



Matt Emmons

Golden Eagle players celebrate after the win against Licking Valley.

A road to remember

► The long trail toward a championship had it all: twists, turns, snags and sweet success ... as if you needed a reminder

The banquet to cap all banquets

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

It was a season for the ages ... Back in the heat and humidity of August, a dream was born amid the dust and sweat on the practice field.

On a cold, blustery afternoon in November, that dream became a reality. Big Walnut celebrated the school's, and Delaware County's, first Ohio High School Athletic Association state football championship at the annual football awards banquet at the Sunbury United Methodist Church.

Coach Scott Wetzel's Golden Eagles, putting a school-record 14-1 season in the books, captured the Division III crown with a 17-10 victory over Licking Valley at Canton's Fawcett Stadium.

Along the way, Big Walnut found time to defend its Ohio Capital Conference Capital Division championship, sharing the top spot with Olentangy Liberty with a 4-1 record. "I knew we had the makings of something special after our annual preseason senior rafting trip to West Virginia," coach Wetzel said. "We always meet as a group before we return home and I try to get the kids involved as to the direction we the season to take. This year I didn't have top say a lot ... the seniors took it upon themselves to set the standard. That made my job really easy."

On a night of awards, seven Golden Eagles, including seniors Ethan Wetzel, Chad Williams, Cory Wolfe, Garrett Koehler and Alex Yarnell along with juniors Will Studien and Jon Smith were singled out for their individual contributions to the championship season.

Studien, Big Walnut's outstanding senior middle linebacker who was voted the Associated Press Division III Central District and All-Ohio defensive player of the year, was recognized as the team's most valuable player on defense.

Please see AWARDS, Page 11



Lenny C. Lepola

Coach Scott Wetzel honors the seniors at the season-ending awards banquet.

" I knew we had the makings of something special after our annual preseason rafting trip to West Virginia.


— Scott Wetzel,
Big Walnut coach

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CONGRATULATIONS EAGLES
on a successful season!
ENJOY YOUR VICTORY!!!



The Sunbury News
 The Delaware Gazette

BIG WALNUT 17, LICKING VALLEY 10

Big Walnut weathers Storm

By GARY HENERY
Sports writer

CANTON — Defense wins championships ... you'd better believe it.

Big Walnut, riding clutch defensive efforts by senior safety Joe Reed and junior cornerback Nick Heiden, won Delaware County's first-ever OHSAA State football championship with a 17-10 victory over Licking Valley in Friday's Division III finals at Fawcett Stadium in Canton.

"We've hung our hats on our defense all season," Golden Eagle head coach Scott Wetzel said after watching his offense struggle against Licking Valley. "Today was no different ... our defense is the reason we are bringing a state championship back to Sunbury."

Reed scored two touchdowns, one on a state championship game record interception return and the second on a game-clinching 41-yard fumble recovery for a score. Heiden picked off two Nick Phillips' passes in the final three minutes to seal the decision.

Big Walnut (14-1) sent an early message to the Panthers when Reed stepped in front of an underthrown Drew Ryan pass on a fake reverse at the Big Walnut 46 and returned it 54 yards for a touchdown for an early 7-0 Golden Eagle lead with 6:21 remaining in the opening quarter.

"I got a good read on Ryan as the play developed," Reed said. "We knew they would run trick plays from time to time ... I was in the right place at the right time."

The 54-yard return was a championship game record, eclipsing mark of 46 yards set by Elyria Catholic's Ron Traut against Cincinnati McNicholas in 1984 at Ohio Stadium.

Junior lineman Colton Griffin got into the act, recovering a Colton McCarty fumble at the Panther 28. Five plays later Andrew Dronsfield booted a 29-yard field goal with 1:20 left in the first half to send the Golden Eagles into the intermission with a 10-0 lead.

By the half, Big Walnut's defense had limited Licking Valley to 72 yards in 28 plays. On the other side of the ledger, the Golden Eagles had gained only 47 yards in 21 plays.

"We were well prepared," senior outside linebacker Mark Nelson said of Big Walnut's defensive performance. "Licking Valley ran pretty much what we expected ... there were no surprises."

Junior middle linebacker Will Studien led the Golden Eagles defensively with 22 tackles, 7 unassisted. Nelson followed with 19 tackles, 9 of the unassisted variety.

Licking Valley (13-2), down but not out, came back out and dominated the second half, outgaining Big Walnut 250 to 62, catching the Golden Eagles at 10-10 going into the final 12 minutes.

The Panthers got on the board with 5:27 left when a bad snap from center eluded quarterback Ethan Wetzel and scooted out of the end zone for a safety. That was one of four errant snaps on the evening.

"Until tonight, I don't think we had had a bad snap all season," coach Wetzel said.

Following senior Chris Franklin's 49-yard punt, Licking Valley mounted an 8-play 57-yard march that ended on junior running back Storm Klein's 8-yard scoring run with 2:04 left in the third quarter. Quarterback Nick Phillips and tight end Vince German hooked up on a 2-point conversion pass to tie the game at 10-all.

"We went back to the basics, to what

got us here," Licking Valley head coach Randy Baughman said. "We got away that in the first half ... we needed to come back out and play a solid second half."

Kline, who has committed to Ohio State as a junior, collected 116 yards of his game-high 155 yards in the Panthers' second-half surge.

"We did a nice job containing Kline," coach Wetzel said. "When it came to defending our opponent's best player, our defense rose to the challenge throughout the playoffs."

"He's a load," Nelson added. "He just keeps coming at you."

The Golden Eagles quickly quelled the Panther momentum.

It started innocently enough as Big Walnut junior tackle Kalven Baer recovered a Josh Bailey fumble at the Big Walnut 26. On the second play, tailback Cory Wolfe fumbled following a 19-yard gain, but Reed, coming over to throw a block from his flanker position, scooped up the loose ball on the dead run, racing 41 yards to put the Golden Eagles back on top 17-10 following Dronsfield's second successful point after conversion with 4:59 to play.

"I was busting my butt to be in position to throw a block for Cory. As I got there the ball came out and I was able to pick it up and score. I was thinking, 'What's going on?'" Reed said. "It was funny that Cory fumbled because the same thing happened last week and the ball came right to me and I scored from two yards against Monroe. Weird."

Reed turned emotional when asked what the state championship meant to him and his teammates.

"It's something we have focused on since our loss to Kettering Alter (Regional

finals) last season," Reed said, his voice cracking. "It's a dream come true."

Heiden single-handedly put the game away for the Golden Eagles.

Licking Valley watched the veteran cornerback short-circuit two sustained series in the closing minutes as Heiden picked off Phillips' passes at the Big Walnut 28 with 2:48 remaining and at the Golden Eagle 11 with 25 ticks left on the clock.

"On the first interception, I got a good read on the ball," said Heiden, who had a 102-degree temperature Thursday night. "The second one, someone tipped the ball and it fell right into my arms."

"It just wasn't meant to be," Baughman said. "We kept battling and if the game had gone another five minutes, I do think we would have scored!"

After watching his charges turn the ball over five times, Baughman had nothing but praise Big Walnut's defense.

"They do a good job creating turnovers, you can see why they are successful ... that's a great football team," Baughman said, adding "I'm proud of my team. They battled back, they didn't quit ... we just didn't take advantage of our opportunities."

"The loss hurts, but it's not the end of the world," Panthers senior lineman Donald Houston said. "We have some good memories of this season — and a lot of life to live."

Licking Valley dominated the game's offensive stat sheet with 18 first downs and 322 yards in 74 plays. Phillips was 6-for-13 for 52 yards and two interceptions.

By comparison, Big Walnut finished with just three first downs and 109 yards in 36 plays. Wolfe rushed for 40 yards in nine carries. Ethan Wetzel completed 2 of 10 passes for 13 yards.

Friday, November 30
OHSAA Playoffs
Division III State Finals
At Fawcett Stadium
Canton

Big Walnut 17, Licking Valley 10

LICKING VALLEY 0 0 10 0—10
BIG WALNUT 7 3 0 7—17

First Quarter
BW—Reed 54 interception return (Dronsfield kick), 6:21.

Second Quarter
BW—Dronsfield 33 FG, 1:20.

Third Quarter
LV—Safety, ball snapped out of end zone, 5:27.
LV—Klein 8 run (V. German pass), 2:04.

Fourth Quarter
BW—Reed, 41-yard fumble return (Dronsfield kick), 9:29.

Team Statistics

	LV	BW
First downs	18	3
Rushes-yards	58-270	26-96
Passing yards	52	13
Comp-Att-Int.	6-16-3	2-10-0
Total yards	322	109
Sacked-yrd. lost	1-5	0-0
Punts-avg.	5-29.0	7-37.6
Fumbles-lost	2-2	2-0
Penalties-yards	3-15	2-10

Individual Statistics

RUSHING: Licking Valley—Klein 33-155, Bailey 8-78, Phillips 15-50, Ryan 1-0. Big Walnut—Wolfe 9-40, Tutorow 2-4, Zarcone 1-1, Team 1-(1).

PASSING: Licking Valley—Phillips 6-13-1-52, Ryan 0-1-1-0, Team 0-1-0-0. Big Walnut—Wetzel 2-9-0-13, Franklin 0-1-0-0.

RECEIVING: Licking Valley—Kuhlwein 3-42, Klein 3-10. Big Walnut—Reed 1-8, Hogg 1-5.

MISSED FIELD GOALS: None.

BIG WALNUT 21, MONROE 7

Golden Eagles ride Jones to Canton

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

LIMA — Get ready Canton ... the Golden Eagles are heading your way!

Big Walnut, on the strength of a 21-7 victory over Monroe Friday night at Lima Stadium, has a 3 p.m. date with Newark Licking Valley in its first-ever OHSAA Division III State Championship game appearance next Friday afternoon at Canton's Fawcett Stadium.

Neighboring Licking Valley (13-1) defeated Mentor Lake Catholic (9-5) in the other Division III semifinal last night at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium in Massillon.

"This is what we have been playing for all season ... to play in the State finals," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said. "Right after our loss to Kettering Alter in last year's Regional finals, the juniors' goal was return to the playoffs this year ... they made good on their promise."

It was business as usual for coach Scott Wetzel's top-seeded 13-1 Golden Eagles in the postseason ... big plays and an even bigger defense in snapping the 11-3 Fighting Hornets' 10-game winning streak.

After falling behind 7-0 for the first time in its Regional run on Monroe running back Jared Ferguson's 11-yard run, Big Walnut turned to the "Big Play" chapter in its playbook to score 21 unanswered points.

Senior Ethan Wetzel started the Golden Eagles' run with a 49-yard kickoff return to the Monroe 38. Four plays later, Wetzel powered his way into the end zone on a 1-yard quarterback sneak to tie the game at 7-7 with 3:22 left in the opening period.

"Monroe's touchdown got our attention after we were three-and-out on our first series," coach Wetzel said. "I think it was a bit of a wake-up call for us."

