By DAVID LA VAGUE
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New London Spicer has allowed opponents to score first in all four playoff games this season. Three of those early deficits extended to halftime. Not Saturday.

The Wildcats offense took charge against Watertown-Mayer and turned a two-half time lead into a 33-28 Class 3A semifinal victory in U.S. Bank Stadium.

New London Spicer earned its first Prep Bowl appearance since 2014. The Wildcats (10-2) will face Dilworth (10-2) in the first round of the state tournament on Saturday.

"We really emphasized getting off to a faster start," Wildcats coach Chad Gustafson said. "So, to have the lead at halftime was huge tonight."

Doing so helped dispatch Wright County Conference rival Watertown-Mayer, which defeated the Wildcats on Sept. 9.

Receiver Byron Christensen produced three touchdowns, two on receptions and one rushing. His 17-yard touchdown catch with time remaining the first half put New London Spicer ahead 17-7.

Watertown-Mayer (11-2), ranked seventh in the final Class 3A poll, won the first game 38-36. The Royals kept battling No. 9 New London Spicer in the rematch.

Quarterback Albert Rindell rushed for 83 yards and two touchdowns, the second cutting the Wildcats' lead to six points in the fourth quarter.

New London Spicer quarterback Blake Schulte tossed his third touchdown pass of the game, this one coming on fourth down, to Gabe Rohman for a 33-21 lead with 4:43 to play.

"I'm sure when I go back and look, I'm going to say, 'Oh man, we were really close in time of possession and yardage and all that,'" Royals coach Andrew Phillips said. "But I told our guys all week long as we prepared that the one thing we had to do was limit the big plays."

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