

COUNTDOWN TO KICKOFF Three items of interest heading into Saturday's matchup against Northwestern at Ross-Ade Stadium

3 Senior Day for the Boilermakers. Which senior is poised to step up during his final home game? Safety Landon Feichter is playing as well as anyone right now. How about tight ends Justin Sinz and Gabe Holmes? Are Akeem Hunt and Raheem Mostert ready to create problems for the Wildcats' defense? Is this the day Dolapo Macarthy is highlighted in the offense? Maybe Ryan Russell and Taylor Richards leave their mark at Ross-Ade Stadium.

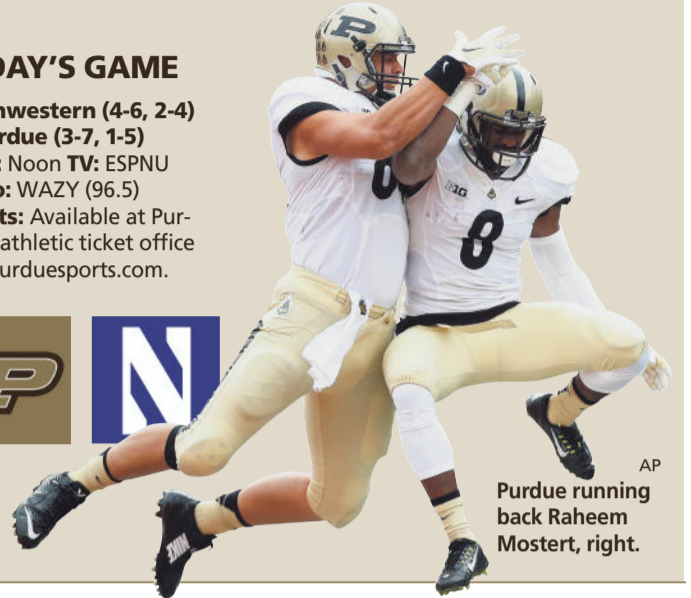
2 The Wildcats have new life after beating Notre Dame. What appeared to be a season without a bowl game came alive after the 43-40 overtime victory in South Bend. Now, all coach Pat Fitzgerald's team has to do is beat Purdue and Illinois, two teams which are a combined 2-10 in the Big Ten. Sound simple, doesn't it? Northwestern's season has been anything but simple and expect the unexpected the next two games.

1 These last two games are really the start of the 2015 season for Purdue. Granted, seniors are still playing key roles but any momentum the Boilermakers can build against Northwestern and Indiana should pay dividends heading into next year. What happens these last two games could easily shape how next season plays out.

— Mike Carmin/mcarmin@jconline.com

TODAY'S GAME

Northwestern (4-6, 2-4) at Purdue (3-7, 1-5)
Time: Noon **TV:** ESPNU
Radio: WAZY (96.5)
Tickets: Available at Purdue's athletic ticket office and purduesports.com.



AP
Purdue running back Raheem Mostert, right.

INSIDE

Get ready for kickoff with our Purdue-Northwestern preview page. **C3**

J&C HOOPS CLASSIC



ERIC SCHLENE/FOR THE JOURNAL & COURIER
West Lafayette's Julia Bittner bats down Evvonie Payne's layup attempt.

Bison move on behind defense

By Clyde Hughes
For the Journal & Courier

Benton Central limited West Lafayette to 20 percent shooting from the field to pull away with a 42-24 victory Friday night in the semifinals of the J&C Hoops Classic at McCutcheon's Resler Gymnasium Friday.

The Bison (4-0), ranked No. 5 in Class 3A, will now take on host McCutcheon (3-0) for the J&C Classic crown in Saturday night's championship game. West Lafayette (2-1) will play in the third place game against Harrison (2-1).

No Benton Central starter scored in double figures as West Lafayette's scrappy defense was determined not to be beaten in the middle by the Bison's 6-foot-2 Kaylan Coffman and 6-0 Katie Shields.

Even though West Side limited the Bison to 31.8 percent shooting from

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

BOMBERS BREAK THROUGH

Rensselaer reaches first state championship game with 17-14 win over CC



JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER
Rensselaer quarterback Dylan Wright looks for running room against Central Catholic. Wright rushed for 198 yards.

By Sam King
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RENSELAER — Steve Roberts is a Rensselaer guy, as Bombers football coach Chris Meeks puts it.

A longtime spotter in the press box and local businessman, Roberts lives for Friday nights at Emory Harrison Field when the Rensselaer football team is in season.

On the night of the program's greatest moment, Roberts was absent.

