

Parkston, Canton Ready For 11B Bout

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

The past 12 months have been nothing but motivation for the Parkston Trojans.

Having lost in last year's playoff quarterfinals, the Trojans — with the talent they had coming back — were rather confident they could make a deep run in 2013, head coach Eric Norden said.

"I thought we had a shot at it, yeah, but we had to improve in a lot of different spots," he said. "We moved some guys around, made some changes, but had a good place to start from."

A year later, Parkston advanced all the way to today's (Friday) Class 11B championship game and will play Canton at 2:30 p.m. in the DakotaDome.

The Trojans (10-1), whose last title game appearance was 2002, suffered only a loss to Winner this season. Oddy enough, Winner was the team Canton took out in the other semifinal.

"We knew with our schedule, we wouldn't have to get too far to know how good we were," Norden said. "It was a crazy schedule; had most of the top teams in the state on it."

The C-Hawks (10-1), meanwhile, are making their first championship game appearance since a Class 11A double overtime win over Dell Rapids in 2006.

And so, having two rather



P&D FILE PHOTO
Parkston's Mitch Heisinger, right, tries to break the arm tackle of Wagner defender Dylan Brunising during their game earlier this season in Wagner.

new teams to the championship field provides new excitement, according to Canton head coach Rich Lundstrom.

"I think it's cool for fans of football to see somebody else on the big stage," he said. "Obviously it's awesome for our communities. I'm sure Parkston is just as anxious as Canton is."

Just perhaps not anxious

to face Canton's Cody Majeres again.

A senior quarterback, Majeres leads the team with 725 yards and 18 touchdowns on the ground, to go along with 576 yards and five touchdowns through the air.

The key for the C-Hawks, though, has been their balance, Lundstrom said. Senior Gabe Dolen has added 882 yards and 10 touchdowns

rushing, and is joined in the backfield by junior Jake Ablett (665 yds, 6 TD) and senior Tanner Broughton (565 yds, 8 TD).

"I've never had a balanced backfield like this before," Lundstrom said. "It's a nice problem to have trying to spread the ball around."

"Cody has opened up some things for them, because teams have focused on

11B

No. 3 Parkston (10-1) vs. No. 5 Canton (10-1)
2:30 p.m., DakotaDome

PARKSTON CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY: 1991 — lost to Hamlin 38-6 (11B); 2002 — lost to Clark 27-18 (11B)

ROAD TO THE DOME: beat Wagner 38-8; beat Custer 34-6; beat St. Thomas More 19-14

No information were submitted by Parkston

CANTON CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY: 1986 — beat Winner 14-7 (11A); 2006 — beat Dell Rapids 27-20, 2 OT (11A)

ROAD TO THE DOME: beat McCook Central-Montrose 50-0; beat Aberdeen Ron-

PARKSTON
call 34-13; beat Winner 19-7

RUSHING: Cody Majeres 106-725, 18 TD; Gabe Dolen 128-882, 10 TD; Jake Ablett 94-685, 6 TD; Tanner Broughton 90-565, 8 TD

PASSING: Majeres 30-49, 576 yards, 5 TD, 2 INT

RECEIVING: Eli Ripley 15-286, 2 TD; Bryce Schroedermeier 6-71, 1 TD; Brian Jennings 3-122, 1 TD

DEFENSE: Dolen 90 tackles, 9 TFL; Broughton 60 tackles, 2 blocked kicks; Ripley 60 tackles; Tyler Lems 51 tackles, 3 fumble recoveries, 2 forced fumbles; Austin Schreurs 34 tackles, 7 TFL; Schroedermeier 4 INT, 1 TD

him in the option."

Parkston, boasting a defense that has allowed no fewer than 14 points in every game this season, realizes the rushing attack it will face today, Norden said.

"We're going to see a lot of power up front, they'll come at us and try to establish the line of scrimmage," he said.

While each team has taken different paths to the final, they are familiar with each other. Parkston beat Canton 21-14 in the second week of the season.