After senior Alex Yarnell made a touchdown-saving tackle on Jared Ferguson's kickoff return to the Big Walnut 23, the Golden Eagle defense



Matt Emmons

Big Walnut cornerback Derek Jones (8) returns an interception 90 yards for a touchdown, stopping a Monroe drive to put the Eagles up 21-7, clinching the victory in the fourth quarter.

stiffened with Ethan Wetzel intercepting a Tyler Osterman pass to end the threat.

"That was probably the key play of the game," coach Wetzel said. "It kept the game tied and gave us the opportunity to come back and regain the lead ... that was nothing but sheer determination on Alex's part."

Big Walnut came back to take a 14-7 lead in the second period following senior safety Joey Reed's interception of an Osterman pass at the Golden Eagle 19. Twelve plays and 81 yards later, Reed recovered senior tailback Cory Wolfe's fumble at the Fighting Hornets' 2-yard line and scramble into the end zone to put the Eagles up by seven with 3:02 left in the period.

"We were starting to put pressure on their quarterback and he over-threw that pass," Reed said. "I was

able to out jump their receiver and come down with the ball."

On his fumble recovery that capped Wolfe's 14-yard run, Reed smiled. "I just happened to be at the right place at the right time."

Osterman, who had thrown for more than 2,600 yards this season, was 9-for-23 for 77 yards and had three passes picked off by the Big Walnut secondary.

"That was the best defense we faced all season," Osterman said. "They seemed to have an answer for everything we tried to run ... they were relentless."

The game-clincher for Big Walnut came in the fourth quarter from senior cornerback Derek Jones. After Monroe had driven the ball from its own 45 to the Big Walnut 20, Jones stepped in front of a forced Osterman pass at the Golden Eagle 9

and returned the ball 91 yards for a touchdown and a 21-7 lead with only 5:48 remaining on the clock.

"Once Derek turned the corner in front of our bench I knew he had a chance to go all the way," coach Wetzel said. "He's one of the fastest players on our team ... he just outran everyone to the end zone."

Big Walnut's defense, which has surrendered grand total 31 points in its four playoff outings, slammed the door on Monroe after the Fighting Hornets opening 13-play, 78-yard scoring march. Monroe, which finished with 186 yards in 56 plays, managed only 108 yards in its remaining 43 plays.

"We just continued to pressure them all night," Big Walnut senior defensive end Jared Suvak said. "Our goal was to keep them off balance and never let them get comfortable

running their offense."

When asked if Big Walnut changed anything defensively after the Fighting Hornets' early success, Wetzel said "We told the guys to go out an turn up the pressure ... we didn't change a thing. By the fourth quarter, Monroe was totally spent."

The Fighting Hornets, who scored a season-low seven points, came into the game with 113 points in their previous three playoff starts.

Big Walnut, led by Ethan Wetzel's 114 yards in 15 carries, totaled 271 yards in 45 plays. Senior fullback Trevor Tutorow Wolfe followed Wetzel with 64 yards apiece.

"We were all right offensively, but penalties kept us from sustaining anything," coach Wetzel said, noting the Golden Eagles' nine penalties that totaled 94 yards. Monroe had three penalties for 30 yards.

*Thank you B.W. Football for fulfilling the dreams of so many.
Your character and devotion to the team is a credit to you,
your coaches and your family.*

**What a Great Christmas Gift you've given the
Big Walnut Community! Our best to all,**

- Delaware County Commissioner, Glenn Evans



BIG WALNUT 21, CLYDE 14

Eagles come up 'golden' in regional final

By GARY HENERY
Sports writer

TIFFIN — The Golden Eagles are going where no Delaware County football team has gone before.

Top-seeded Big Walnut won its first-ever OHSAA Division III Regional football championship in its third try, defeating sixth-seeded Clyde 21-14 in a titanic defensive struggle Friday night in front of a packed house at Frost-Kalnow Stadium in Tiffin.

The Golden Eagle victory, which marks the first-ever regional football championship in county football history, sends the Red and Gold to next Friday night's Division III State Semifinals against Lemon-Monroe at 7:30 at Lima Stadium (see related story). The 11-2 Fighting Hornets defeated Cincinnati Indian Hill 31-28 last night at Kings Mill Stadium.

Big Walnut (12-1) relied on its playoff-tested defense to shut down a potent Flier offense while forcing five turnovers.

"I can't say enough about our defense, we've hung our hats on it all season," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said after his squad had equaled the single-season school win record set in 2001. "That's been our strength all season, especially the playoffs, and tonight was no different against a team that was averaging 40.2 points per game."

The Golden Eagle defense gave Big Walnut an early 7-0 lead 5:40 into the first quarter. On a second and nine from the Clyde 24, Flier quarterback Alex Gillette fumbled the ball on the handoff to senior runningback Jacob Andrews. The ball took a fortuitous bounce into the hands of senior safety Anthony Zarcone who returned it 18 yards for a 7-0 Big Walnut lead. Andy Dronsfield added the first of his three successful conversions.

After Big Walnut had taken a 21-



Matt Emmons

The Golden Eagles' Cory Wolfe fights off a Clyde defender in the '07 Division III regional final.

14 lead on quarterback Ethan Wetzel's 5-yard run with 30 seconds remaining in the third period, the Golden Eagle defense slammed the door on the Fliers. Junior Cornerback Nick Heiden picked off a Gillette pass at the Big Walnut 33, junior middle linebacker Will Studien recovered an Ethan Ott fumble at the Golden Eagle 44 and with 3:09 to play Wetzel came up with an interception from his roverbak slot at the Flier 40. Clyde's final series, and their playoff hopes, ended when junior

tackle Kalven Baer knocked down a Gillette pass on fourth down with 1:23 left.

"Someone once asked me where I would play my best players and I said I would always put my best 11 on defense," coach Wetzel said. "And it's because of their season-long effort that we're headed to the final four next week."

Big Walnut's offense, which produced 297 yards against a Clyde defense that had allowed just 213.5 yards per game in the Fliers' first 11

games, made it's share of contributions.

After Clyde (10-3) tied the game at 7-7 on Andrews' 3-yard run 30 seconds into the second period, the Golden Eagles answered on a 2-play, 59-yard series to regain the lead at 14-7. Senior tailback Cory Wolfe, who totaled 86 yards in 14 carries, opened the efficient series with a 57-yard run to the Clyde 2. Senior fullback Trevor Tutorow covered the final two yards with 7:01 left in the opening half

Ethan Wetzel led the offense with 120 yards in 19 carries while completing seven passes for 92 yards, including a 28-yard completion to senior flanker Joey Reed who made a one-handed catch while going out of bounds to set up Wetzel's go-ahead touchdown run.

"After dropping two earlier in the game, that sort of got me fired up," Reed said after the game, adding, "Going to the state finals is something we've had our focus set on after reaching the regional finals last season ... it's been a goal of ours since the first day of camp."

Clyde wasn't about to go quietly, especially after knocking off second-seeded Tipp City Tippecanoe and third-seeded Napoleon.

The Fliers opened the second half with renewed vigor, taking the kick-off and marching 70 yards in just three plays with Gillette finding senior tight end Aric Thurn breaking open down the middle of the field on a 63-yard scoring strike to tie the game at 14-all with 10:16 left in the third period. Thurn had 4 catches for 107 yards. Senior kicker Jerry Phillips kicked the second of his two-point conversions.

Gillette was 13-for-36 for 215 yards in leading the Fliers to 349 yards in total offense, outgaining the Golden Eagles by 152 yards. Andrews led the Fliers on the ground with 81 yards in 16 carries. Senior wide receiver Justin Cook pulled in 6 passes for 76 yards.

"Defensively, we came up with the big plays when we needed, them," Ethan Wetzel said. "They didn't do anything that we weren't prepared for. We knew we were facing a 2,000-yard passer and a 1,000-yard running back ... we just went out and did our job."

In their two previous playoff appearances against Rossford and Shelby, the Golden Eagles had allowed 356 yards in total offense.

BIG WALNUT 35, SHELBY 8

Big plays propel Eagles to bigger win

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

LEWIS CENTER — The Golden Eagles' early big-play offense overwhelmed the Whippets.

Big Walnut (11-1), striking for two first-quarter touchdowns, rolled past Shelby 35-8 in a Division III Regional semifinal matchup before a packed house Friday night at Olentangy's Braves Field.

The victory sends Big Walnut (11-1) to its second straight Regional semifinal appearance and third overall Friday night. The Golden Eagles will play Clyde (11-1), a 19-13 victor over Napoleon last night at Toledo Central Catholic.

Golden Eagle head coach Scott Wetzel said the Golden Eagles' fast start caught Shelby by surprise.

"We shook their foundation early," coach Scott Wetzel said after watching senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel break free on a 49-yard scoring run at 7:12 of the opening period and senior fullback Trevor Tutorow scored on a 6-yard run three minutes later on the heels of senior running back Cory Wolfe's 40-yard scamper to the Shelby 6. "We came out and took control of the game early ... and I don't think they ever recovered."

Big Walnut's defense, called the Golden Eagles' strong suit by Shelby head coach Chris Solis, would not let the Whippets recover.

Shelby (9-3) moved the

ball at will in the opening half, running 26 more plays (40-14) than the Golden Eagles. But they also turned the ball over twice. A Derek Jones interception of a Scott Baird pass at the Big Walnut 23 on the Whippets' opening series led to Ethan Wetzel's touchdown run. Shelby fumbled the ball away to Kalven Baer at the Golden Eagle 20 late in the second quarter.

"It all happened up front," said junior linebacker Will Studien who was credited with a quarterback sack, two tackles for losses and an interception. "We kept the pressure on and we went but we never broke ... that's been our defensive philosophy all season."

By the intermission, the Whippets had outgained the Eagles 141-125, but trailed 14-0/

"We went a little flat offensively after the first quarter," coach Wetzel said, "but we picked it back up in the third quarter."

After Baer and Jones made back-to-back tackles for losses to force Shelby to turn the ball over on downs at the Golden Eagle 21, Wolfe slipped around his own right end on a reverse and outraced the Whippet defenders on a 79-yard scoring run to make it 21-0 with 5:07 left in the third period.

"The guys up front were opening up hold all night," said Wolfe, who rushed for 161 yards in 12 carries. "We were really clicking on offense."



Matt Emmons

Big Walnut's Anthony Zarcone (6) sets his sights on the Shelby quarterback.

The Golden Eagles totaled 282 yards and 8 first downs in 32 plays.

"With the big plays, we never really got into our offense," Ethan Wetzel said in a jubilant Golden Eagle locker room. "Our line kept open-

ing up huge holes four our backs to tun through."

While the Golden Eagles ran only 31 plays, 40 fewer than Shelby, they outgained their Whippets 282-252.

Wetzel finished with 59 yards in six carries while

completing 3 of 6 passes for 48 yards.

