

### “The Drive” caps thrilling victory

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So much for the notion of a two-man team.

After two lopsided victories, Niles West football fans could be forgiven for assuming that the Wolves’ offensive fortunes began and ended with the Mendenhall brothers, junior Walter and sophomore Rashard.

However, with Walter sidelined with a mild concussion and Rashard hampered by leg cramps, senior quarterback Dan Uhle suddenly “turned into Joe Montana,” said head coach Mark Egofske, leading the Wolves to a come-from-behind, 30-27 victory over Maine West last Friday.

Uhle fired a three-yard out pass to fellow senior Mark Krier with 2.9 seconds to go in the game to power the Wolves (3-0, 0-0) over the previously unbeaten Warriors.

“This group of kids here is special,” said Egofske. “They could have just laid down, but they just kept coming.”

After fighting back from 12-0 and 20-13 deficits, the Wolves led 23-20 late in the fourth quarter on the strength of a 24-yard field goal by junior Ryan Brkjlacic. After halting a Maine West drive, it appeared the Wolves would be able to run out the clock and escape with a victory.

Unfortunately, it was not to be as Rashard Mendenhall, who played on one leg for much of the night, fumbled the ball away with 2:35 left.

After gaining possession, the Warriors took just three plays to score and take a 27-23 lead. That, however, is when Uhle and Krier took over.

Staring an upset loss and 80 yards in the face, the Wolves’ offense stepped up, making big play after big play and staving off defeat.

Victory, however, was anything but certain when the Wolves were faced with a fourth and eight at their own 35. On the play, Uhle flung a 15-yard rainbow in the direction of Krier who leapt and hauled in the catch between two defenders.

After three more completed passes got the Wolves to the Maine West three, Uhle once again connected with Krier, sealing the victory and setting off a celebration that ended with most of the student body on the turf of Basrak Field.

Following the game, however, Uhle was hesitant to take credit for “The Drive.”

“It wouldn’t have happened if not for the offensive line blocking like it did,” Uhle said. “We were focused, and we knew we were going to do it.”

Uhle finished with 220 yards on 16-28 passing, with Krier accounting for 60 of those yards. Despite his calf miseries, Rashard Mendenhall still managed to gain 148 yards on 17 carries.

Yet another unusual element to an extraordinary game was Brkjlacic’s penalty-lengthened 35-yard PAT.

Walter Mendenhall was held out by the team physician after a devastating hit on a Warrior defender that could be heard all the way into the stands. He is expected to return to the lineup in time for Friday night’s game versus Glenbrook North.

“He’s doing great,” said Egofske of Walter. “He was up leading cheers in the second half.”



**Dan Uhle (3) sets up behind Nick Cosmos’ block.**