"It didn't surprise me Canton made it, they're a good team and they've only gotten better from our game," Norden said. "I was really impressed with them the first time. They were so physical up front on us, and Majeres was so tough getting around the edge."

The C-Hawks, too, clearly remember that first meeting,

specifically how many big plays their defense gave up, Lundstrom said.

"Defensively, we have to play a little more disciplined. They broke some big plays on us," he said. "We moved the ball fairly well on offense, but just didn't get it into the end zone."

"We've got to be able to finish."

There might not much of that in today's game, though, given both team's tough defenses, Lundstrom said.

"We're pretty evenly matched teams. The first game was a slugfest, so I'd expect the same thing," he said. "They like to run, we like to run, and we both play good defense."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.



P&D FILE PHOTO
Avon's Liam Swanson, 36, tries to break through the Tripp-Delmont-Armour defense during their game earlier this season in Avon.

Class 9B

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Devin and Logan run free."

While the Avon defense has been good, the Hamlin defense has not slouched off, either. The Chargers have allowed just 72 points in 11 games, over half of which came in wins over Webster (28-20) and Hitchcock-Tulare (30-22).

"Our kids have bought into the old saying that offense wins games, but defense wins championships," Sheehan said. "Our kids have taken that to heart."

Brody Grantham (87 tackles, 12 TFL, 4 sacks, 5 FR), Ryder Grantham (84 tackles, 6 TFL, 4 INT) and Alex Holzwarth (84 tackles, 17 TFL, 13.5 sacks) have provided a big-three for a team that recorded 77 tackles for loss and 40 sacks.

Also for the Chargers, Tristen Leiseth (69 tackles, 11 TFL, 10 sacks) and Dylan Reuer (62 tackles, 8.5 TFL, 7

sacks) have provided pressure up front, while Dustin Quiram (32 tackles, 4 INT) and Austin Niemann (57 tackles, 9 TFL, 3 INT) have patrolled the secondary.

"These guys have bought into the concept that everyone has to do their part," Sheehan said. "It's hard to pick out one guy."

Quiram and Brody Grantham have provided a 1-2 punch for a Charger offense that put up just over 3,000 yards of rushing on the season. Quiram has 1,233 yards and 21 scores, while Grantham has rushed for 1,158 yards and 15 scores.

"They feed off each other," Sheehan said of the offense. "If one is running, the other is blocking."

Unlike the Pirates, the Chargers have thrown the ball a little more, completing 39 passes for 577 yards and nine touchdowns. Niemann has a team-high 18 catches (196 yards, 1 TD), while Leiseth has a team-best 202 yards (11 catches, 3 TD). Tristen Namken has just six catches for 92 yards, but has

a team-best four TD catches.

"Brody's not your traditional QB," Sheehan said. "He's built like a fullback. He is a great student of the game."

For the Charger offense to be successful, they need to hang onto the ball.

"They force a lot of turnovers. We have to eliminate that," Sheehan said. "We have to try to spread them out and run on them, make sure we block to the whistle." Culver said that the Pirates must contain that spread in order to come out on top.

"We need to keep them inside the ends, don't let their QB get loose," he said. "We need to keep them from running free."

The matchup between the Chargers and Pirates begins the second day of championship competition in the DakotaDome. Game time is 11 a.m.

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/JCimburek. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net

ESD Foes Watertown, Pierre Meet Tonight For 11AA Crown

BY NICK ROBINSON
sports@yankton.net

Tonight (Friday) at 7:30 p.m., Eastern South Dakota foes Pierre and Watertown will face off for the first time in the DakotaDome in Vermillion for the right to be crowned state champions of Class 11AA.

Both teams met just a couple months ago, in the first regular season game of the season.

Pierre went into Arrow Country and defeated Watertown 35-24 on Aug. 31.

The Governors (9-1) are playing in their first state championship game since 1988, when the Governors were rolled by the O'Gorman Knights 44-6.

