

Jewell's championship hopes rest on stopping Linfield offense

By Bill Richardson

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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 Tarpenning adds to the attack with his kicking. Tarpenning, 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 was 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.