



GROOM (10) LOOKS FOR A RECEIVER
Cardinal has passed for 1,866 yards.

Cards "Groom" for war

The team's the thing.

Kelly Groom, William Jewell's All-American quarterback, is a firm believer in the team concept.

The spirit of togetherness, the closeness, the friendships formed in a special way—blending to generate the team's power, its very existence.

Groom, whose team is two steps away from a national championship, has gathered countless honors and accolades, leading the Cardinals through a near-flawless season and into the national semifinals.

Yet, with a characteristic modesty, he attributes personal achievement to the interdependence of team.

"On another team, I might be mediocre,"

Groom says.

His high school team, at Highland, near Hannibal, Mo., won only two of nine games, with Groom as quarterback, his senior year. In his junior season, they managed only four wins in 10.

William Jewell, this season, climbed to the top of the NAIA Division II national rankings, winning its first six games. The Cardinals finished the regular campaign 8-1 and ranked sixth.

They stayed alive in the national playoffs, surviving in three overtimes, 44-43, at fourth-rated Sul Ross, Texas State Nov. 20.

The most-memorable aspect of playing at Jewell, Groom says, is the team feeling.

"You depend on people, and they depend on you,"

he says. "It becomes a two-way confidence."

The Cardinal offensive line and defensive unit are the source of Groom's confidence.

"They are simply outstanding," he says.

Before Sul Ross, Groom had never been involved in the pressure of playing in overtime. "You had to draw strength from your teammates," he recalled.

Groom threw four times for touchdowns at Sul Ross, twice in overtime.

During the season, Groom, a 5-11, 180-pound senior, completed 55 percent of his 175 passes. He amassed 1,768 yards, running and passing.

Groom and his teammates are preparing for an invasion Saturday by top-ranked Northwestern of Iowa. A victory would pro-

pel Jewell into the national finals Dec. 11 against Westminster, Pa.-Linfield, Ore. winner.

"We're polishing our game plan," Groom said, choosing his words carefully to safeguard the Cardinal strategy.

Groom's number one fan is his wife Kim. She hasn't missed a game in the three years the Grooms have been married, and was one of the 20 Cardinal backers at Sul Ross.

The Grooms have one daughter, Kendall.

After college, Groom, 21, plans to coach football. "I'm not definitely planning to coach at the high school or the college level," he says. "It depends on the opportunities."

One thing is certain. He'll stress team concepts.