"Any time you get a team all the way to the championship game, you learn things about your team along the way," head coach Jayson Poppinga told the Pierre Capitol Journal. "They've learned things about their team, and we have as well. We had a larger learning curve with the new coaching staff, and because of that, they are more similar to what they were. They have improved though, and they've played some very nice football during the last five games."

It has been 15 years since their last appearance in the DakotaDome, and Pierre has their first year coach Jayson Poppinga under the helm.

The 2013 ESD champions ride behind three-year starting quarterback Alex Gray.

Grey has passed for 2,078 yards and 21 touchdowns this season.

Pierre has three rushers over 500 yards this season: Ethan Case (625), Gray (518), and Jace Jerome (504).

Grey has a two-headed monster to throw the football to, seniors Austin Christopherson and Garrett Pochop.

Pochop, a speedy slot receiver leads Pierre with 43 snags, 773 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. Christopherson, the lengthy deep-threat, has 32 catches, 571 receiving yards and nine touchdowns.

"We're trying to learn new ways to get the ball into the hands of our best players," Jayson Poppinga said. "Every week, it's been a different player, which is a nice thing. Watertown has had a similar situation where they have their centerpiece in Bratland, like we do with Alex Gray, and they could recover if any other player were taken out."

The Governor defense is anchored by none other than Gray.

He has recorded 49 tackles this season as a safety. Christopherson leads the Governors with three interceptions. Senior linebacker Shay Reinke has added six sacks on the season as well.

11AA

No. 1 Pierre (9-1) vs. No. 2 Watertown (7-3)
7:30 p.m., DakotaDome

PIERRE CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY: 1988 — lost to O'Gorman 44-6 (11AA)

ROAD TO THE DOME: beat Brookings 59-19; beat Harrisburg 45-13

RUSHING: Ethan Case 86-662, 9 TD; Jace Jerome 93-484, 3 TD; Alexander Gray 102-418, 9 TD

PASSING: Gray 131-220, 2,078 yards, 21 TD, 8 INT

RECEIVING: Garrett Pochop 43-771, 7 TD; Austin Christopherson 32-571, 9 TD; Case 30-395, 1 TD

DEFENSE: Gray 49 tackles, 2.5 TFL; Matthew Blasig 47 tackles, 6 TFL, 1 sack; Case 42 tackles, 1.5 TFL, 2 INT; Jerome 39 tackles, 5.5 TFL, 3.5 sacks; Christopherson 35 tackles, 0.5 TFL, 3 INT; Shay Reinke 23 tackles, 8 TFL, 5 sacks

WATERTOWN CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY: 1992 — lost to Huron 30-0 (11AA); 1996 — beat Yankton 34-6 (11AA); 2001 — beat Brookings 18-10 (11AA)

ROAD TO THE DOME: beat Douglas 54-7; beat Yankton 32-14

RUSHING: Shay Bratland 252-1,474 yards, 17 TD; Logan Gabriel 63-99, 2 TD; Foley 13-209, 2 TD

PASSING: Gabriel 68-149, 1,140 yards, 12 TD, 6 INT

RECEIVING: Jess Poppen 21-344, 5 TD; Bratland 12-329, 4 TD; Decker 12-156, 2 TD

DEFENSE: Jutting 41.5 tackles, 2 sacks; Koehn 39 tackles, 3.5 sacks, 2 INT; Foley 25 tackles, 2 sacks; Jones 17 tackles, 4.5 sacks, 2 fumble recoveries; Poppen 13.5 tackles, 3 INT, 1 fumble recovery

Defensive coordinator Shannon Poppinga feels that stopping Shay Bratland will decide the contest.

"I showed the boys the film from week one, and they've noticed the improvement as well," he said. "Shay Bratland runs hard, but I think our kids are chomping at the bit to tackle the challenge. He's going to be very quick on the turf, he's big and he likes to cut back. It's all about us filling gaps, making the right reads and tackling."

Head coach Jayson Poppinga feels that his team will be able to handle the jitters early on.

