



## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: CLASS 3A, SECTIONAL 28

## A TALE OF TWO CITIES



West Lafayette's Maurice Woodard stiff-arms a Western defender during Friday's 34-7 win. JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL &amp; COURIER

## West Lafayette blows past Western to reach title game

By Ken Thompson  
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AT JCONLINE.COM

Check out John Terhune's photo gallery from Friday's game at West Side.

Defenses playing one-on-one with senior wide receiver Brandon Watt is a mismatch in West Lafayette's favor.

With Western's defense selling out to stop 1,600-yard rusher Maurice Woodard, the Red Devils knew they would have to hit a couple of big plays to take command of their Class 3A, Sectional 28 semifinal game.

Watt sprinted away from Western's secondary thanks to two perfect throws from Parker Ronchetto covering 51 and 62 yards in the second quarter, and No. 6 West Lafayette cruised to a 34-7 victory Friday night at Gordon Straley Field.

The Red Devils (10-1) travel to Yorktown next Friday night for the sectional championship game at 7:30 p.m.

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## CC's 25-game postseason streak snapped at Tipton

By Sam King  
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TIPTON — The story had always ended happily. Why would Friday night be any different?

Even when Tipton scored the go-ahead touchdown 1:19 to go, Central Catholic was going to come back, surely. The Knights always did.

CC's 25-game postseason winning streak made the Knights despised, but more importantly, respected. Moments like this never fazed them.

On Friday night, Central Catholic's second-ranked football team learned nothing lasts forever, falling four yards short of another unexplainable comeback win in a 28-24 Class 2A, Sectional 35 semifinal loss at No. 7 Tipton.

The chance to continue winning state championships while playing in Class 2A for the first time ended without a postseason trophy, but serves as a needed reminder that sometimes you do fall.

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## HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOCCER

## Alexander, WL seek memorable finish

## Red Devils take aim at area's first state soccer championship

By Sam King  
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Maya Alexander's journey to captain of a state finalist soccer team had a not-so-glorious beginning.

She still recalls the first goal of her life, coming in the first game she played and how she was celebrated after the fact — by the opposing team.

"My very first game and the very first goal I ever scored was actually on our own goal," Alexander recalled earlier this week. "I didn't understand that until after the game, when the other team came up and said

thanks. They won because of my goal."

Alexander has wiped away the embarrassing start with what she hopes to be a memorable end.

The senior midfielder captains the Red Devils, along with Emily Field and Erin Brophy, and has contributed nine goals, three assists and unmatched leadership to the area's first soccer state finalist.

Win or lose, today's match against Gibson Southern will be the last of her career.

Knowing how quickly the time has passed from her own goal in the first match of her life to potential state champion, Alexander has tried to use the week to take in everything.

"My mom got a little bit of (the semistate victory) on tape, so we watched it again,"

Alexander said on Wednesday.

## Close, but ...

The last two seasons ended in the semistate round for West Lafayette. A program long known for being good has yet to be considered great. It was a point that coach Aaron Blessing tried to hammer into his players this week.

The Red Devils have won nine regional titles since 1999 and have 11 sectional championships.

He told the players this week of outstanding teams the coaching staff had been members of, only to see losses in travel championships, the NCAA Sweet 16 and, in assistant Hayley Alden's case, the 2007 state championship when she was a teammate of former WL assis-

tant and current Harrison coach Emily Gonderman for Penn High School.

"My point wasn't to bring anybody down. It's hard to get to that level," Blessing said. "What more can you do to get to that next point? What more can we do to move ourselves from the finalists to the final?"

"We've been to semistate three years in a row. This year, we put together two quality performances against two really tough teams. We don't want to be satisfied with getting (to state)."

## Steady improvement

There's a general consensus that this West Lafayette team may not be as talented as Red Devil squads in recent years.



Maya Alexander has been a key to West Lafayette's success. MICHAEL HEINZ/JOURNAL &amp; COURIER

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**HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: CLASS 5A, SECTIONAL 11**

Nate Deno had another huge game for McCutcheon, rushing for 217 yards. TIM BATH/KOKOMO TRIBUNE

# Mavs thump Kokomo

Deno runs wild as McCutcheon beats future league rival

By Nathan Baird  
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McCutcheon football players had barely taken a knee in the end zone following Friday's 42-13 victory at Kokomo before their focus shifted to unfinished business.

For the second straight season, the Mavericks will play for a sectional championship. Their opponent: top-ranked Westfield, which beat McCutcheon 42-28 just three weeks ago en route to the Hoosier Crossroads Conference championship.

