

Newman Coach Wants to Bring Back NCS Title Game

September 30, 2005

Montgomery's 21-18 comeback win Saturday over the Bay Area's sixth-ranked football team, Casa Grande (2-1), extended the Vikings' winning streak to 16 games. Montgomery (3-0) last lost on Nov. 21, 1993, a 29-18 Redwood Empire 3A playoff defeat at the hands of Analy, which underscores the question: Why aren't North Bay schools competing against their East Bay counterparts in the North Coast Section championships, like they once did?

"It robs our kids of a chance to see how good they are," said Cardinal Newman coach Paul Cronin. "Last year, you had a great Montgomery team (13-0), and they should have had a chance to play a great East Bay 3A team like San

Ramon Valley, who went 11-2 and beat Las Lomas for the 3A East Bay championship.

"They need to reevaluate it," he said. "We have 12 teams (in the Redwood Empire 3A class), and for the playoffs we eliminate four. We play our schedule, and then we just recycle opponents."

In 1996, under the original NCS playoff system, Montgomery defeated Amador Valley of Pleasanton at the Oakland Coliseum for the 3A title. The next year, a decision was made to split the Redwood Empire and East Bay into separate conferences, each with its own playoffs and championships.

"It was done by a recommendation of the league commissioners," said NCS associate commissioner Gil Lemmon. "They felt because of the distance that the playoff crowds were small. The gate was lower, and you didn't have a championship atmosphere."

"You could have a four-team playoff here, and then play the winner of the same thing in the

East Bay. That would be an option," Cronin said.

"We've had close to 10 different proposals over the last few years that for one reason or another have not passed," Lemmon said. "We have another one on the table in December."

Currently there are 13 leagues that make up the NCS, and each league has two representatives. For a new proposal to be approved, 14 of the 26 league representatives need to support it, which so far has not happened.

"There is a strong opinion that when we went to seeding meetings in the past, we (Redwood Empire schools) got looked over," Cronin said. "My view is you need to schedule your preseason to be the best it can."

The Cardinals enter tomorrow's NBL opener at Montgomery a deceptive 1-2 after three high-quality nonleague games. Last Friday night, Newman, with an enrollment of just over 400, nearly knocked off 2004 East Bay 4A

semifinalist James Logan, a 4,200-student school, losing 20-16.

"We were up 16-13, and we had the ball and we were driving," Cronin said. "We were in control. Our center got dinged in the head and had to come out. The second snap with our backup center we had an exchange problem, and we fumbled at their 15 with 3:30 left. Then they (Logan) put together a big-time drive."

Newman was ruled ineligible for NCS postseason play last year because of an alleged infraction regarding transfer running back Marty Ponzio. In their final league game, the Cardinals had a chance to knock off Montgomery and claim the NBL title, only to lose on Jon Colgan's 54-yard "hail Mary" touchdown pass to Marcus Ezeff with two seconds left.

"Our challenge this year is to see how quickly we can get good," Cronin said. "Our junior class is extremely talented, but we only have five returning starters."

The Cardinal's offensive line coach is Keith Dorney, who was an offensive tackle at Penn State in the 1970s and was recently voted to the College Football Hall of Fame. Dorney went on to play nine years for the Detroit Lions. Helping with the quarterbacks, in an unofficial capacity, is none other than Joe Montana.

"All the coaches really like him, and the kids obviously respond," Cronin said. "But the truth is, the kids will think about who you are for about 10 seconds -- after that, you are a teacher. They get used to the person, as opposed to what he accomplished. He (Montana) is a really nice guy, really down to earth."

SRJC on fire: The Santa Rosa Junior College Bear Cubs, who have led the nation in passing yardage four of the last six seasons, surprised even themselves last Saturday in Eureka. In a non-conference game against College of the Redwoods, SRJC scored five touchdowns on its first 15 plays en route to a 48-point first quarter, which may be a junior college record.

The statistical database is incomplete, according to Hank Ives of JC Gridwire, but it is "highly probable," he said, that the Bear Cubs are the first team ever to score 48 points in a quarter.

"Coach Simons and I were on the headsets saying, 'Can you believe what we are watching?'" receivers coach Matt Collins said.

Starting quarterback Ian Hetrick enjoyed a first quarter most athletes can only dream of, completing 15 of 21 passes for 295 yards and five TDs.

SRJC travels to Stockton on Saturday to take on Delta College. Through four games this season, the Bear Cubs have outscored opponents 211-7.

Tonight's top football games in the Sonoma County League:

-- Windsor at Healdsburg, 7:30. Both teams enter tonight's league opener 3-0 with potent

offenses. Windsor is averaging 35 points a game, while the Greyhounds average 43.

-- Analy at Casa Grande, 7:30. Analy (2-1) was overwhelmed by Mitty but beat up on Piner and Santa Rosa. The Gauchos (2-1) look to rebound after being out-willed in the closing minutes by Montgomery.

-- St. Mary's (Berkeley) at Petaluma, 7:30. The Panthers, out of the Bay Shore League, are 2-1. Petaluma (2-0-1) looked sloppy last Friday against Rancho Cotate in a tie.

Tonight's top games, Marin County League:

Marin Catholic at Terra Linda, 7:30. The Wildcats (2-2) lost close games to Archbishop Murphy (Everett, Wash.) and St. Ignatius. Terra Linda is a surprising 3-0, including a win over Mission San Jose.

Saturday's North Bay League: Cardinal Newman (1-2) at Montgomery (3-0), 1 p.m.

Ukiah at Piner, 1 p.m. Both teams are 1-2 but coming off wins, Ukiah against Eureka and Piner over previously unbeaten El Molino.

-by Ted Gross

[Articles](#)