Ill from pancreatic cancer, the opportunity to witness the Bombers' 17-14 Class 2A north semistate victory over Central Catholic was not afforded.

The community made sure Roberts was a part of it.

Residents of Rensselaer went along with the football team to Roberts' door Friday night, not long after the Bombers advanced to the state championship for the first time, and performed the calisthenic staple that

follows a victory — Bomber Jacks.

"There's people in Rensselaer who live for Bomber football and Steve Roberts definitely is one of those people," senior Ab Kiger said. "Going to his house and being able to do Bomber Jacks for him and show him our support when he always shows us his support, it means everything in the world to us."

It was a fitting close to the final

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

J&C HOOPS CLASSIC

McCutcheon denies Harrison second upset

Mavs roll after both rivals have sluggish start in semifinal

By Clyde Hughes
For the Journal & Courier

After coming off a huge upset of Class A No. 1 Central Catholic in the first round of the J&C Hoops Classic, Harrison had to figure out what to do for an encore for new coach John Laird against cross-county rival McCutcheon on their home floor Friday night.

The answers, though, came much too late as the Mavericks jumped all over the Raiders in the first half before cruising to a 56-42 win in a semifinal game at Resler Gymnasium.

McCutcheon (3-0) advances to finals against Benton Central (4-0), ranked No. 5 in Class 3A. Harrison (2-1), which suffered its first loss under Laird, will take on West Lafayette (2-1) in the third place game.

Laird admitted that he does not doubt the 58-56 win over Central Catholic on Tuesday night might have taken a little bit out of the Raiders.

"We came off the bus flat," Laird said. "I think we were mentally drained. That's a rivalry game as well. In the second half I thought we came out with a lot more aggressiveness. We won the second half 28-24 so that's what I'm pushing."

Both teams came out cold, shooting a combined 0 for 13 from the field until McCutcheon's Kerstyn Lowery drained a 15-foot jumper at the 4:35 mark. While the Mavericks slowly righted their ship offensively, Harrison kept missing. The Raiders finished the quarter 1 of 9 from the field as McCutcheon grabbed a 14-3 lead.

Gabby Gary, who helped awaken McCutcheon from its early doldrums with two 3-point shots, said the Mavericks' ability to share the ball on offense sparked its defensive effort, which allowed them to pull away early.

"When we share the basketball, we play more as a team and that's what we've been trying to do this season," Gary



McCutcheon's Hannah Burger shoots over Harrison's Erica Rozenboom as their teams meet in the J&C Hoops Classic semifinals Friday.

said, echoing a statement Lowery made after McCutcheon's opening night win Tuesday against Twin Lakes. "Our defense opened up a lot more options for us offensively as well."

The Mavericks opened the second quarter with a 9-0 run to push their lead to 20 points for the first time after a Lowery 3-pointer at the 6:30 mark made it 23-3. McCutcheon coach Jeff Knoy said his veteran team knew they did not want to give Harrison the optimism that it had in the Central Catholic game.

"That's the thing about senior players, they come ready to play in games like this," Knoy said. "The seniors knew Harrison was a good team and after

that win against CC, it was important to get up on them early. A senior-led team does that for you."

Lowery led the Mavericks with 19 points, followed by Gary's 15 while McCutcheon held a solid 47-31 advantage on the boards. Twenty-three of those rebounds came off the offensive glass as McCutcheon repeatedly got second-chance looks against Harrison.

McCutcheon stretched its lead to 46-20 by the end of the third quarter to all but seal the contest, leaving the Mavericks to prepare for Benton Central.

"You're going to see two contrasting styles in terms in what we both want to do, so execution will be a key factor," Knoy said of Saturday's title game.

BOMBERS

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game Rensselaer's 11 seniors will play at home. They have one game left in their high school careers, at noon this Friday against the winner of today's south semistate game between Monrovia and Evansville Mater Dei.

"It's amazing to have the home crowd and as a senior, this is the last game to ever play on this field and we ended it well," senior Austin Fleming said.

Rensselaer got there the way it has all season, with impressive defense and a powerful running game, this time behind quarterback Dylan Wright and Rylan Arihood, who contributed 80 rushing yards.

Wright completed just 2 of 3 passes against the Knights. One was a 12-yard completion to Kiger on fourth-and-8 that led to Nathan Ziese's 22-yard field goal that proved to be the game winner.

But where the senior signal caller really hurt CC was with

his feet, rushing 25 times for 198 yards and two first quarter touchdowns that put the Knights in an early 14-0 hole.