"Ever since we lost that game, they've been our motivation the whole year, week in and week out," said McCutcheon senior running back Nate Deno, who rushed for 217 yards and three touchdowns and opened the scoring with a 22-yard touchdown reception from Aaron Phillips.

"We knew we were going to see them in the end, and we hope we can get them this time."

A year ago, McCutcheon went from a 1-8 regular-season record to lead Fishers 6-0 late in the first half of a Class 5A sectional championship game. The Mavericks last played in consecutive sectional finals in 1999-2000.

McCutcheon's 4-7 record also represents the program's highest victory total since 2006. The Mavericks entered the Associated Press poll after a 3-1 start but broke a six-game losing streak on Friday.

"We knew what's going to happen, we know what they do, we just have to be ready for it," said McCutcheon junior linebacker John Bonaguro, whose six solo tackles led all players. "We felt like we could have beaten them the first time — here's our chance to prove it."

McCutcheon pulled away from a 7-6 halftime lead at Walter Cross Field on Friday thanks to the Deno-led rushing attack and the adjustments of their defensive front. Kokomo rushed for 156 yards in the first half, but netted just 37 on 23 carries after halftime.

The Wildkats (5-5) used their ground game to dominate time of possession (32:42 to 15:18). But McCutcheon made

the most of its chances, with Deno scoring on runs of 27, 32 and 41 in the second half.

"All I had to do was run, so I just read our blocks," Deno said. "(Fullback Lane) Beeler and our line did great tonight; also our wide receivers, R.J. (Blair) and Blake (Elming). All around, just get the ball in my hands and I'll read blocks and we'll make plays."

Parker Caldwell (13 tackles), Caleb Harper (12) and Cole Taylor (11) helped McCutcheon hold an opponent under 20 points for the first time in six games.

McCutcheon and Kokomo played for the first time on Friday, but will be divisional rivals next season when the Mavericks join the North Central Conference. The Wildkats started eight sophomores and a freshman.

"I told our kids when we drew them ... they're the best team coming into the conference from Tippecanoe County," said Kokomo coach Brett Colby, who formerly coached at Frankfort. "This is the new regime coming in here. It's a great chance for us to get a look at them to see where we measure up; to see what we need to do."

## KNIGHTS

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"They've got to know what this feeling feels like, because it's horrible," senior lineman Gage Ulery said.

The Knights showed the same flair for the dramatic five weeks ago on the same field, when a late punt return lifted CC to a 14-7 victory over the Blue Devils, eventually allowing the Knights to win the Hoosier Conference championship.

Talented Tipton senior quarterback Austin Hooker watched that game from the sidelines with a fracture in his throwing arm. Hooker and the Blue Devils had a streak of their own to protect Friday night and did, winning their 11<sup>th</sup> sectional contest in a row and continuing their quest for a fourth consecutive title.

It was the heroics of Hooker and senior classmate Nathan Friend, who connected for two touchdowns on deep balls down the left sideline in a span of 3:50, wiping away the disappointing pick-six Hooker threw that was returned 76 yards by Central Catholic sophomore Adam Lovell with 5:53 to go.

"It was our streak against theirs. We're not done," Hooker said of the mindset coming into the game. "We have a lot of momentum, but this game now doesn't mean anything. We haven't won anything this year, and the next game is the most important of the year. The celebration ends five minutes ago and we're looking at Delphi."

Tipton (8-3), which plays Delphi in the sectional champi-

onship next Friday, responded quickly.

Brody Dell caught two passes for 38 yards on the drive following Lovell's interception that put CC up 24-14. Dell jogged out of bounds both times, preserving precious clock and setting up a 22-yard strike to Friend with 5:09 to go.

The Knights' next drive was a three-and-out after CC was stopped on third-and-1.

"Up two scores, we should have been able to seal the deal and we let them score a little too fast on that first series," O'Shea said. "Our kids fought all the way back and I am proud of them. We needed about 20 more seconds."

Hooker's 18-yard TD pass to Friend with 1:19 to go came on fourth-and-5 and forced the Knights to have to pull out another incredible comeback with no timeouts.

They nearly did. Jackson Anthrop returned the kickoff to the Tipton 43, and quarterback Ty Preston avoided pressure and put two passes on target before hitting Jarrod Patzschke at the 4-yard line and spiking the ball with two seconds remaining.

At that point, a Knights win almost seemed inevitable. In six seasons, coach Kevin O'Shea's staff was 77-4 with four consecutive Class A state titles, mostly because they always found ways to pull out games just like Friday's.

The final pass of Preston's career sailed high in the back of the end zone as Tipton students stormed the field.

"It didn't come down to one play. It was all the plays together, but they happened to make one more big play than us," Patzschke said.