Big Walnut put the game out of reach with a pair of fourth-quarter scores. Following junior lineman Colton Griffis' fumble recovery at the Whippet 48, Ethan

Wetzel hit senior wide receiver Joe Reed in stride with a 35-yard touchdown pass two minutes into the final period.

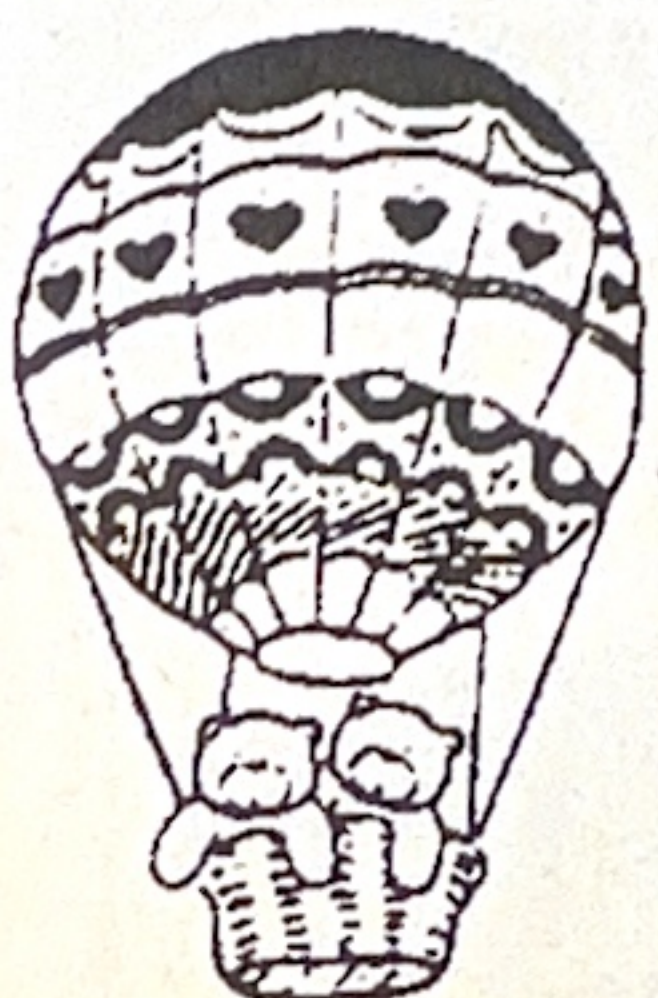
Just over a minute later, Baer picked up his second fumble of the night and rambled 26 yards for a 35-0 Big Walnut lead. Andrew Dronsfield tacked on his fifth extra point of the night.

"I can't say enough about the effort of our defense," coach Wetzel said. "Shelby's midline offense is tough to defend, but we kept the pressure on all night and never gave them the opportunity to get into any sort of rhythm."

Big Walnut's defense forced five turnovers, three fumbles and two interceptions while recording four quarterback sacks, two each by Chris Franklin and Ethan Wetzel. The Golden Eagles also had 11 tackles for losses. The Golden Eagles did not commit a single turnover.

Shelby, which finished with 258 yards and 16 first downs in 71 plays, averted a shutout on the game's final series. Senior quarterback Chad Coward, replacing starter Scott Baird who left the game with a right knee injury in the third quarter, tossed a 23-yard scoring pass with 1.5 seconds to play. Coward ran in the 2-point conversion.

Senior fullback Brett Thompson led the Whippets with 75 yards in 16 carries. Baird completed 5 of 121 passes for 55 yards and rushed for another 46 in 20 carries.



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BIG WALNUT 35, ROSSFORD 2

Golden Eagles pound Bulldogs

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

SUNBURY — All is well in Golden Eagle Nation.

Big Walnut, behind a solid ground attack led by seniors Ethan Wetzel, Cory Wolfe and Trevor Tutorow, piled up 352 yards of total offense in a 35-2 romp over Rossford in OHSAA Division III Regional quarterfinal action Friday night at Golden Eagle Stadium.

"I thought we came out and took care of business," Golden Eagle head Scott Wetzel said. "We ran the ball extremely well, and I can't say enough about our defense ... we really did a nice job of shutting Rossford down."

With senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel at the controls after suffering a concussion at the conclusion of a touchdown run on the final play of the first half in last Friday's loss to New Albany, Big Walnut (10-1) raced out to a 21-0 halftime lead and never looked back.

Tutorow tallied Big Walnut's first two touchdowns. His first came on a 7-yard run which capped a 6-play, 65-yard march with 23.4 seconds left in the opening period. Wolfe's 36-yard run to the Rossford seven set up the score. Andrew Dronsfield was successful on the first of five point-after conversions.

Tutorow scored on the ensuing series, going in from 3-yards out to end an 8-play, 51-yard drive with 9:24 remaining in the second quarter. Wolfe's 16-yard scamper gave the hosts a first-and-goal on the Bulldogs' three.

Ethan Wetzel, completing three of four passes for 31 yards and rushing for 30 yards in four carries, accounted for all eight plays in a 60-yard series that saw the quarterback score on a 14-yard run with 6:30 left in the half.

By the half, Big Walnut had outgained Rossford by 218 yards, 225 to 7.

"They had more bullets then we had," Rossford head coach Chris Werbylo said. "We've been hit by injuries the last couple of weeks. Our leading rusher (junior Brandon Huner, 875 yards in 145 carries) did not play and running back Ricardo Ross (717 yards, 98 carries) and wingback Tyler Waclawski (397 yards, 69 carries) were slowed by ankle injuries."



Matt Emmons

Big Walnut's Will Studlien wraps up a Rossford runner in first-round playoff action.

Big Walnut came back and put the game out of reach with two third-quarter touchdowns. Ethan Wetzel, breaking free around his own left end, scored on a 73-yard scamper at the 10:25 mark of the third period.

Back-up quarterback Garrett Koehler, who also left last Friday's New Albany game with a concussion, took over behind center and led the Golden Eagles on a 2-play, 56-yard series that ended on

Wolfe's 50-yard run. Wolfe finished with 128 yards in 10 carries.

Ethan Wetzel, who was held out of practice until Thursday before receiving medical clearance to start against the Bulldogs, finished with 188 yards in total offense, 136 coming on the ground in 13 carries. He was held of the Golden Eagles' defensive backfield for precautionary measures.

"I was a little skittish on our first series," Ethan

Wetzel said, "but once I had contact I settled in. On defense, they didn't do anything we didn't expect ... it felt good to get back out on the field."

For Bulldogs, it was a long night offensively.

Rossford (6-5), which came into the game averaging 24.9 points and 304.9 yards, including 34.7 points during the Bulldogs' season-ending three-game winning streak, struggled to break the 100-yard barrier with 104 yards in 59 plays. On the ground, where the Bulldogs averaged 202.7 yards per game during the regular season, they managed only 45 yards in 46 carries.

Of the Bulldogs' 13 series, 10 ended in punts.

Rossford's lone score came with 4:44 left in the third period on a safety when Big Walnut punter Chris Franklin watched the snap sail over his head and scoot out of the end zone.

"Our defense played a great game against a team that had success in a league with Division I and II schools ... we pretty much took away what they wanted to do," coach Wetzel said.

"I know where coach Werbylo is coming from when you are not at full strength due to injuries," coach Wetzel continued. "We played tonight without our starting tight end Jared Suvak (knee), and we weren't sure with the status of our two quarterbacks ... it's tough."

"Give their kids credit," coach Wetzel continued. "They hung in their and played hard until the end."

Werbylo, who watched his club lose its fifth straight first-round game, said Big Walnut compared favorably to teams in the Northern Lakes League.

"Big Walnut is a very good football team that executed their game plan tonight," Werbylo said. "They would compare favorably to Division I Perrysburg which finished second in our conference."

"It feels good to be back in the Sweet Sixteen," coach Wetzel said. "That was a goal the guys had set at the beginning of the season ... they want to go deeper in the playoffs than they did last year."

The Golden Eagles will face fifth-seed Shelby (9-2), a 35-7 winner over Bellefontaine (9-2) last night at Bellefontaine, next Friday night at a site and team to be determined.

Big Walnut reached the Division III Regional semifinals where they were sidelined by Kettering Alter.

NEW ALBANY 24, BIG WALNUT 17

New Albany stuns Big Walnut

Loss denies Golden Eagles outright OCC Capital title

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

SUNBURY —

Disappointment! For the second year in a row, The Golden Eagles watched an outright Ohio Capital Conference Capital Division football championship slip through their fingers.

New Albany (7-3, 3-2), clinging to slim OHSAA Playoff hopes, upset second state-ranked Big Walnut 24-17 to hand the 9-1, 4-1 Golden Eagles their first loss of the season Friday night at Golden Eagle Stadium. The loss, combined with Liberty's 34-7 victory over Franklin Heights gave the 8-2, 4-1 Patriots a share of the Capital Division title.

"New Albany's a good football team that came in tonight with something to play for ... and they got it done," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said. "We had our chances, especially in the second half, but we didn't get it done."

The visiting Eagles, who trailed 14-10 after the first 36 minutes, dominated the final 12. Junior 6-foot-2, 245-pound running back Michael Morrow scored on a 3-yard run 34 seconds into the fourth quarter to give New Albany a 17-14 lead, their first since a 10-7 late second-period lead.

Big Walnut answered when senior place kicker Andrew Dronsfield booted a 23-yard field goal to tie the game at 17-all with 5:51 remaining to play.



Lenny C. Lepola

Big Walnut senior linebacker Mark Nelson brings down New Albany's running back Charles Fry (13) during the first half of Friday night's OCC Capital Division matchup at Golden Eagle Stadium.

The scoring series started on the New Albany 28, but an illegal motion penalty stalled the drive.

New Albany wasted little time regaining the momentum. After Dronsfield's kickoff sailed out of bounds giving the Eagles possession on their own 35, senior quarterback Tristan Moore broke free around his own left end and outraced the Big Walnut secondary for what turned out to be a game-winning 65-yard scoring run. Collin Show converted his third point after for the 24-17 margin of victory.

Moore completed 10 of 16

passes for 118 yards, adding 130 yards on 6 carries.

New Albany senior safety Chris Irwin settled the issue for the Eagles.

Senior quarterback Garrett Koehler, replacing starter Ethan Wetzel who left the game with a concussion on the final play of the first half, led a late Big Walnut charge that ended when Irwin stepped in front of a pass intended for junior split end Nick Heiden at the goal line.

Irwin had given the visitors an early 7-0 lead, hauling in a 36-yard scoring pass from Moore with 7:13 left in the first

half.

"Our guys came in with something to play for ... they felt like they had something to prove," New Albany head coach Mark Mueller said. "I thought we came back out and played well in the second half against a very good Big Walnut team."

New Albany finished ninth in the Division II Region 7 Computer Ratings and did not make the playoffs.

After New Albany went up 10-7 on Show's 32-yard field goal with 1:44 remaining in the opening quarter, the Golden Eagles led 10-7. Please see EAGLES, Page 8

BIG WALNUT 44, FRANKLIN HEIGHTS 18

Eagles cruise

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

COLUMBUS — The Golden Eagles continue to gather momentum ...

