

William Jewell players may find there's no place like Linfield's home

By Bill Richardson

sports writer

Citizens of McMinnville, Ore., must feel their community of 15,000 is situated on hallowed ground.

The U.S. Department of the Interior said that, ecologically, McMinnville is one of the seven best places in the nation to live among cities of its size.

The diversity of McMinnville's industry—poultry, computers, steel, wood products, agriculture—has enabled it to weather

the economic recession better than most areas in Oregon.

In a survey by a financial magazine, Linfield College of McMinnville, with an enrollment of 1,283 was listed among the top smaller-school bargains in the nation for an education of high quality.

McMinnville also is feeling pretty smug about football these days.

While the University of Oregon, 2-8-1, and Oregon State, 1-9-1, have packed up their seasons, the undefeated Linfield Wildcats are

shooting for a national championship. Linfield, 11-0, will be host to William Jewell College, 10-1, Saturday afternoon in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division II title game.

Linfield, a 127-year-old institution associated with the American Baptist Church, was awarded the title game by the NAIA for its support of earlier playoff games and because of weather considerations. NAIA officials say Linfield has sold all the top-price tickets for the game in a public-school stadium. A capacity crowd of

3,808 is expected.

Ad Rutschman, who has a 111-30-2 record in 15 seasons as Linfield's head coach, has taken a low-key approach about his team.

"We make the big play here and there," Rutschman said. "We don't have a single standout, or a star. There are no NFL prospects on this team, but we have a group of fine small-college players."

Rutschman said the Wildcats use a multiple offense, and in keeping with their no-star system, stress balance. Fullback Mike Freeman was the team's

rushing leader with 297 yards in nine regular-season games. Four other players each gained more than 200 yards. Freeman suffered a leg injury in the playoff quarterfinals and has been replaced by freshman Dino Gipaya, a Hawaiian who enjoyed a big game Saturday against Westminster (Pa.).

Quarterback Randy Mueller has the most imposing statistics. Mueller, a 5-foot-11, 185-pound senior from St. Maries, Idaho, completed 103 of 241 passes for 1,518 yards and 14 touchdowns in the regular season. He rushed for 222

yards and seven more touchdowns.

Linfield began its season with four straight victories over NAIA Division I opponents. Rutschman said a 40-35 victory over Oregon Tech in the fourth game was a key victory for the Wildcats. Oregon Tech was rated 14th in the final NAIA Division I poll.

"That game gave us confidence," Rutschman said. "After beating Oregon Tech I knew we were in good shape going into the rest of the schedule against Division II opponents."