

Sports
Sports
Sports

Wolves seek to turn tables on Trevians

Beat Glenbrook South in shootout 64-49

A.J. Bayatpour
Sports Editor

"It's our turn."

With those words, West assistant coach Mark Rigby threw down the gauntlet for tonight's first round football playoff showdown with archrival New Trier.

The Wolves travel to the Trevians' freshman campus stadium in Northfield for a 7:30 p.m. date with destiny.

Hoping to avenge a heartbreaking, last-second loss to the Trevians (7-2) two weeks ago, the 6-3 Wolves hope to put up big offensive numbers, as they have done all season, averaging over 40 points per game.

If last week's regular season-ending contest is any indication, the scoreboard operator had better bring his calculator.

The Niles West Wolves knew the opposing Glenbrook South Titans were a better team than their 1-7 record would indicate. Thus, it was no surprise when the Titans gave West a run for its money in a 64-49 shootout played in the rain and mud that ended up going the way of the Wolves.

Right out of the gate, junior Rashard Mendenhall, a name we'll hear from a few more times, broke a big first down run near Titan territory. The drive got its exclamation point from senior running back Blerim Delisi who went in from 41 yards out to put West on the board just a minute and a half in.

Glenbrook South was quick to respond as junior quarterback Bryan Olsen found fellow junior John Maloney for a 60-yard touchdown. Unlike the Wolves, the Titans made their extra point and with only four minutes elapsed in the game Glenbrook South led 7-6 and the wild ride had just begun.

The ensuing Niles West possession ended in just 48 seconds when Rashard Mendenhall found the end zone on a 68-yard blaze down the sideline and after successful two-point conversion, the Wolves held a 14-7 lead.

The Titans responded with a drive of their own, but senior Damien Kulikowski picked off an Olsen pass and gave the Wolves the ball and Rashard Mendenhall a chance to show his big play ability on an 87-yard touchdown run. Another missed extra point left Niles West with a 13 point lead, and it ap-

peared that West has shaken the pesky Titans and was on its way to an easy victory. Such was not the case.

Although a solid punt by junior Jake Cusack pinned Glenbrook South's offense inside its own 20 yard line, GBS junior running back Frank Able made his first of

successful two-point conversion added to the lead and put the Wolves back on top at 36-29. Perhaps a waning lack of trust in his defense motivated coach Mark Egofske to pull a trick out of his sleeve in the form of an onside kick. It worked to perfection as the Wolves recovery set up another Delisi touchdown run as well as another converted two-point attempt. The lead was temporarily stable as Niles West held a 44-29 lead with less than three minutes to play in the half. The plan to go into the break leading by 15 was quickly demolished by none other than Able, whose touchdown cut the lead to nine and halftime finally arrived with the score 44-35 in favor of the Wolves.

In a game full of quirky numbers and stats, perhaps the oddest was that nobody scored in the third quarter. Unfortunately for the Wolves, not everything remained static as the team lost Cusack, a defensive force, to a leg injury. Cusack's status was still unknown after the game. The plan was to rest Walter Mendenhall who has been suffering from a series of minor injuries all year, but Cusack's injury forced

him into the game, which wasn't a bad thing. Walter scored from 17 yards out and the Wolves were back up by 15. Cusack is listed as day-to-day.

Able still wouldn't go away and neither would the Titans who cut the lead back to nine on Able's fourth score of the night. Despite having a record night, Able still wasn't the best player on the field as Rashard Mendenhall recaptured the spotlight on a 56 yard touchdown run as the Wolves could finally breathe leading 57-41 with under two and a half minutes remaining in the game. Senior Mike Archams interception sealed the deal as the Wolves took over at their own three. Rashard Mendenhall wasn't done however as he went the distance, going 97 yards for the exclamation point on a night that saw the Wolves put up a record 64 points and Mendenhall finished with approximately 400 yards rushing in one of the best games ever played by a Niles West football player.

The 64-49 win gave the Wolves the sixth seed in their bracket in the Class 8A playoffs and a ticket for tonight's rematch.



several big runs when he broke through a hole and went 85 yards for the Titan touchdown.

The Wolves responded with a long drive that climaxed in the form of a four-yard touchdown run by senior quarterback Mike Pantazis on the first play of the second quarter. A successful two-point conversion gave Niles West a 28-14 lead, their biggest of the night to that point.

Another dose of Able put the Titans inside the Wolves five yard line, and Able finished what he started, plowing in for the touchdown. Glenbrook South went for two and converted, cutting the West lead to a scant 28-22 advantage.

Rashard Mendenhall proved to be mortal at the most inopportune of times, throwing an interception that would be returned 74 yards for the Glenbrook South touchdown, and the Titans had their second lead of the night at 29-28 with 5:45 to play in the second.

It only took West a minute and change to answer the lost lead with a touchdown of its own. A big run by senior Walter Mendenhall set up a 14-yard scoring run from Delisi. A