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SPORTS

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PREPS

FOOTBALL · STATE QUARTERFINALS



CLASS 6A CENTENNIAL 24, ROSEMOUNT 0

Cougars finally reach semis after 39 years

By HEATHER RULE
Special to the Star Tribune

A year ago, the Centennial football team met in the end zone at Stillwater High School's stadium following their Class 6A state quarterfinal loss to Rosemount.

"We told our kids: 'Next year, we're taking the steps,'" Centennial coach Mike Diggins said. "We're going to move on in state this year."

"And that's what our goal was and our theme was all year."

That step was advancing to the state semifinals. The Cougars, ranked No. 4 in Class 6A, took that leap with a 24-0 victory over the Irish on Thursday.

Same opponent, same stadium, a nearly opposite result.

"The victory sends Centennial (10-1) to the state semifinals for the first time in 39 years, since it finished as the Class 6A runner-up in 1984."

"Our dream of going to the Bank has finally come," senior running back Maverick Harper said.

"But we're not done yet. We still got two more."

Harper ran for more than 100 yards in a game for the sev-

enth time this season, passing 1,200 yards for the season. His 19th rushing touchdown of the season made it a 24-0 game in the fourth quarter.

Centennial started with a nine-play, 75-yard opening drive for a 7-0 lead. Coming out of the halftime break up 10-0, Diggins said the game plan was to keep running the ball. When Centennial coach Mike Diggins said, "We're going to move on in state this year,"

The Cougars strongly set the tone in the second half, coming out with a 15-play drive for 65 yards that took 8:42 off the clock and ended with a Cummings-5-yard touchdown run and a 17-0 lead.

"When they're ahead on the chains, they're really good at what they do," Rosemount coach Jeff Erdmann said. "And if you can't get them into a third-and-6 and that type of thing, it makes it hard."

Rosemount (6-5), last year's Class 6A runner-up, managed only two first downs in the first half before running only eight offensive plays in the second half with a three-and-out, an interception and two fumbles halting drives.

ROUNDUP

Rocori gets by Orono with TD in final minute

By ION HAGGSTROM
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Rocori is accustomed to last-second victories.

Junior wide receiver Grant Tyulkit took an inside handoff and scored on a 9-yard run on a third-down-and-2 play with 44.6 seconds remaining as No. 5-ranked Rocori overcame a 14-point deficit to edge No. 5 Orono 28-27 on Thursday in the Class 4A football state tournament quarterfinals at Elk River High School.

Orono junior Charlie Coedes scored on a 3-yard quarterback sneak with 4 minutes, 34 seconds remaining, breaking a 21-21 tie. Orono (9-2) faked the extra-point attempt, and the two-point conversion pass failed. Coedes was sacked on the game's final play from the Rocori (9-2) 4-yard line.

Tyulkit caught a 26-yard touchdown pass from senior quarterback Will Stell and ran for the conversion earlier in the fourth quarter to tie it.

In other quarterfinals:

Class 4A
Byron 31, Hill-Murray 28: Senior quarterback Kade Robinson ran for two touchdowns and threw for one as the No. 9 Bears (10-1) outlasted the No. 10 Pioneers (8-3). Robinson scored on runs of 3 and 8 yards and hit junior tight end Trey Gostomczik with

a 28-yard touchdown pass that Gostomczik caught one-handed. Senior running back Adam Glynn, who rushed for over 200 yards, added a 53-yard touchdown run. Junior quarterback Jackson Reeves ran for one touchdown and passed for another for the Pioneers.

North Branch 38, Bemidje 34: Margaret 27, Tyler Minnie set the tone early, breaking loose for an 82-yard touchdown run on the game's first play from scrimmage as the No. 8 Vikings (9-1) defeated the Red Knights (5-7). He added a 14-yard scoring run later in the first quarter as North Branch's wishbone attack produced five rushing touchdowns. Sophomore running back Sean Washington rushed for two touchdowns, and senior quarterback Nivvan Yoganah found classmate Hayden Daisy with two touchdown passes to the Red Knights.

Class 2A
Barnesville 42, Osakis 36: Junior running back Gannon Bolge ran and schemed running back Cameron Halverson each ran for touchdowns as the No. 1-ranked and defending state champion Trojans (12-0) outscored the No. 8 Silverstreaks (9-2). Senior quarterback Kyle Mages threw three touchdown passes and senior running back Gaven Cimbrura rushed for two for Osakis.

CLASS 6A EDINA 49, STILLWATER 21



Edina running back John Warpinski racked up 254 yards and two touchdowns against Stillwater in the Class 6A quarterfinal.

Hornets surge past Ponies

By JIM PAULSEN
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It didn't matter to Edina coach Jason Potts, nor his players, that they gave up a quick touchdown to Stillwater in their Class 6A quarterfinal Thursday at Park Center.

"The Hornets had played at a high level during their winning streak. There was a lot of game to go. Nothing would be gained by fretting over a single touchdown."

They responded with a touchdown drive of their own, cutting the deficit to a single point. The Hornets kept adding points — 28 total before halftime — and came away

with a 49-21 victory and a berth in the state semifinals next week at U.S. Bank Stadium.

"We just worry about ourselves," Potts said. "We say all the time: reach your highest potential. We don't make excuses, we don't talk about the weather, we don't do all that stuff. We just want to play our best game. We put the focus on us."