"The nerves are going to be there in an environment like this," he told the Pierre Capitol Journal. "No matter what class, the jitters will be there in a championship game. We will try to get our guys settled down with some early touches. A hall of fame coach told me that kids start to see trophies attached to every play, but our kids need to realize that's it's just like a normal game. One play won't determine the game, and this will be a battle for four quarters. I don't anticipate this to be a blowout for either side, so it will be key for our guys to handle momentum throughout the entire game."

Long-time Watertown coach Steve Svendsen feels that his team is well prepared for the state championship showdown.

"We know all about them, we've seen every single game they have played this year," he said. "However, they are a very good football team, but we're a much different team from week one."

The Arrows (5-3) are arguably one of the hottest

teams in the state, led by running back Shay Bratland.

"He's the type of kid that wants to make sure everyone is ready to go and expects them to play hard," Svendsen said. "He plays so hard, he's always looking to score a touchdown on the offensive side of the ball."

Bratland leads the Arrows with 1474 rushing yards on 252 carries. He has also reached the pile-line 17 times this season.

Coach Svendsen feels that a revamped passing attack will help the Arrow offensive charge.

"We adjusted and simplified some things with our quarterback," he said. "He has shown that he can throw the ball of late, it means that teams can't just stack the box on us. That really opens up the running game for us."

Senior Logan Gabriel is the man-under-center for Watertown. Gabriel has 1,140 yards through the air, along with 12 touchdowns.

Gabriel finds success when he finds his fellow senior wide-out Jess Poppen early in the contest.

Poppen leads the Arrows with 344 receiving yards on 21 catches, with five touchdowns.

The Watertown defense, which is averaging 20.4 points per game to its opponents has seen a surge in the playoffs.

The defense works through their offense and has forced 26 turnovers this season. Poppen leads the defense with six takeaways, two of them for touchdowns.

Even though the Arrows have three losses on the season, Svendsen feels that his

McCutchen, Cabrera Win MVP Awards

NEW YORK (AP) — Pittsburgh Pirates center fielder Andrew McCutchen and Detroit Tigers slugger Miguel Cabrera both coasted Thursday to Most Valuable Player awards.

McCutchen won the National League honor by a surprisingly wide margin after leading a baseball revival in Pittsburgh. He drew 28 of the 30 first-place votes from members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Seated in a sweater and tie, a smiling McCutchen juked a sort of stationary shimmy when his name was announced on MLB Network.

"If I could get up and dance right now I would, but I don't have much room to do that," he said. "When I get off camera, I probably will."

Cabrera took the AL prize for the second straight year,

once again winning by a comfortable gap over Angels outfielder Mike Trout.

A season after posting the majors' first Triple Crown in 45 years, Cabrera came back to lead baseball in hitting at .348 and finish second with 44 home runs and 137 RBIs.

Cabrera got 23 of 30 first-place votes, becoming the first player to win consecutive AL MVPs since Frank Thomas for the Chicago White Sox in 1993 and 1994.

"This is unbelievable," Cabrera said, young kids buzzing around him. "I'm so excited right now."

McCutchen ranked among the NL leaders by hitting .317 with 21 home runs and 84 RBIs. He also scored 97 runs, stole 27 bases and had a .404 on-base percentage.

The 27-year-old with the long, flowing dreadlocks

helped the Pirates stop a record streak of 20 losing seasons and make the playoffs for the first time since 1992.

McCutchen, third in MVP balloting last season, got 409 points. Arizona first baseman Paul Goldschmidt finished second with 242, while St. Louis catcher Yadier Molina received the other two first-place votes and came in third.

Goldschmidt hit .302 with 36 homers and 125 RBIs. Molina batted .319 with 12 homers and 80 RBIs, and virtually shut down opponents' running games. Molina and Goldschmidt each won a Gold Glove, too.

McCutchen's win came two days after Pirates manager Clint Hurdle was picked as the NL Manager of the Year. McCutchen was the first Pittsburgh player to win the MVP since Barry Bonds in 1992.

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