West Lafayette's Everett Gorup (30) and Casey Crosser (59) force a Western fumble. JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL &amp; COURIER

## WEST SIDE

Continued from Page C3

Watt sprinted past his defender and was open by 10 yards when Ronchetto hit him in stride on the first touchdown pass that made it 20-0 with 8:04 to play in the first half.

"I was wide open," Watt said. "It was a cakewalk."

The 62-yard touchdown pass involved a bit of deception on Watt's part.

"I jogged out, acted like I was about to block and gunned it," he said. "I ran right by him."

"They didn't know what was going on. They didn't know if it was a run or a pass. They were trying to cover both at the same time and they couldn't."

Ronchetto, who was 7 of 9 passing in the first half for 154 yards, marveled at how wide open Watt made himself on both scores.

"Their corners played press coverage, and we've got Brandon Watt, probably one of the fastest receivers to come through West Side," Ronchetto said. "I threw a little hitch-and-go, the corner bit a little and he was able to get over the top and get open. I hit him in stride and he did the rest."

The pass plays were wide open because Western was unable to slow Woodard or Ronchetto running the football. Woodard rushed for 135 yards and the Red Devils' first touch-

down, a 4-yard run on WL's opening possession.

Ronchetto gained 81 yards on 16 carries and finished 8 of 14 for 179 yards passing. Behind their massive offensive line, the Red Devils piled up 20 first downs.

"We got to a lot of third-and-mediums and fourth-and-short a few times," Ronchetto said. "The offensive line did a great job of opening up holes for Maurice and I. We knew if we got up by two or three scores, it was going to be hard for them to come back."

While Woodard got his yards, West Lafayette's defense held Western leading rusher Ben Lenahan to 43 yards on nine carries. The Panthers (9-2) didn't surpass 100 rushing yards until the Red Devils inserted their second-team defense in the fourth quarter.

"Our defense was incredible tonight," West Lafayette coach Shane Fry said. "They were gap sound. That's a good option football team. Their quarterback is a load; he's 215 pounds. Our D-ends do not weigh 215. They did a great job with assignment football."

Ronchetto added touchdown runs of 3 and 22 yards to help West Lafayette outgain Western 214-178 on the ground.

Western quarterback Drew Bellus led an 80-yard scoring drive on the Panthers' final possession against the Red Devils, scoring on a 17-yard run with 2:54 to play.

**HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: CLASS 5A, SECTIONAL 11**

# Westfield tops Harrison

No. 1 Shamrocks get McCutcheon in final after 42-14 victory

By Clyde Hughes  
For the Journal & Courier

Top-ranked Westfield scored touchdowns on its first four possessions and cruised to a 42-14 victory over Harrison at Rickard Field.

Westfield hosts McCutcheon next week for the sectional title. Harrison finishes its season 0-10.

The Raiders seemed to be fighting from behind from the opening whistle. Nick Ferrer, who completed 12 of 18 passes for 242 yards — all in the first half — threw his first of four touchdown passes less than three minutes into the game, a 28-yarder to Nick Henderson. Ferrer's first eight completions went to different receivers.

"He had a lot of time to throw

the ball, and they have some excellent receivers," Harrison coach Tony Martin said. "When you give someone like him that kind of time to wait for guys to come open, it makes it hard on you."

Westfield didn't get any short-field touchdown possessions, either, scoring on drives of 72 and 71 yards the next two times it had the ball. Ferrer threw two touchdowns to Devin Reece — 45 and 28 yards — and then threw a back-breaking 50-yard touchdown to Milo Beam with 50.4 seconds left before halftime to give the Shamrocks a 42-7 lead.

Elvin Caldwell rushed for 106 yards on 13 carries and two touchdowns in the first half.

Westfield coach Jack Gilbert said his team ignored Harrison's record throughout its preparation and believed it had to play one of its best games.

"We have a lot of respect for those guys," Gilbert said. "Looking at them on film,

they've improved a lot, and it's not like we've been a great team for years and years. We're a pretty humble group. No part of us was thinking this was an easy week."

Harrison showed flashes of big-play potential when Arriane Cook raced 66 yards with a Jake Lasky pass in the second quarter to put the Raiders in scoring position for the first time. Lasky scored on a 5-yard run three plays later.

On Harrison's best drive of the night, when the Raiders went 72 yards in the fourth quarter, wingback Jeep Morehouse turned a reverse into a 23-yard touchdown run.

"I'm proud of this team, because they are good kids," Martin said. "They could have quit a long time ago and they didn't. They are high-character kids and we'll have a lot of juniors and seniors (next year) who played a lot as sophomores and juniors. We'll be in a new league with new opportunities."