Unbeaten and state-ranked Big Walnut clinched a tie with Liberty for the Ohio Capital Conference Capital Division championship with a 44-18 victory over Franklin Heights Friday night.

The 9-0, 4-0 Golden Eagles, ranked first in the OHSAA Division II Region 10 Ratings and second behind Canal Fulton Northwest in the AP Division III poll, hold a one-game lead over 6-2, 3-1 Liberty, a 23-21 winner at Dublin Scioto last night with one week remaining on the conference schedule. Big Walnut shared the OCC Cap crown with Watkins Memorial last season.

"We went out, played our game and took care of business," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said of his team's victory over the 4-5, 0-4 Falcons. "It would have been easy for us to come down here and not be ready to play, but our kids came in ready to play."

And take care of business they did.

The Golden Eagles scored three touchdowns in the first 10 minutes and never looked back. Senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel scored on a 3-yard run at 9:16 and hooked up with senior split end Derek Jones on a 9-yard scoring pass at 4:24 before senior running back Cory Wolfe scored on a 2-yard run at 2:12 for an early 20-0 Big Walnut lead.

"I thought our kids came out focused against a Franklin Heights team that can be explosive," coach Wetzel said. "We played smart, aggressive foot-

ball and took advantage of our opportunities."

Talk about opportunities.

Ethan Wetzel's touchdown was set up when Chris Franklin's punt on the Golden Eagles' first possession hit a Franklin Heights player and was recovered on the Falcon 27 which set up the 5-play scoring series.

After Big Walnut drove 83-yards in 9 plays following the Falcons' second punt to take a 13-0 lead on the Wetzel-Jones touchdown pass, the Golden Eagles caught another break.

Forced to punt for the third time in the period, Falcon quarterback-punter Michael Chandler watched helplessly as the snap soared over his outstretched hands, downing the ball on the 2-yard line to set up the first of two Wolfe scoring runs.

Big Walnut, putting a 25-yard Garrett Koehler-to-Wolfe touchdown pass and a 22-yard Andy Dronsfield field goal on the scoreboard in the second quarter, took a 30-6 lead into the intermission.

At the end of the first 24 minutes, Ethan Wetzel and backup quarterback Koehler had combined to complete 7 of 11 passes for 101 yards and two scores. On the ground, the Golden Eagles had rushed for 122 yards in 23 carries.

"We played a very efficient first half," coach Wetzel said.

Not to be overlooked was the Big Walnut first-half defense which held Franklin Heights to a net 10 yards in total offense. The Falcons were a minus 43 yards rushing in 12 carries while Chandler completed 8-13 passes for 53 yards.

The Falcons' lone first-half

Please see CRUISE, Page 9

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August 31 Delaware Hayes; W, 41-15

September 7 @ Chillicothe; W, 43-7

September 14 Olentangy; W, 14-12

September 21 @ West. Central, W, 29-22

September 28 @ Watkins Mem.*; W, 21-0

October 5 Dublin Scioto*; W, 21-7

October 12 Liberty*; W, 24-7

October 19 @ Franklin Heights*; W, 44-18

October 26 New Albany*; L, 24-17

November 2 Rossford**; W, 35-2

November 9 Shelby**; W, 35-8

@ Olentangy, Braves Field

November 16 Clyde***; W, 21-14

@ Tiffin, Frost-Kalnow Stadium

November 23 Monroe****; W, 21-7

@ Lima Stadium

December 30 Licking Valley; W, 17-10

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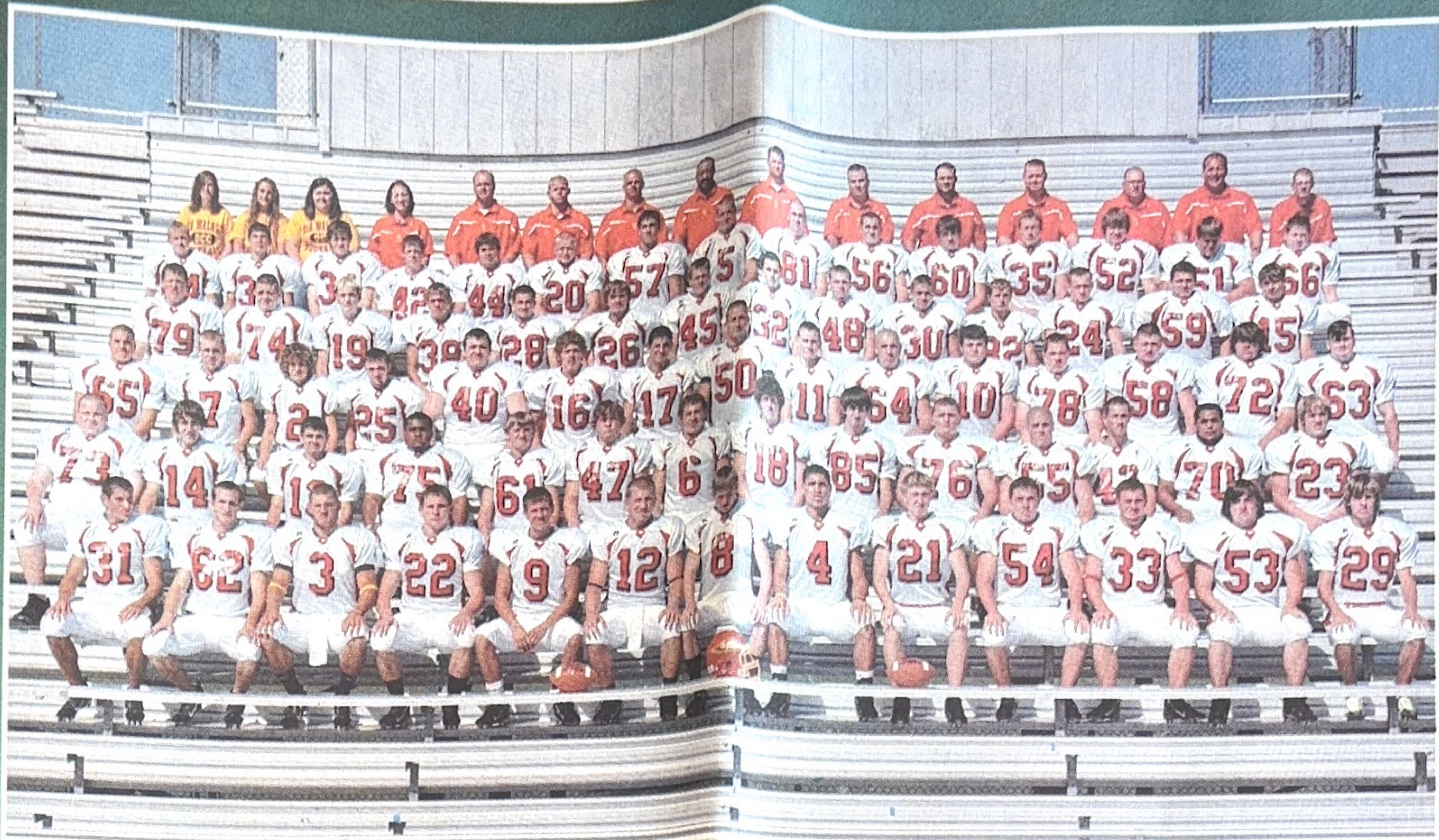


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THE 2007 GOLDEN EAGLES ARE:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Josh Pace | 19 Drew Billard | 40 Colton Griffs | 60 Colton Hubbard |
| 3 Jared Suvak | 20 Cody Lechner | 42 Joey Millsbaugh | 61 Charles Thompson |
| 4 Joe Reed | 21 Alex Yarnell | 43 Cory Johnson | 62 Chris Franklin |
| 5 Johnny Cannell | 22 Mark Nelson | 44 Steve McDaniel | 63 Logan Mead |
| 6 Anthony Zarcone | 23 Brad Mays | 45 Drew Curtis | 64 Jon Smith |
| 7 Jacob Daltadesco | 24 Seth Dunn | 47 Nick Hampton | 65 Kalven Baer |
| 8 Derek Jones | 25 Patrick Daugherty | 48 Jon Norman | 66 Tyler Fielding |
| 9 Jared Hogg | 26 Ryan Hardy | 50 Will Studlien | 70 Steve Hubbard |
| 10 Jordan DeWitt | 28 Buddy Carrel | 51 Tyler Piper | 73 Kyle Guthrie |
| 11 Sharie Trotter | 29 Andrew Dronsfield | 52 Ryan Gerny | 74 Nathan Taylor |
| 12 Ethan Wetzel | 30 Bret Myers | 53 Zach Rife | 75 Ousmane Bangoura |
| 13 William Hernandez | 31 Cory Wolfe | 54 Shane Hubbard | 76 Chad Williams |
| 14 Andrew Fox | 32 Brad Beltram | 55 Phil Gaulini | 78 Travis Mead |
| 15 James Rimella | 33 Trevor Tutorow | 56 Zach Mathews | 79 Steve Hobart |
| 16 Bryan Dillon | 34 Mitchell Daily | 57 Peter Isbell | 81 Zach Shryock |
| 17 Nick Heiden | 36 David Zitelio | 58 Nate Scarbury | 82 Jacob Little |
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BIG WALNUT 24, LIBERTY 7

Golden Eagles pummel Patriots

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

SUNBURY — The Golden Eagles continue to find ways to win ...

Big Walnut turned to its passing game in the second half to outscore Liberty 14-0 en route to a key 24-7 Ohio Capital Conference Capital Division victory over the visiting Patriots Friday night at jam-packed Golden Eagle Stadium.

With the victory, Big Walnut (8-0, 3-0 OCC Capital) moved into first place in the OHSAA Division III Region 10 Computer Ratings with 21,4875 points. Tipp City Tippecanoe (8-0) is second with 18,5875 points followed by Shelby (6-2) with 17,4250 points.

In this week's Associated Press Division III Poll, Big Walnut remained second with 8 first-place votes and 309 points behind Canal Fulton Northwest, 23 first-place votes and 329 points.

Friday night's victory over Liberty was the first in four meetings in Big Walnut's young series with coach Steve Hale's Patriots. Liberty had won the first three games by scores of 21-9, 3-0 and 7-0.

Clinging to a slim 10-7 advantage at the break on senior place kicker Andy Dronsfield's 22-yard field goal with 22.7 seconds left on the second quarter clock, Big Walnut went back to the X's and O's at the intermission.

"We came out trying to run the ball ... and we weren't too successful," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel admitted. "We knew we had to make some changes if we were to be successful."

The Golden Eagles rushed for 63 yards in 18 carries the first half, with 36 of the 63 coming on senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel's scrambling scoring run that gave the Golden Eagles a 7-0 lead with 9:26 left in the second period.

"We made some blocking adjustments at halftime and came out throwing the ball," coach Wetzel said. "Obviously we were successful."