Things nearly got worse for the Hornets (8-3), who won their seventh straight game, before they got markedly better.

After Stillwater (8-3) scored, the Ponies tried an onside kick that, originally, looked successful. But the

officials, after a brief huddle, ruled that Stillwater had touched the ball before it traveled the required 10 yards and awarded Edina the ball at midfield.

The Hornets scored in about every way possible. Quarterback Mason West threw two touchdown passes to Sonny Villegas before halftime, and threw four TD passes total. Running back John Warpinski stacked another big game on top of the numbers he'd posted previously, rushing for 254 yards and two touchdowns.

Edina got a gift safety from Stillwater, courtesy of a bad snap. And senior defensive

end Kade Chrysler blocked a first-half punt and recovered it in the end zone to cushion what was then a narrow lead.

"I just saw an open lane and I took it," Chrysler said of his game-changing block. "Nothing special. I saw a gap wide enough for me to slip through and there was nothing but the punter right in front of me."

Potts said the key to Edina's winning streak has been believing in itself after an early three-game losing streak. "It's all about our resilience," he said. "We lost some early games, but we learned a lesson that we don't let those things bother us."

CLASS 4A HUTCHINSON 44, TOTINO-GRACE 12

Hutchinson, Thode romp over Totino-Grace

By DAVID LA VAQUE
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A generous number of the Hutchinson football faithful gave Thursday's Class 4A state tournament quarterfinal game at Lakeville South a pro-Tigers vibe.

The visitors were right at home watching their boys roll to a 44-12 victory against Totino-Grace, Junior running back Nathan Thode ran for three Tigers touchdowns in the first half (four overall) to set the romp in motion.

No. 2 Hutchinson (9-2), victorious 20-3 on Sept. 15 at Totino-Grace (7-4), advances to the semifinal at 4:30 p.m. Nov. 17 at U.S. Bank Stadium. "Our town is amazing," senior offensive lineman Anton Kadlec said. "Everywhere you go, everyone has an H on their car."

After the game, Grady Rostberg, legendary former



Hutchinson teammates celebrated one of Nathan Thode's four TDs on Thursday in a 44-12 win against Totino-Grace.

Hutchinson football coach, zeroed the focus of the Tigers offensive attack on Kadlec, all 6-3 and 300 pounds of him.

"We had two guys in the NFL, and he's just as good as them," said Rostberg, still an

Totino-Grace would agree. With Kadlec, a third-year varsity player, blowing open holes, Thode punctuated long drives with some breakaway runs to keep Hutchinson in control.

Junior running back Marquel Keten cut the Totino-Grace deficit to 14-6 in the second quarter, with his 31-yard touchdown dash on fourth down. Keten heated up, but Thode and the Tigers offense never cooled down.

Hutchinson scored at least 30 points for the sixth consecutive game. Its lead ballooned to 44-6 to trigger running time — which sent their crowd home extra happy because they got a head start on the 70-mile trip.

"All the teams I've played on have been really good," Kadlec said. "But this team — we have a lot of great players."

THE PICKS

Experts go deep on a pair of Lakeville playoff matchups

By DAVID LA VAQUE and JIM PAULSEN
Star Tribune staff writers

The football season has played down to the final eight teams in every class, and every game is for a spot at U.S. Bank Stadium, where semifinals and championship games are played.

David La Vaque and Jim Paulsen make an annual competition of predicting winners of games of interest and importance, and they found two more on Friday's schedule, a pair of Class 6A quarterfinals that will fill out the semifinal bracket. Their picks and their analysis:

Class 6A

Lakeville North (9-1) vs. Eden Prairie (10-0), at Spin Lake Park 7 p.m.

Jim says: As good as Lakeville North has played this year, it's difficult to pick against Eden Prairie in a state tournament. Yes, the Eagles haven't won a title since 2017, but Mike Grant is still the coach and he hasn't forgotten what it takes to win in the postseason. The Eagles just look to be set up for success this time of year: a gargantuan offensive line, a rotating stable of quality backs and a physical defense. Lakeville North probably has the edge at the skill positions and has big boys up front, too. But Eden Prairie will come out on top. **The pick:** Eden Prairie 24, Lakeville North 21. **David says:** Great quarterbacks or at least quarterbacks capable of playing great have been able to crack Eden Prairie's code. North junior Riley Grossman is a QB capable of playing great. The Panthers' ability to stay physical and opportunistic could be enough. **The pick:** Eden Prairie 21, Lakeville North 14.

East Ridge (4-6) vs. Lakeville South (9-1), at St. Michael-Albertville 7 p.m.

Jim says: On paper, this pick looks like a piece of cake. But East Ridge is playing its best football of the season, having won at Anoka and at Minnetonka. Raptors quarterback Tanner Zolnowy has practically willed his team to win. But Lakeville South is just too talented and well-coached to let East Ridge pull off another shocker. The Cougars may give up a point or 20, but they will counter with plenty of playmakers. **The pick:** Lakeville South 38, East Ridge 21. **David says:** This time of year, teams are either really talented or on a roll. East Ridge seems to embody the latter. Lakeville South can build a lead and keep a lead. And junior running back Connor Cade supplies the explosive element. Funny, he also wears No. 28; just like Carson Hansen, South's big-play guy the past few seasons. **The pick:** Lakeville South 31, East Ridge 17.