

S.D. Football Championship Preview: 11AAA

Warriors, Knights Ride Momentum Into 11AAA Final



P&D FILE PHOTO

Sioux Falls Washington receiver Ty Smith hauls in a touchdown pass during the Warriors' matchup with Yankton earlier this season. Smith is the leading receiver for Washington, which faces Sioux Falls O'Gorman in the Class 11AAA championship today (Saturday).

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

The Sept. 18 meeting between Sioux Falls Washington and Sioux Falls O'Gorman could be marked as a turning point for both teams.

After giving up 23 points to the Knights, Washington only gave up 21 points in the next five games, including a 49-7 victory over Class 11AA finalist Pierre and a double-overtime victory over Roosevelt in the regular season finale. Washington went six straight giving up a touchdown or less before Brandon Valley scored 21 points on the Warriors in the semifinals.

The Knights have not lost since that 39-23 setback, running off seven straight wins after the loss to Washington dropped O'Gorman to 2-2.

The two Sioux Falls powers will test each other in the

Class 11AAA championship tonight (Saturday) at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

Washington (10-1) comes into the finals on nine-game win streak. The Warriors scored 39 points or more in the first six of those games, including a 43-19 victory over Yankton to start the streak.

The Warrior offense has been sparked by Jack Schelhaas, who threw for 1,445 yards and 20 touchdowns, and rushed for 560 yards and nine touchdowns on the season.

"My teams have been both running and throwing, and Jack fits into that nicely," said Washington head coach Chad Stadem. "He runs physical, almost like a fullback."

Chayden Fitzsimmons has rushed for a team-best 1,017 yards and 12 scores to lead the Washington run game.

"Fitzsimmons (Sr., 5-6, 170) is so small that you can't

see him behind the line," Stadem said. "Will Farniok (So., 6-2, 245) is the smallest guy on our line, so Chayden hides behind them very well."

Ty Smith (29-479 yards, 9 TD), Logan Uttecht (22-340, 3 TD) and Logan Eckhoff (18-170, 2 TD) have been primary targets in the passing game.

"Ty Smith is having a good year. He's a guy that plays both ways very well," Stadem said. "When one of our receivers broke his ankle in the Yankton game, Uttecht stepped in and has done well. Eckhoff is a very intelligent, very talented athlete."

Eckhoff has a team-best five interceptions for Washington. He and Jack Bren (3 INT) have each return one pick for a touchdown.

"Eckhoff played slot (receiver) last year. We had an injury at safety, threw him in there and he was a natural fit," Stadem said. "He

had a big interception when Brandon Valley was on its final drive, and also had a big interception in the second overtime against Roosevelt."

Jared Gully (74 tackles, 11 TFL, 2.5 sacks) and Joey Wehrkamp (71 tackles, 16.5 TFL, 4.5 sacks) have led the defense. Jensen Amdahl (56 tackles, 11 TFL, 6 sacks), Ty Smith (40 tackles, 10 TFL) and Thayer Smith (40 tackles, 11 TFL, 3.5 sacks) have also applied pressure in the backfield.

O'Gorman lost early contests to Roosevelt and Washington, then avenged the setback to the Rough Riders in the semifinals.

"Our schedule helped us gain momentum," said O'Gorman head coach Steve Kueter, who passed former Yankton mentor Max Hawk earlier this season as the

FINALS | PAGE 5B

S.D. Football Championships: Class 9B

Lions Roar To 9B Crown

Gibbs Rushes For All-Class Finals Record 350 Yards

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
James.cimburek@yankton.net

VERMILLION – This past spring, Langford Area's Lincoln Gibbs proved he was pretty fast on a track, placing second in the 100-meter dash in the South Dakota State Class B track meet. On Friday, he proved that he can fly on turf, too.

Gibbs set a state all-class finals record with 350 yards on 26 carries in a 52-28 victory over Harding County at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. He found the endzone five times, including another state record with a 93-yarder. That run, as well as touchdowns of 64 and 82 yards, were the result of one-play drives.

"I was gassed," he said of the long touchdown runs. "You don't feel it right away. I tried to keep my composure, save my energy for the next play."

Lions quarterback Chance Olson also had a big day, rushing for 148 yards and three scores. He broke a 63-yarder late to ice the victory, helping the Lions to 508 yards on the ground.

"That's the best feeling in the world," said Lions center Jordan Carson, named the Outstanding Lineman for the game. Gibbs hauled in Joe Robbie MVP and Outstanding Back honors. "Nothing feels better than watching those guys break big runs."

Defensively, Gibbs and Josh Punt each had 10 tackles for Langford Area. Mason Larson had two tackles for loss among his eight tackles.

Harding County's Garrett Boylan rushed for 128 yards and a score, and caught three passes for 14 yards and a score. Sam Podzimek was 14-30 passing for 168 yards and two scores, and rushed for 49 yards and a score. Clayton Koch was the primary receiving target, making seven catches for 101 yards and a score.

Boylan had 14 tackles and Podzimek had 13 stops for Harding County. Trig Olson picked off a pair of passes.

Langford Area scored on its first five possessions, building a 32-0 lead. The Lions gained much of that



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

ABOVE: A Harding County defender, left, dives in an attempt to tackle Langford Area running back Lincoln Gibbs during Friday's Class 9B state championship game at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. **BELOW:** Gibbs runs for one of his five touchdowns. He also rushed for an all-class finals record 350 yards on 26 carries.

yardage on the ground, with Gibbs' first two big touchdowns helping that total.