Big Walnut opened the third quarter with a 9-play, 76-yard scoring drive capped by senior fullback Trevor Tutorow's yard scoring run to give the hosts a 17-7 lead with 8:15 left in the period. Tutorow's score was set up by senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel's 30-yard pass to senior end Jared Hogg that gave the Golden Eagles a first-and-goal at the Patriot one-yard line.

Following a Liberty punt, Big Walnut put together a 7-play, 66-yard drive that ended on Reed's scoring catch in the right corner of the end zone with 11:53 left in the fourth quarter. Ethan Wetzel and Cory Wolfe hooked up on completions of 16, 23 and 7 yards to set up the score.

Big Walnut ran a balanced attack in the second half. Wetzel was 7-for-7 in the second half for 118 yards while the Golden Eagles' running game ground out 78 yards in 21 carries.

"All the credit goes to my receivers and our offensive line," Ethan Wetzel said. "At halftime, our linemen got together and said it was time to put it together. They did a great job of handling Liberty's defense and giving me time to find open receivers."

And Big Walnut's pass catching corps chipped in with some great receptions.

"Suvak, Wolfie, Hogg, Joey ... were getting open and making tremendous catches," Wetzel added.

Wetzel finished with 15 completions in 24 attempts for 227 yards. Reed had five catches for 86 yards, Wolfe 4 for 66 and Hogg 4 for 58 yards.

Liberty's lone score came on a Big Walnut defensive breakdown as senior quarterback Ryan Cypret found senior wide receiver Dustin Welch open on the Golden Eagle 37 for a 74-yard touchdown pass with 3:38 left in the first half.

"We had our opportunities in the first half, but unlike Big Walnut we did not take advantage of them," Hale said. "Give Big Walnut credit, they made the right adjustments at halftime and came out an executed, we lost to a very good football team tonight."

Liberty finished with 178 yards in total offense, 74 coming on the Cypret-to-Welch scoring play. On the ground, the Patriots netted just 10 yards in 28 carries. Cypret, who misfired on his first seven passes, finished at 6-for-16 for

168 yards.

"Defensively, other than the one breakdown on our pass coverage, I felt like we played our best game all season," coach Wetzel said. "We were putting good pressure on a very athletic quarterback in Ryan Cypret and, at the same time, neutralizing their solid running game."

When asked to compare the Golden Eagles' 2007 defense with past teams, he said "from the top down, this group may be the best defensive team I've had in my 10 seasons at Big Walnut."

The victory gave the Golden Eagles a one-game lead over Liberty (6-2, 2-1) and Dublin Scioto (5-3, 2-1) in the OCC Cap with two weeks remaining on the conference schedule. Scioto defeated New Albany 31-7 last night.

Despite of being just one win away from clinching at least a tie for the Capital Division title, Wetzel said it was too early to start celebrating.

"We have a tough road game at Franklin Heights next week and we close out at home against a very good New Albany team," he said. "Beginning Monday, our focus will be on Franklin Heights."

The Patriots closes out their OCC Cap slate with Dublin Scioto next week on the road and with Franklin Heights on October 26 at Liberty.

BIG WALNUT 21, DUBLIN SCIOTO 7

Big Walnut's defense shuts down Scioto

Wetzel's 100-yard kickoff return ignites seventh straight victory

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

SUNBURY — The Golden Eagles stole some Irish thunder!

Big Walnut posted two first-quarter touchdowns, including Ethan Wetzel's 100-yard kickoff return to open the game, en route to a 21-7 Ohio Capital Conference Capital Division victory on Homecoming Night Friday at Golden Eagle Stadium.

"Dublin Scioto has a history this season of coming out and scoring early and often," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said. "Tonight was our turn ... After Ethan's kickoff return and Joey's interception, you could see them lose some of their energy."

Ethan Wetzel's season's best kickoff return energized Big Walnut (7-0, 2-0 OCC Capital). Senior defensive back Joey Reed intercepted senior quarterback Ryan Pendleton in the end zone on Scioto's first series. Reed's pick set up a 12-play, 84-yard Golden Eagle march that ended on Wetzel's 9-yard scoring strike to senior tight end Jared Suvak and a 14-0 lead with 3:18 remaining in the opening quarter.

Coach Wetzel said he challenged his players at the end of Big Walnut's last practice Thursday following two lackluster performances against Westerville Central and Watkins Memorial.

"I told them the game was now in their hands ... as coaches we had done all we could do to get them ready for tonight," he said. "Tonight, I saw more enthusiasm, more desire on both sides of the ball, than we've seen the last two weeks ... we went out and played a great game against a very good team."

Coach Wetzel was especially pleased with his Golden Eagles defensive effort, especially in the third quarter when Dublin Scioto ran 23 plays to 4 for the Golden Eagles and controlled the ball for 10 minutes and 21

seconds.

"It was a tremendous effort by our defense," the Big Walnut coach said. "And it was a total team effort ... everybody contributed in one way or another."

After forcing Scioto (4-3, 1-1 OCC Capital) to punt on its first series of the second half, the Golden Eagles watched as Scioto junior safety Deji Olatoye picked off an Ethan Wetzel pass at the Irish 29. Again the Big Walnut defense held as junior lineman Kalven Baer sacked Pendleton at midfield and junior linebacker Will Studlien dropped McDougald for a 3-yard loss on third and nine at the hosts' 48.

"For us, the third quarter was the ball game," Scioto head coach coach Karl Johnson said. "We possessed the ball for better than 10 minutes (10:21) and ran 23 plays to 4 for Big Walnut, but we could not score."

Scioto turned the ball over on its final two possessions. Senior defensive back Derek Jones recovered a Bradley McDougald fumble at the Big Walnut 47 as time expired in the third period to set up what proved to be the game-clinching score for the Golden Eagles. The second Irish turnover came on Reed's second interception, stepping in front of a Pendleton pass at the Big Walnut 42 with 3:47 remaining to seal the victory.

Jones' fumble recovery led to a 14-play, 53-yard Big Walnut series that took 7:10 off the clock and ended in senior fullback Trevor Tutorow's 6-yard scoring run that gave the Golden Eagle a 21-7 lead with 4:50 to play.

Sophomore kicker Jacob Little, filling in for the injured Andy Dronsfield who was sidelined with a leg injury suffered in a Big Walnut boys soccer game this week, completed the scoring with his third extra point.

"How's that for responding to pressure," coach Wetzel said about Little's performance. "He stepped in and looked like he had been



Lenny C. Lepola

Big Walnut senior fullback Trevor Tutorow dives through a hole against Dublin Scioto defenders senior linebacker Corey Strawser (7) and senior lineman Nathan Votino for a short gain in the first half Friday night. Tutorow finished with 36 yards in 8 carries, including a game-clinching 6-yard run late in the fourth quarter.

“Dublin Scioto has a history this season of coming out and scoring early and often. Tonight was our turn.”

— Scott Wetzel, BW coach

“kicking extra points all season.”

Big Walnut managed just enough offense to put 21 points on the scoreboard, totaling 192 yards in 49 plays. Ethan Wetzel, who completed his first six passes, four coming in the Golden Eagles' first-quarter scoring drive, was 7-for-11 passing for 76 yards while rushing for 35 yards in 11 carries. Senior halfback Cory Wolfe, with 46 yards in 18 carries, led the Eagles on the ground. Tutorow added 36 yards in 8 carries.

Scioto's lone score came

two minutes into the second quarter. The Irish took the kickoff following Big Walnut's second touchdown, and drove the ball 66 yards in 11 plays with McDougald eluding three Big Walnut tacklers en route to a 19-yard with 10:04 left in the opening half.

"Dublin Scioto came and played a physical game," coach Wetzel said. "They keep coming after you and they have the ability to break a long play from anywhere on the field."

The Irish totaled 211 yards in 57 plays, led by McDougald's game-high 129 yards in 26 carries. Pendleton completed 6 of 14 passes for 27 yards, including the two interceptions.

Johnson was disappointed in his team's effort.

"Our special team play, turnovers, untimely penalties really hurt, but that's not to take anything away from Big Walnut ... they played a solid game," Johnson said. "The bottom line for us is that we need to learn how to finish

games."

Big Walnut, moving up to second in this week's Associated Press Division III poll behind Canal Fulton Northwest (7-0) with nine first-place votes and 304 points and second behind Shelby (6-1) in the Division III Region 10 Computer Ratings, continues its drive for an OCC Capital Division championship and return to the OHSAA Division III Playoffs when the Golden Eagles play host to Liberty (6-1, 2-0 OCC Capital) in a matchup of division leaders Friday at 7:30 p.m. at Golden Eagle Stadium.

The Patriots scored a first-quarter touchdown against the Golden Eagles in last season's meeting at Liberty and made it stand up in a 7-0 victory.

Liberty has won the last three games in the series by scores of 21-9, 3-0, and 7-0. Liberty enters Friday night's game coming off a 31-14 OCC Capital home win over Watkins Memorial.

EAGLES

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Eagles took the 14-10 halftime lead on quarterback Ethan Wetzel's 12-yard run with 56 showing on the clock.

It proved to be a costly score for the Golden Eagles as the senior signal-caller left the game with the concussion. Ironically, Koehler suffered a concussion on the interception that ended the game.

"You can't blame this loss on injuries," Coach Wetzel said. "We had our chances in the second half, but we could not take advantage of our opportunities."

Wetzel completed 8 of 11 passes 84 yards, including a 2-yard second-quarter touchdown pass to Cory Wolfe that tied the game at 7-7. He had rushed for 39 yards in 8 carries.

"I hope that Ethan is O.K. and ready for the playoffs next week," Mueller said. "He brings a special energy to their team ... an energy that wasn't there the second half."

Koehler was 8-for-15 for 99 yards.

New Albany outgained Big Walnut 339-307, rushing for 221 yards in 34 carries. The Golden Eagles finished with 307 yards, 124 coming on the ground, led by Wolfe's 52 yards in 14 carries.

With Ethan Wetzel and Koehler's status uncertain, Big Walnut's postseason preparations are unsettled.

"We will know more Monday about Ethan and Garrett's status as far as they playoffs," coach Wetzel said.

The Golden Eagles also hope to have senior tight end Jared Suvak back from a knee injury. Suvak did not play against New Albany.

"We have to put this loss behind us and get ready for the postseason," coach Wetzel said. "We need to focus on ourselves and our first-round opponent ... but more importantly, we need to be ready to play next Friday (November 2) night."

Big Walnut opens with Rossford (6-4) in a Division III Regional quarterfinal game at 7:30 p.m. at Golden Eagle Stadium (see related story).

Ironically, Big Walnut has shared the OCC Capital championship the last two years with teams they defeated during the regular season. In 2006, the Golden Eagles shared the title with Watkins Memorial, a team they defeated 24-14 during the regular season. This season, Big Walnut defeated Liberty 24-7.

"That's ironic, to share the title two years in a row with a team you defeated during the regular season," coach Wetzel said.