"Look at how athletic he is. He can throw and he can run, but I haven't run him much this year," Meeks said of his quarterback. "I wanted to save him for later in the season for big games. He's another weapon we have in our arsenal. Tonight we had it in our minds we were going to use him."

Wright had already accumulated 125 yards by halftime and did not attempt a pass. Other than a couple big runs in the second half, he was keyed on by the CC defense in the second half.

But the damage had been done.

The Bomber defense swarmed CC sophomore quarterback Avery Denhart, who was intercepted by Jake Steinke and Trevor Hill on a night where he was 7-for-21. Denhart completed a touchdown to Luke Fusiek with 49 seconds left but Austin Fleming recovered an onside kick to seal the victory.

Jackson Anthrop pulled CC right back in the game, break-

ing a 57-yard touchdown run on the first play of the second half that cut the lead to 14-7. The Knights' inability to capitalize on turnovers and long drives, though, proved to be a difference maker.

Wright fumbled on the first drive and CC recovered on the Rensselaer 46. Kiger broke up a pass on fourth down and Wright scored on a 57-yard run moments later for the game's first points. Rensselaer fumbled five times and lost two, resulting in zero CC points.

"When you are in games like this and you turn teams over, you need to take advantage of it, especially a great team like Rensselaer," CC coach Kevin O'Shea said.

Anthrop finished with 117 rushing yards but falling behind was a recipe for disaster in front of a loud home crowd.

The Knights finished 10-4. Rensselaer improves to 14-0, but the Bombers said all year there was only one factor in determining this team's success.

"We've been looking forward to this moment ever since we were little," Wright said.

BISON

Continued from Page C1

the field (14 of 44), BC still found plenty of other ways to win, including forcing a whopping 31 turnovers with a harassing defense that limited the Red Devils to 8 of 40 shooting.

"We have to be able to adapt against every team," said Benton Central's Evonnie Payne, who caused the biggest headache for West Side on defense with a game-high five steals and seven rebounds. "Every team is going to try to show you something different, so you have to adjust. That's what we did tonight and it ended up in a win. We just needed to settle down and handle the ball."

While Benton Central led the entire first half, it seemed an uneasy lead. West Lafayette's defense forced the Bison into 13 turnovers during the first 16 minutes and 29.2 percent shooting from the field (7 for 24).

West Side, though, was worse, shooting 19 percent in the first half (4 for 21) and were outrebounded by the Benton Central 22-16.

Coffman's turnaround jumper with 1:36 left gave the Bison an early 10-2 lead. Two free throws by Shields, who had a team-high nine points, to start

the second quarter lifted Benton Central to a 12-4 edge. But the Bison could never get the lead into double digits and the Red Devils hounded BC shooters all over the court, particularly inside.

Maggie Wodicka's follow-up basket at the 2:33 mark cut BC's lead to 14-11. A Madi Jacobs free throw cut the deficit to two points.

But Bison baskets in the final 30 seconds by Madison Tolen and Taylor Tucker gave Benton Central an 18-12 lead at halftime.

The Bison finally got its double-digit lead on Tolen's layup after a turnover with 2:42 left in the third quarter for a 27-17 lead. Benton Central, though, did not put the contest away until the fourth quarter with a 13-4 run, sparked by a Bayley Goodman 3-pointer with 6:23 left in the game for a 32-20 lead.

"Against a good team, your defensive scheme can only last for so long and eventually you're going to have to put points up on the board," West Side coach Jane Schott said. "We had our opportunities early whether it was to build a lead or withstand their storm when it came in the fourth quarter. I'm proud of how hard our kids played but we've got to get better."

West Lafayette's Kylie Martin led all scorers with 13 points and grabbed nine rebounds.



Bayley Goodman drives the ball inside for Benton Central.

HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP

Delphi, Carroll in Kitchen Classic final

Staff reports

Myka Roth and Tatum Minier scored 21 and 19 points, respectively, to help send host Delphi to the Indiana Kitchen Classic championship game with a 74-30 victory against Clinton Central on Friday night.

Minier completed a double-double with 10 rebounds and Erika Carroll added 10 points. Clinton Central was led by Caitlyn Bradley's 19 points.

Delphi's victory sets up a rematch with Carroll tonight. The Cougars defeated North White 62-37.

Libby Eller lit up the Vikings for 14 points in the first quarter, including four 3-pointers, on her way to 17 points. Carly Kingery led Carroll with 20 points.

Audrey Minix had 20 points and 11 rebounds for North White.

Fountain Central 50 South Newton 16

Maggie Fishero scored seven of her game-high 15 points in the first quarter to launch the visiting Mustangs in their opener.

Morgan Richards' nine points paced South Newton (0-3).