"That's what we've done all season, pound and pound away," Gibbs said. "We have a lot of guys that are fast – we're known as a basketball school – but we've all put in hard work for football."

Lions head coach Paul Raasch concurred.

"We're not fancy," he said. "That first drive was really big. It took the edge off and gave us confidence."

From there, Harding County fought to get back into the game, but could not close the gap.

"We didn't play up today," said Harding County head coach Jay Wammen. "I liked the way our kids

responded in the second quarter and the second half."

The Lions were making the program's first-ever state appearance. As Raasch told his team prior to the game, they needed to take advantage of the opportunity.

"In the records, you see a lot of teams that lost the first time they made it, then won the next time," he said. "I told them that it's not often that you get here, so let's get it now."

"We have a good group of kids. We didn't have to do much motivating."

Harding County made its eighth appearance in program history, the first since winning in 2012.

Follow @JCimburek on Twitter.



Nebraska, Rutgers Playing For Bowl Hopes

PISCATAWAY, N.J. (AP) — The bowl season is underway for Nebraska and Rutgers. It's either win or face the prospect of missing the postseason.

Coming off a win over previously undefeated Michigan State, Nebraska (4-6, 2-4 Big Ten) will visit High Point Solutions Stadium for the first time to face Rutgers (3-6, 1-5) on Saturday.

Rutgers, the birthplace of college football, has been to a bowl game nine of the last 10 years. Nebraska has played in 51 bowls, third all-time behind Texas (53) and Alabama (62). The Cornhuskers have played in bowl games in 44 of 46 seasons.

Nebraska is breaking in first-year coach Mike Riley after Bo Pelini was fired last year following a nine-win campaign. Embattled Rutgers coach Kyle Flood is in his fourth year with questions whether he'll get a fifth following a season that has featured player dismissals and a three-game suspen-

sion for contacting a professor about a player's grade.

"We're all human. We're going to talk about it, but our main focus is to be 1-0. That's all you can think about it," Rutgers senior captain Quentin Gause said. "You think too far ahead, you get unfocused. You want to focus on one game at a time to get to where we want to go."

Nebraska players have been talking about a three-game season, starting with the upset over now No. 14 Michigan State.

"We've got one under our belt and we're continuing to fight for larger things like a bowl bid. We've got Rutgers coming up, second game of our three-game season," defensive tackle Kevin Maurice said. "Now it's a two-game season."

also

■ Learn More About Today's Matchup On Our Game Day Page. **PAGE 5B**

There are 80 bowl slots to fill. If there are not enough bowl slots to fill with teams that are at least 6-6, a 5-7 team with a top-five APR (Academic Progress Rate) could be selected.

RECIEVER IN QUEST- NEBRASKA: Rutgers offense needs a boost and it could come from its top playmaker Leonte Carroo. The star receiver missed the past two games with a lower body injury. He is listed as questionable this week. The All-Big Ten receiver has only played 15 of 36 quarters this season due to injury and suspensions, yet has nine of Rutgers' 14 touchdown receptions.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE: This will be the first time Nebraska has visited New Jersey since beating West Virginia 31-0 in the 1994 Kickoff Classic at the Meadowlands. New Jersey was fertile recruiting territory for Nebraska under Tom Osborne from the 1970s through the '90s. The Huskers haven't had a player from the state since defensive

back D.J. Singleton of Jersey City in 2013. "We want to capitalize on all those kinds of connections and we'll sure use Nebraska's history in recruiting there," Riley said.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME: Nebraska has gone 1-3 on the road with their only win at Minnesota while losing at Miami, Illinois and Purdue. Nebraska is .500 or better in their first four seasons in the Big Ten. The Huskers need a win at Rutgers to go 2-2 on the road in the Big Ten. Nebraska is 11-8 overall in Big Ten road games since joining the league in 2011.

FLOOD STICKING WITH LAVIANO: Flood is sticking with quarterback Chris Laviano despite poor performances the past three games. LSU transfer Hayden Rettig could see action if the struggles continue. Laviano started the season well, completing a conference leading 69.3 percent of his passes for 12 touchdowns and six interceptions in six games. In the last three games, he

has completed roughly 42 percent of his passes for 81.7 yards per game, no touchdowns and three interceptions.

DEFENSIVE STRUGGLES: Rutgers defense has allowed 1,441 yards and 146 points (48.7 per game) in losing to Ohio State, Wisconsin and Michigan. Opponents have scored 14 touchdowns in 20 trips in the redzone. "We just have to finish more and get guys on the ground. I just feel like it's an effort thing," linebacker Kaiwan Lewis said.

SOLID D: Minnesota's offense has been inconsistent all year, but its defense is among the better ones in the country. The Gophers are 24th nationally in total defense at just 330 yards allowed per game, including just 177 per game through the air. Minnesota also kept TCU, Michigan and Ohio State under 30 points, though it couldn't generate enough points to win any of those games.

IOWA | PAGE B5

If It's Not Climate Controlled...
You Have Mold

Fort Knox
Climate Controlled Storage
24 Hour Surveillance | Clean & Affordable

Call 605.661.0987