

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

Fact: 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 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.

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.

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Jewell's championship hopes rest on stopping Linfield offense

By Bill Richardson

A Member of the Sports Staff

McMINNVILLE, Ore. — In the last several days, the offense of Linfield College has tantalized William Jewell football coaches and players as they watched it flicker about in films. Here it comes, there it goes.

There are reverses galore, with most everything in the offense stemming from misdirection plays. As Jewell Coach Vic Wallace said, "They must practice against air because so much of it is just timing."

Wallace wishes he had more time to prepare a defense for Linfield.

"I wish we had had two weeks instead of just one," Wallace said. "Even one more day would have helped."

Time, however, has run out on the Cardinals. At 2:30 p.m. today (Kansas City time).

the celluloid images will come to life on the field when William Jewell, 10-1, meets Linfield, 11-0, in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division II championship game.

The game will be taped and shown from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Sunday on Channel 9.

Although Linfield is the home team, the game is being played at a public-school field. Too much rain and two playoff games left the Linfield College field too chopped up to be used for a title game.

The star of the Linfield game films and maestro of the offense is quarterback Randy Mueller, who has passed for 1,518 yards and 14 touchdowns and rushed for 222 yards and seven more scores. What Mueller doesn't do with the football also has the Cardinals concerned.

"Our coaching staff thinks that Mueller is the best running and faking quarterback we've seen this year," Wallace said.

Linfield confused its opponents plenty during its nine regular-season games. Five times the Wildcats scored more than 40 points. In the Division II playoffs, Linfield defeated California Lutheran 20-16 and Westminster (Pa.) 37-9.

Linfield's top receiver is wingback Howard Hines, who has 38 catches for 522 yards. Kyle Tarpensing adds to the attack with his kicking. Tarpensing, who also plays in the defensive backfield, has scored 54 points on 36 conversions and six field goals (out of 12 attempted).

Wallace said Linfield plays a sophisticated defense.

"It looks like the old Arkansas 50 monster defense," he said. "But in reality it's more of a pro-type defense. They use a strong safety (and) free safety and have a dozen or more coverages."

Linfield Coach Ad Rutschman knows Jewell only from three games films but said he was impressed by the Cardinals' rugged style.

"Jewell has a very strong defense and a hard-nosed running attack," Rutschman said. "They have size and mobility and they come at you. We're about the same size as they are offensively, but we're not as big as they are defensively."

Jewell's offense, directed by senior quarterback Kelly Groom, features junior running backs Steve Hodges and Scoop Gillespie and junior wide receiver Jimi Reed. Groom

completed 54 percent of his passes for 1,615 yards. Hodges rushed for 760 yards in 166 carries. Gillespie for 550 in 109. Reed had 38 receptions for 769 yards.

The big play is the main characteristic of the Cardinals' offense. In Jewell's 23-10 playoff victory over Northwestern of Iowa last Saturday, Groom threw scoring passes of 78 and 28 yards to Reed, and Hodges scored on a 61-yard run.

Final NAIA regular-season statistics showed that William Jewell and Linfield were close in three categories. Linfield were 11th in total offense at 395 yards a game, Jewell 15th at 386.4. Linfield was eighth in rushing defense at 589 yards, Jewell ninth at 619. Linfield was third in scoring average at 35.3, Jewell fifth at 33.7.