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BIG WALNUT 21, WATKINS MEMORIAL 0

Golden Eagles blank Watkins for first shutout

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

PATASKALA — It was defense with a Capital "D".

In a battle of defending Capital Division co-champions, Big Walnut's defense stymied Watkins Memorial, allowing the Warriors to cross midfield only three times in a 21-0 victory Friday night. It was the Ohio Capital Conference opener for both teams.

The Warriors, who came into their Homecoming contest averaging 23 points per game, crossed midfield only three times, reached the Golden Eagle 38 twice before turning the ball over on downs in the second quarter and on a punt in the third quarter.

"You couldn't ask for much more out of our defense... they pitched a shutout against a team that is capable of putting points on the board," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said.

How solid was it? Watkins Memorial (3-3, 0-1 OCC), which

scored 40 against Fairfield Union and 35 against Mount Vernon earlier this season, rushed for only 45 yards in 20 plays. The bulk of their 154 yards came from senior quarterback Kevin Weber who completed 8 of 19 passes for 109 yards. Senior wide receiver Sam Gamertsfelder was the game's leading receiver with 4 catches for 72 yards.

"It was a solid defensive effort by our guys ... I couldn't have asked for much more," coach Wetzel added. "We came up with big plays when we needed them."

Offensively, state third-ranked Big Walnut (6-0, 1-0 OCC) managed only two scoring drives against an aggressive Watkins defense. Both series started on the Warriors' side of midfield following punts.

Senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel found senior tight end Jared Suvak on a slant over the middle for a 26-yard scoring strike just over three minutes into the second quarter. Andrew Dronsfield tacked on the point-after.

The 6-play, 40-yard series was set up by a short 22-yard Justin Warrington punt from the Watkins Memorial 18.

Big Walnut's second scoring drive, a 10-play, 49-yard third-quarter march, consumed better than four minutes as senior fullback Trevor Tutorow scored on fourth-down-and-one call from the three with 5:07 left in the period. Again Dronsfield was perfect on his point-after attempt for a 14-0 Golden Eagle lead.

The series started when Warrington was forced to punt from his own 14, a punt Ethan Wetzel returned 6 yards to the Big Walnut 49.

It was only fitting that the Big Walnut defense put an insurance score on the board in the final quarter. Ethan Wetzel picked off an overthrown Weber pass at the Golden Eagle 21 and returned it 79 yards for the score, diving into the end zone with 6:02 to play.

Dronsfield converted the extra points following a 15-yard unsports-

manlike conduct call on the Eagles, one of eight flags thrown on the visitors from Sunbury.

Those eight Big Walnut penalties, which totaled 70 yards, did not escape coach Wetzel's attention.

"Offensively, we kept shooting ourselves in the foot all evening," he said. "Penalties kept taking us out of our offensive rhythm ... and we deserved every one of them."

As did five fumbles.

"We kept putting the ball on the ground, and while we didn't turn the ball over on those fumbles, they disrupted our offense," coach Wetzel added. "We needed to control the ball and keep our defense off the field for longer periods of time."

Big Walnut totaled 265 yards in 65 plays against Watkins' defense. The Golden Eagles rushed for 174 yards in 47 carries, with Ethan Wetzel collecting 77 in 15 carries and senior running back Cory Wolfe 72 in 18 tries.

Ethan Wetzel (5-for-14 for 50

yards) and Garrett Koehler (3-for-4 for 41 yards) combined to complete 8 of 18 passes for 91 yards.

"Give credit to Watkins' defense," coach Wetzel said. "They always seem to play us tough, and we play it's always a battle ... this was OCC football at its best."

"It's always good to win on the road, especially in the OCC," he continued, noting that the Golden Eagles have only one road trip remaining on their regular-season schedule, an October 19 date at Franklin Heights. "Three of our final four games at home, and for us, that's a certainly a plus."

The Golden Eagles' final three home dates, all conference games, are with Dublin Scioto, Liberty and New Albany.

Big Walnut resumes its quest for the OCC Capital Division championship Friday night when the Golden Eagles play host to Scioto on Homecoming Night. Kickoff is 7:30 p.m.

BIG WALNUT 29, WESTERVILLE CENTRAL 22

State-ranked Eagles hold off Warhawks

Defense shuts down Warhawks late; Central's Buchanan boots 57-yard FG

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

WESTERVILLE — For the second week in a row, the Golden Eagle defense rode to the rescue.

Led by senior outside linebacker Mark Nelson, state-ranked Big Walnut stalled a promising Westerville Central drive as senior defensive back Joe Reed picked off a Keegan Varner pass at the Golden Eagle 40 to preserve a 29-22 victory here Friday night.

"Our defense came up big again tonight," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said after his club had won for the fifth time in five tries. "We knew coming in that Westerville Central would give us a battle ... we're just happy to get out of here with a win."

Big Walnut is ranked third in this week's Associated Press Division III poll behind Canal Fulton Northwest (5-0) and Cuyahoga Falls Walsh Jesuit (5-0) with three first-place votes.

Westerville Central, behind the strong, accurate right leg of senior kicker Ben Buchanan who kicked five field goals, including a school-record 57-yarder to give Central an early 3-0 lead, chased the Golden Eagles all night.

Senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel capped a 10-play, 67-yard march with a 6-yard run, a run capped by Wetzel's successful 2-point conversion pass to senior Jared Hogg, to give the Golden Eagles what seemed to be a comfortable 29-15 lead with 5:20 to play, the 0-5 Warhawks mounted a comeback.

On the first play following Josh Zeeb's kickoff, senior runningback Onesiaum Glass broke through the Big Walnut defense for a 71-yard scoring run to cut the Golden Eagle lead to 29-22 with 5:06 to play following Buchanan's successful point after.

Central's defense rose to the occasion following Glass' score as senior defensive end Tyler Stevenson sacked Wetzel for a 6-yard loss on a third-and-four call from the Big Walnut 35 bringing out senior punter Chris Franklin for his fourth punt of the night.

Gaining possession of the ball on their own 36, the Warhawks, with the aid of an anxious Nelson's offside penalty, moved to a first down at the Central 48

before the Golden Eagle defense slam-med the door.

Nelson responded by flushing Varner out of the pocket and holding the Warhawk quarterback to a 2-yard gain; senior defensive back Derek Jones held junior runningback Josh Wilson to a 4-yard gain; and Nelson sacked Varner for a 2-yard loss to set up Reed's game-ending interception.

"We didn't execute very well tonight ... and that's not to say we played a bad game," coach Wetzel said. "We made some poor decisions in our play-calling on first down which put us in long second-down counts, and that's my fault."

While Big Walnut put up big offensive numbers, totaling 20 first downs and 390 yards in total offense, the Golden Eagles drew 10 penalties totaling 90 yards.

"We weren't quite as sharp tonight as we were in our first four games, and I think part of that rests with our effort against Olen tangy last week," coach Wetzel said. "It took us to Tuesday or Wednesday to bounce back ... and it's tough getting up for an 0-4 team after playing an Olen tangy."

For the Golden Eagles statistically, Wolfe finished with 105 yards in 14 carries while Wetzel Ethan totaled 116 yards in 19 carries. Wetzel completed 5 of 13 passes for 66 yards.

Big Walnut took a 7-3 lead late in the opening period as Ethan Wetzel capped a 10-play, 53 yards march on a 4-yard run with 2:33 lead in the first period. Andy Dronsfield kicked the first of his three extra point tries.

The Golden Eagles extended their lead to 14-3 as senior runningback Nic Hampton broke free on a 47-yard scoring run 47 seconds into the second period.

Senior runningback Trevor Tutorow offset two Buchanan field goals with a 6-yard touchdown run with 7:49 led in the third quarter before the Warhawks made things interesting in the final frame.

"Westerville Central is a very good offensive football team that has speed out of the backfield in Glass," coach Wetzel said, noting the Warhawks piled up 400 yards in total offense against Liberty earlier this season. "And with a kicker like



Photos Lenny C. Lepola

Big Walnut defender Chris Franklin (62) pressures Westerville Central quarterback Keegan Varner during the first half Friday night at Westerville (above). The Eagles' Trevor Tutorow runs to the outside (below).



Buchanan, once they cross the 50, they are capable of scoring."

Glass rushed for 190 yards in 26 carries. The Warhawks totaled 215 on the ground as a team. Varner completed nine of 25 passes for 87 yards.

After his school-record 57-yard field goal, Buchanan followed with kicks of 29, 44, 46 and 41 yards, missing a 60-yard

try that sailed under the cross bar late in third quarter.

"It wouldn't surprise me to see Westerville Central challenge for the championship in their division (Central) of the Ohio Capital Conference," Wetzel predicted. "They certainly have the talent."

Big Walnut opens Ohio Capital Conference Capital

CRUISE

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

score came on Chandler's 17-yard touchdown pass to junior running back Kyle Powell with 11:16 left in the second period.

The two teams swapped second-half touchdowns, Nick Hampton and Wolfe scoring on a pair of 1-yard scoring runs for the Golden Eagles. For the Falcons, Chandler opened the second half with a 3-yard touchdown run and sophomore running back Caleb Quinn on a 15-yard run.

Chandler threw for 108 yards in the second half to lead as the Falcons piled up 211 yards in total offense in the second half.

"They gave New Albany they wanted in a 35-32 loss and played a solid game in a 28-24 loss to Watkins Memorial," coach Wetzel said. "You can see that they have the potential to score in a hurry."

The 26-point margin of victory enable coach Wetzel to utilize his bench.


"It gave us the opportunity to give some of our seniors who hadn't received as much playing time as we would have liked to get into the game for some meaningful minutes," coach Wetzel said. "And some of our younger kids also saw some playing time late in the game."

Big Walnut, which has scored 40 or more points four times this season, posted a season-high 44 points, totaling 340 yards and 17 first downs in 52 plays.

Wolfe, who finished with three scores, totaled 119 yards, rushing for 94 yards in 15 carries to go with his 25-yard scoring reception. Ethan Wetzel, who played less than two quarters, totaled 116 yards in total offense, completing 5 of 7 passes for 69 yards and rushing for another 47 in 6 carries.

Chandler was a one-man offense for the Falcons, completing 16 of 26 passes for 160 yards. Sophomore running back Jon Parks came off the bench to rush for 35 yards in 4 carries. The Falcons finished with 211 yards and 17 first downs in 46 plays.


Big Walnut, 10-0 in both 2001 and 2003, will bid for its third undefeated regular season in the past seven years when the Golden Eagles close out their 2007 slate with New Albany (6-3, 2-2) at home Friday night. Game time is 7:30 p.m.



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Big Walnut wins nail-biter over Olentangy

Nelson denies Stevens' 2-point conversion try to preserve win

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

SUNBURY — The Golden Eagles proved they could win the close games.

After winning its first three games by an average margin of 32 points, Big Walnut held off a second-half Olentangy surge to slip away with a 14-12 victory in front of a standing-room-only gathering Friday night at Golden Eagle Stadium.

