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# Jewell team takes solace in the soil

## Group to carry dirt from its football field into battle for No. 1

By D.P. Breckenridge  
staff writer

**F**act: On its home turf in Liberty, the William Jewell College football team has not lost a regular-season game in longer than any of the players can remember.

Fact: The William Jewell Cardinals will play Saturday for the national football championship of their small-college division in McMinnville, Ore., more than 1,000 miles away from their home turf—on the home turf of their opponent.

Put those facts together and the Cardinals may feel they could use some help.

So they are going to take their the home-field advantage to Oregon with them.

"The idea came from four of our football players," Coach Vic Wallace said Thursday afternoon after his team, which won 10 of 11 games in the regular season, held an informal ceremony that involved filling a plastic bag with dirt from the school's football field.

As the players are introduced before the game with Linfield College, each member of the 42-man squad will carry a little of that dirt onto the field with him, "and they're just going to spread it on the field," Mr. Wallace said.

"The kids on this team have never lost a game on their home field, and we'd hoped to play for the national championship on our home field," he said. "We couldn't do that, so the next-best thing is to take our home field with us."

Said all-conference halfback Steve Hodges: "There were four of us sitting around talking about the national cham-

pionship, and we just thought this was a good idea."

The Cardinals, who have not lost a regular-season home game since 1978, have reached the semifinals of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division II the last three years. Now that they have reached the championship game, they thought that called for something special.

Although some outdoor signs in Liberty have urged the team on, and a banner across a major Liberty thoroughfare welcomed William Jewell's semifinal opponent to town last week, the team's rise to pigskin prominence has been distinctly low-key.

College officials said they know

of no plans for a welcome-home celebration when the team returns from Oregon, arriving at 1:45 p.m. Sunday on Western Airlines at Kansas City International Airport.

The team, lacking great numbers of ferocious fans that support larger football schools, has had to create much of its own enthusiasm.

"At the beginning of the year, we set our goal at winning the national championship. At the time, it seemed the goal was possible, but it was so far off," Mr. Wallace said. "Now it's only one game away."

And the Cardinals have their home turf.