Leading 14-0 at the half, Big Walnut watched the Braves mount a second-half comeback that had the Golden Eagles clinging to the slim two-point advantage.

Olentangy (2-2), behind the hard-nosed running of Michigan State-bound senior fullback Drew Stevens, posted two second-half scores while shutting down the Golden Eagles.

Senior quarterback Michael Duffy's one-yard sneak with 25 seconds to play cut the Braves' deficit to 14-12 and sent Stevens on the field for the two-point conversion try. Duffy handed off to Stevens who slanted to the outside, but he was met head on by 6-2, 210-pound senior linebacker Mark Nelson before he could cut towards the end zone for the tie.

"Nelson made a great play,"



Lenny C. Lepola

Big Walnut quarterback Ethan Wetzel (12) slides past Olentangy linebacker Chad Pepper (47) during the first half Friday night at Golden Eagle Stadium. Wetzel rushed for 58 yards and one touchdown while throwing a 14-yard scoring strike to Andy Dronsfield to give BW a 14-0 halftime lead in an eventual 14-12 victory over the Braves.

Olentangy head coach Ed Terwilliger said. "We came out in an unbalanced line to give their defense a different look, but he read the play and made the hit on Drew short of the goal line."

"I kept telling Mark all week that this was going to be his night," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said of his

game captain. "He read their two-point conversion play, knifed to the outside and made the hit on Stevens ... that play just might earn him the Player of the Week award."

Stevens, who finished with 194 yards in 28 attempts, carried the Braves in the second half as the 6-foot-3, 215-pounder rushed for 135 yards

and one touchdown in 18 carries. Stevens' score came on a 6-yard run with 8:04 left in the third period. Placekicker Sean Moritz' point after try was blocked by Joe Reed.

"We couldn't stop Stevens the second half," coach Wetzel said. "They ran the ball at will."

Wetzel was quick to point

out Chris Franklin's punt that set up the final Olentangy scoring drive, a punt that pinned the Braves back on their own 18 with 6:24 to play and forced Olentangy to drive 82 yards.

"Chris's punt forced Olentangy not only to eat up the clock, but to use all their timeouts as well," coach Wetzel noted. "That turned out to be a big play."

Big Walnut (4-0), ending a three-game losing streak at the hands of the Braves, struck for two second-quarter scores to take a 14-0 lead into the intermission.

The Golden Eagles first score was set up by a Stevens fumble at the Big Walnut 4, a fumble Nelson recovered and appeared to return for a 96-yard touchdown, but the Golden Eagles were whistled for an illegal block, putting the ball on the Golden Eagle 45. Eleven plays later quarterback Ethan Wetzel scored from a yard out with 5:20 left in the second period.

Following an Olentangy punt with 3:06 remaining in the opening half, Big Walnut embarked on a 9-play, 50-yard series that ended as Wetzel rifled the ball between two Olentangy defenders for a 14-yard scoring strike to senior tight end Jared Suvak with :17.1 seconds left until intermission.

Senior placekicker Andrew Dronsfield tacked on both point-after conversions.

"Give Big Walnut credit, they made more plays than we did," Terwilliger said. "We had our opportunities ... we just

were unable to convert."

In addition to the blocked PAT and Stevens' fumble on the Big Walnut 4, Moritz also missed a 39-yard field goal that had the distance but sailed wide left 11 seconds into the third quarter.

"We were a young team when we opened the season four weeks ago, but tonight we show the mettle of a veteran team," Terwilliger said. "There was no quit in us in the second half. We battled back and put ourselves in a position to win this game ... we have no reason to hand out heads."

Led by Stevens, Olentangy totaled 358 yards and 22 first downs in total offense. Duffy was 10-for-14 passing for 115 yards. Senior wide receiver Nicholas McVay had 3 catches for 52 yards.

Big Walnut finished with 222 yards and 14 first downs. Wetzel was 11-for-17 passing for 128 yards and rushed for 58 yards in 17 carries. Senior running back Cory Wolfe added 34 yards in 13 carries. Reed had four receptions for 29 yards.

Coach Wetzel, in summing the game up, said "I don't think Ed or I would have it either way ... this is a great rivalry between two fine high school football programs."

Both teams return to action next Friday night, Olentangy returning home to entertain Marysville while Big Walnut hits the road to tangle with the Warhawks at Westerville Central in a pair of 7:30 p.m. non-conference contests.

BW routs Chillicothe 43-7 for third straight victory

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

CHILICOTHE — In spite of the long bus ride, the Golden Eagles hit the ground running Friday night at Herrmstein Field.

Big Walnut's smothering defense, led by the linebacking duo of senior Jared Suvak and junior Will Studien, dominated Chillicothe's line on both sides of the ball in leading the unbeaten (3-0) Golden Eagles to a 43-7 non-conference victory.

The Cavaliers' first possession of the game set the tone for the rest of the night for Big Walnut.

After Zach Ray picked up six yards on the ground to open the Cavs' first drive, Caleb Knights fired a screen pass to the sideline on second down that bounced off its target and right into the hands of Eagles' defender Derek Jones.

Starting at the Cavaliers' 36 after the pick, Big Walnut needed just seven plays to put its first touchdown on the board as tailback Cory Wolfe blasted in from one yard out.

"They (Chillicothe) had lost two close games and once they threw the interception and we scored, you could just see the wind go on their sails," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said. "And that's not to overlook the effort of our defense ... our defense played really well."

Chillicothe's next three possessions started from its own 18, 10 and 29 yard lines. None of the drives lasted more than three plays and each ended in a punt.

During that span, the Golden Eagles added two more touchdowns — a 5-yard run by Wolfe with 11:53 left in the second quarter and a 1-yard run by quarterback Ethan Wetzel with 7:49 left in the second — to pull ahead 21-0.

The Cavaliers did not pick up a single first down until the 7-minute mark of the second quarter when Ron Smith busted free for an 11-yard gain — which would be the Cavs' second-longest offensive play.

As the first half came to a close, Big Walnut scored again as Wetzel sprinted in from seven yards out as the Golden Eagles took a 28-0 lead into the half.

Big Walnut added two second half touchdowns, a 1-yard run by Wolfe and a 2-yard run by backup quarterback Garrett Koehler to go with a late safety.

Wolfe led Big Walnut with 108 yards in 18 carries. Nick Hampton added 47 in 8 attempts and Wetzel 44 yards in 7 rushes, including a pair of second-quarter scoring runs. Wetzel was 5-for-7 passing for 81 yards.

"Cory has his most impressive game of the season with his 18 carries ... that's a lot for him," coach Wetzel said. "But that's the kind of effort we are going to need from Cory as we go deeper into the season."

"I thought we played hard. It wasn't a lack of effort," Chillicothe coach Bill Davidson said. "That team's just better than we are."

The Eagles held Chillicothe to 54 yards of total offense, including a very uncharacteristic 6-of-15 passing for just 13 yards out of Cavs' All-Ohio quarterback Caleb Knights.

Coach Wetzel praised his second-tram offense.

"Our second team took possession of the ball on our 20 and put put together a seven-and-one-half minute drive to the Chillicothe 10 to run the clock out," the BW coach said. "that was the most impressive thing I saw all night."

Chillicothe, trailing 34-0 late in the third quarter following

Wolfe's third touchdown run, the Cavaliers found the scoreboard when Nathan "Juice" Woodworth blocked a Big Walnut punt and covered it in the end zone.

Other than that, there wasn't much for Chillicothe to celebrate.

Knights threw for nearly 300 yards a week ago against Logan, but the long passes weren't there against the Eagles while the short passes seemed to get swallowed up as soon as they were completed.

The running game was nearly non-existent Friday as Ray took a beating, carrying the ball eight times for 13 yards. Smith led the team on the ground, gaining 17 yards on three tries.

"If we played Brookhaven 10 times, we might win three or four of them. I still don't think Logan's that much better than us. They're better, but I don't think they're that much better," Davidson said of Chillicothe's first two non-league opponents. "But this team, yeah, we could play them a bunch of times and I don't know that the result would be a whole lot different. They're very physical. They're very fast. They're very disciplined. They execute everything very well. They're just a heck of a football team."

Despite their 3-0 start, coach Wetzel said the Golden Eagles still have their work ahead of them when it comes to returning to the playoffs.

"We're in a situation where the teams we are beating are not winning," coach Wetzel said. "That makes our road to the playoffs a little different in that we have our work cut for us. I hate to look that far down the road, but seven wins may not do it for us as far as the playoffs this season."

Golden Eagles' 482-yard night flattens the Pacers

Wetzel collects 300 yards in offense, scores three times

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

SUNBURY — The numbers don't always tell the story ...

Delaware Hayes' offense put up some good offensive numbers and came away with three interceptions against Big Walnut Friday night, but finished on the short end of a 40-15 score at Golden Eagle Stadium Friday night in Sunbury.

But in the end, the numbers favored the Golden Eagles as senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel engineered an offensive attack that produced six touchdowns and 482 yards in total offense.

"We spent the week watching films and had a pretty good idea what Delaware's scheme would be," the Golden Eagle quarterback said. "And we were able to take advantage of what they were giving us."

Wetzel took full advantage, scoring on runs of 60, 3 and 19 yards as he rushed for 150 yards in 11 carries. He also completed 12 of 15 passes for 150 yards, including a 21-yard scoring strike to senior split end Nick Heiden. Senior split end Joe Reed was on the receiving end of six passes for 94 yards.

"They were taking away our inside trap and counter and that pretty much opened up the outside to both run and pass," Wetzel said. "Our line did a great job opening up holes."

After Delaware had taken a 6-0 lead on quarterback Taylor Wood's 2-yard scoring



Lenny C. Lepola

Big Walnut wide receiver Joey Reed heads down the home sideline after hauling in a pass from quarterback Ethan Wetzel Friday night. Reed had six catches for 94 yards.

run at the 7:18 mark of the opening quarter, Big Walnut (2-0) answered with two quick scores. Wetzel broke two tackles on a 60-yard scoring scamper at 6:59 and came back six minutes later with a 3-yard scoring run with 14.5 seconds left in the period.

Hayes' head coach Jamie Masi was disappointed in the Pacers' inability to contain The Golden Eagles.

"We knew what to expect from Big Walnut and we had our defensive schemes in place to make plays, but we could not finish," he said.

He pointed to Wetzel's 60-yard scoring run as an example.

"We had a corner and linebacker on Wetzel, but he was able to break free and score," Masi continued. "But the

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Golden Eagles rout Cardinals, 41-6

Big Walnut strikes early with two touchdowns in first three minutes

By GARY HENERY
Sports Writer

WORTHINGTON — Talk about getting out of the gate early.

Big Walnut took advantage of two Thomas Worthington mistakes in the first three minutes to grab an early 14-0 lead and cruise to a season-opening 41-6 victory over the Cardinals Friday night.

The Golden Eagles scored 62 seconds into the game following defensive back Joey Reed's recovery of quarterback Brett Hoffman's fumble at Worthington's 27-yard line. On the second play following Reed's recovery, senior quarterback Ethan Wetzel found senior split end Derek Jones on a 23-yard scoring strike on Big Walnut's second play of the game.

Big Walnut took its 14-point lead 61 seconds later as senior defensive back Reed picked off a Brett Hoffman pass and returned it 36 yards for a score with 8:53 still to play in the opening period.

"Our defense set the tone for us," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said. "I think Thomas Worthington wanted to get out to an early lead and force us to play from behind, but wound up turning the ball over ... you could see them lose some of their edge after we went up 14-0."

"We wanted to be the team that jumped out early," Cardinal first-year head coach Scott Gordon said. "Instead, we wound up turning the ball over at our end of the field and fell behind early ... give Big Walnut credit, like all good teams, they took advantage of our mistakes."

On the Golden Eagles' quick start, Reed reflected on last season when the Golden Eagle had trouble getting out of the gate.

"One of our goals this season is to come out and take control of the game early," he said. "The only problem was that the offense wondered if the defense was ever going to give us the opportunity to play."

Big Walnut's offense, which piled up 2346 yards and 20 first



Golden Eagles fans celebrate at the season opener.

downs in 58 snaps, had plenty of opportunities.

Opening up a 28-0 lead after three quarters, Ethan Wetzel, who was 6-for-7 pass-

ing for 72 yards and two scores, tossed a 16-yard scoring pass to senior running back Corey Wolfe in the third period. Wetzel who rushed for 44

yards in 10 carries made in 28-0 with a 15-yard scoring run to open the third period.

The Golden Eagles closed out the scoring in the fourth

quarter as backup quarterback Garrett Koehler scored on a sneak from a yard out. Wolfe, who was the game's leading rusher with 81 yards in 15 carries, scored on a 6-yard run with 7:48 to play.

"Corey ran the ball very well," coach Wetzel said of his 6-foot, 195-pound senior running back. "I was a little concerned because Corey is not a hot-weather athlete, but he ran the ball well tonight."

Senior place kicker Andrew Dronsfield converted six of seven point-after tries.

Big Walnut's defense limited held Thomas Worthington to negative yardage until the fourth quarter when the Cardinals scored their lone touchdown, collecting 74 of their yards in the fourth quarter after being held to a minus 1-yard over the first three periods.

"Our defense shut down an offensive unit that has some nice athletes," coach Wetzel offered. "Chris (Franklin), Mark (Nelson), Will (Studien) and Logan (Mead) did a good job pressuring their quarterbacks who were a combined 9-for-18 for 69 yards."

For Big Walnut's seniors, the victory gave them closure with Thomas Worthington. The seniors' lone loss in their seventh-grade, eighth-grade and freshman seasons came at the hands of the Cardinals, a 9-6 loss on a late field goal to the Cardinals.

"We talked about it just before the game ... it was definitely foremost in our minds," Reed said. "We knew this would be our last opportunity to play Thomas Worthington, and we wanted to take full advantage of it."

And that they did. Big Walnut returns home to entertain county foe Delaware Hayes on Wall of Fame Night Friday at 7:30 p.m. Golden Eagle Stadium. The Pacers opened their season last Friday night with a 48-6 victory over Mt. Gilead.

Rollie DeLong, Courtney Stelzer and Howard Bricker will be formally inducted in the Wall of Fame at ceremonies beginning at 7 p.m.



Photos Lenny C. Lepola

At left, Big Walnut defenders Ethan Wetzel (12) and Logan Mead (6-3) close in on Thomas Worthington running back Alan Juckett (3) during the first half of Friday night's season opener. Above, Golden Eagle running back Cory Wolfe (31) looks for a block from teammate Derek Jones for an opening-half gain. Wolfe rushed for 81 yards in 15 carries.

FLATTENS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

blame rests on us as coaches, not the players ... we need to have the kids ready to make those plays."

Hayes (1-1) made it 14-9 midway through the second quarter on Evan Shaw's 20-yard field goal with 6:48 left in the half, but that was the last time the Pacers would score until the final quarter when Wood hit senior Cody Dalga with a 42-yard scoring strike with 7:56 to play.

Wood was 11-for-20 for 120 yards. Dalga was on the receiving end of four Wood tosses for 117 yards. Senior running back Stan Gibson rushed for 77 yards in 6 carries to lead the Pacers on the ground.

In between Delaware's field goal and final touchdown, Big Walnut scored four unanswered touchdowns.

Senior running back Trevor Tutorow scored on a 5-yard run to make it 21-9 following Shaw's field goal. Wetzel and junior split end Nick Heiden connected on a 21-yard scoring strike to end the Golden Eagles into the break with a 28-9 lead.

The Golden Eagles put the game out of reach with two early second-half scores. Wetzel capped an 8-play, 72-yard drive with a 19-yard scoring run with 7:49 left in the third period. On the following series, senior running back Cory Wolfe broke free on a 47-yard scoring run at the 4:31 mark.

Wolfe rushed for 79 yards in 11

carries. Big Walnut finished with 345 yards in 40 rushing attempts.

"We lost to a good football team tonight," Big Walnut head coach Scott Wetzel said. "They came in with a good game plan, and they caught us by surprise on a couple of occasions."

The Big Walnut coach said the Golden Eagles still have some things to work on.

"We can't get overly excited about our start," Wetzel noted. "We still have some things to work on before we get to where we need to be, but I'm pleased with our effort so far. We're getting our second group playing time, and that's something we weren't able to do last season."

In spite of Delaware's defensive breakdowns, the Pacers' defensive unit set up both Delaware touchdowns last night. Junior Jacob Nicol picked off Wetzel at the Delaware 40 in the opening period to set up Wood's scoring run. Junior Calvin Turner came up with a Garrett Koehler pass early in the final quarter, an interception that led to Dalga's touchdown.

At times, we executed on defense, there were times we didn't," Masi said. "This game was a learning experience for us, a tough experience, but one that will make us a better football team," Masi said. "We know what we have to work on ... and we will start with practice Monday."

Big Walnut has the road next week, traveling south to Chillicothe to take on the Cavaliers in a 7:30 p.m. non-conference contest. Hayes returns home to entertain Olentangy at 7:30 p.m.

AWARDS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

"Will was voted the best defensive player in both the district and the State ... I think that says it all," coach Wetzel said. "He had a terrific season and, the best part, he will be back next year."

Ethan Wetzel, the Golden Eagles' starting quarterback-roverback who was tapped the Player of the Year in the OCC Capital, was selected the squad's Most valuable player on offense. Wetzel joined Studien on the AP All-District and All-Ohio first team defense.

"Ethan was a 1,000-yard rusher (1,132 yards) and a 1,000-yard passer (1,234), the first time in school history that any player has accomplished that feat," coach Wetzel said. "He was a big-time playmaker for us this season."

Williams, Big Walnut's starting right offensive tackle, was the recipient of the Outstanding Lineman Award. Smith, getting the starting nod opposite Williams at left tackle, earned the Most Improved Player Award. Williams was an honorable mention All-OCC selection.

"This was a near unanimous vote by his teammates. Chad's performance in the playoffs was huge for us," coach Wetzel offered. "Jon moved up to the varsity after playing JV ball as a sophomore, started all 15 games for us and played a key role in our success."

Wolfe, who lined up behind Wetzel at tailback, and Koehler, the squad's backup quarterback, shared the prestigious Golden Eagle Award. Wolfe was second-team All-OCC and All-District.

"Cory and Garrett displayed all the attributes of the Golden Eagle Award ... academics, athletics, dedication," coach Wetzel said. "As a coach, you would

love to have a roster loaded with players with their qualities."

Koehler was also recognized as an OCC Scholar Athlete, and an honor that goes to a senior athlete that carries a 3.50 or higher grade point average.

Yarnell, who will be remembered for his touchdown-saving tackle against Monroe in the state semifinals at Lima, was singled out for the 12th Man Award.

"Alex was great on special teams, especially in the playoffs," coach Wetzel said. "He was always in a position to make plays when we needed them most."

Freshman Nick Keller was the recipient of the Brett Stelzer Memorial Award.

Postseason recognition also went to four members of the squad, including senior flanker-safety Joe Reed, first-team All-OCC, first team defense All-District and Special Mention All-Ohio; senior tight end-defensive end Jared Suvak, first-team All-OCC and second team offense All-District; senior outside linebacker Mark Nelson, first-team All-OCC and second team defense All-District; and senior cornerback Derek Jones, first-team All-OCC and special mention All-District.

Earning second-team All-OCC recognition were senior center Shane Hubbard, senior wide receiver Jared Hogg, junior cornerback Nick Heiden and junior tackle Kalven Baer.

Twenty seniors, the heart-and-soul of Big Walnut's championship squad, were awarded varsity letters. Four-year Varsity Blankets went to Suvak and Ethan Wetzel. Third-year letters went to Chris Franklin, Nick Hampton, Zach Rife, Chuck Thompson, Trevor Tutorow, Anthony Zarcone, Hogg, Hubbard, Jones, Koehler, Nelson, Reed, Williams, Wolfe and Yarnell. First-year varsity letters were awarded to Ousmane Bangoura, Andrew Dronsfield and Josh

Zeeb.

Senior plaques were presented to Dronsfield, Franklin, Hampton, Hogg, Hubbard, Jones, Koehler, Nelson, Reed, Rife, Suvak, Thompson, Tutorow, Wetzel, Williams, Wolfe, Yarnell, Zarcone and Zeeb.

"This team was more than about our seniors," coach Wetzel said. "Our success revolved around all 72 players on the roster from our starters down to our scout teams ... one player's success was the result of contributions by every member of the team."

Juniors earning varsity letters included second-year letter recipients Kalven Baer, Patrick Daugherty, Jacob Deltedesco, Bryan Dillon, Colton Griffin, Nick Heiden, Logan Mead, Nathan Scarbury and Studien. First-year letterwinners were Jordan Dewitt, Philip Gaulin, Travis Mead, Joshua Pace, Shane Trotter and Smith.

Twelve sophomores received their first varsity letter, including Bradley Beltram, Buddy Carrel, Andrew Curtis, Mitchell Daily, Seth Dunn, Steven Hobart, Peter Isbell, Cody Leitner, Jacob Little, Bret Myers, Jon Norman and Zach Shryock.

Junior varsity awards were presented to juniors Andrew Fox, Kyle Guthrie, Will Hernandez, Stephen Hubbard, Cory Johnson, Bradley Mays, James Rinella and Jeremy Taylor; sophomores Andrew Billard, John Cannell, Tyler Fielding, Micheal Foley, Garret Franta, Ryan Gerren, Ryan Hardy, Colton Hubbard, Zachary Mathews, Steven McDaniel, Joseph Millsbaugh, Tyler Piper, Nathaniel Taylor, Cody Walters and David Zitello; and freshmen Gage Carlisle, Tyler Fifer and Nicholas Velaquez.

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