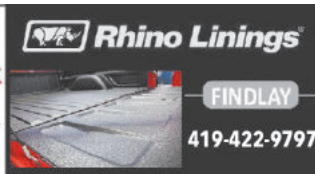


SPORTS



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FRIDAY'S GRIDIRON TOP GUNS

BEN IRELAND
FINDLAY

6 receptions, 107 yards, 3 TDs including game-winner

QUIN SCHROEDER
LEIPSIC

135 yards receiving, 38 yards passing, 3 TDs

ANDREW SWISHER
MCCOMB

99 yards rushing, 2 TDs



Northwest Ohio Orthopedics & Sports Medicine, Inc.

419-427-1984

7595 CR 236, Findlay www.nwomedicine.com

'Players make plays'

Findlay's Ireland comes up big against St. Francis

By DAVE HANNEMAN
DAVEHANNEMAN@THECOURIER.COM

Stefan Adams told Ben Ireland to go make a play. Ireland went one better. He made two, and sent Findlay High home a winner in the process.

Ireland scored the game-tying touchdown in Friday's Three Rivers Athletic Conference game with Toledo St. Francis, with 2:58 on the clock, snaring a tipped pass as he fell to his back in the end zone with 2:59 left in the fourth quarter.

He hauled in the game-winner as well, leaping between two Toledo St. Francis to haul in a 41-bomb from Ryan Montgomery with 33 seconds on the clock.

Kam Stagnoli's second interception on the final play

of the game sealed it as Findlay overcame some costly penalties, some dropped passes, some defensive lapses and some sluggish offensive drives to improve to 4-3 overall and even off at 2-2 in the TRAC. St. Francis, which had matched Findlay win for win and loss for loss each week of the season, fell to 3-4, 1-3.

"We know we're better than this standard," Adams said.

"There are things I am not okay with; things I know we can do better. But we showed resolve and we showed grit, and for those things I am extremely happy."

St. Francis led 21-7 with four minutes left in the first half and 28-14 three minutes into the third quarter when Knights' quarterback Denim



KENT TARBOX / for The Courier

BEN IRELAND BREAKS away from a pair of St. Francis defenders Friday in Findlay.

Truss (27-49 passing, 293 yards 4 TDs) hooked up with Trey Talboo (11 receptions, 114 yards, 3 TDs) on

touchdown passes covering 6, 6 and 34 yards.

Findlay seemed snake bit from the start.

The Trojans could not get the handle on a bounce-

See **PLAYS, B4**

Bailey, Swisher make big plays as McComb shuts out Arlington

By ZACH BAKER
ZACHBAKER@THECOURIER.COM

MCCOMB - It took some time for McComb's offense to get rolling against Arlington Friday.

It actually took more than three quarters.

The Blanchard Valley Conference rivals were locked in a defensive struggle. By the time the fourth quarter rolled around, the contest was still scoreless; each offense had only one possession move inside the opponent's 20.

But McComb got a break late in the third quarter. Ka'Von Bailey, one of the area's most dynamic players who was shut down on offense, intercepted a pass by the Red Devils' Jared Griggs, and returned it to his own 33.

When the fourth quarter started, McComb faced a second down and eight from the 35.

The passing game had been ineffective; the Panthers only had 22 yards through the air. If McComb was going to take over, coach Kris Alge decided, it was going to have to move the ball - and some Arlington defenders - with the ground game.

"We moved them when we had to,"



MATTHIAS LEGUIRE / for The Courier

MCCOMB'S ANDREW SWISHER (17) stiff arms Arlington's Grant Riegler (11) getting a few more yards.

he said.

Indeed.

McComb had a pair of offensive possessions in the fourth quarter Friday, and ran 20 plays.

The Panthers rushed the ball on all 20 plays. Andrew Swisher finished with two touchdowns, and McComb moved to 6-1, 4-0 in the BVC with a 14-0 win.

See **MCCOMB, B2**

Leipsic scores 21 second-half points to knock off Bluffton

By DYLAN FRAZIER
DYLANFRAZIER@THECOURIER.COM

BLUFFTON - A week ago, Leipsic saw an 18-point lead over NWC leader Columbus Grove turn into a heartbreaking defeat.

This week, it was clear that was on the Vikings' minds.

"We couldn't let Columbus Grove beat us twice - we couldn't let the loss from last week affect things," Leipsic coach Joe Kirkendall said. "It took us some time to get over it and it was a concern of mine."

Through the first 24 minutes, it looked evident it bothered them as the Vikings turned the ball over two times and were getting stuffed on the line in the first half.

Still, even with it all going wrong, the Vikings were up 7-6 over Bluffton going into halftime.

"We thought we were in a great position to win the game, but we didn't capitalize on some of those turnovers we created," Bluffton coach Jeff Richards said.

And what bit them in the first half, propelled them in the second.

Leipsic used a key turnover and stellar second halves from Dillan Niese and Quin Schroeder to knock off Bluff-

ton, 28-14.

With the win, Leipsic

moves to 4-3 (3-1 NWC), while Bluffton falls to 4-3 (1-3 NWC).

"We made some mental mistakes in the second half," Richards said. "In high school football, you can't afford to make mistakes like that."

Near the end of the third quarter, it was still 7-6 Vikings with 45 seconds left to go.

That's when Dillan Niese, on fourth down, tossed a back-of-the-end-zone dime to Schroeder for a 6-yard touchdown to make it 14-6.

Then just 11 seconds later, it was 21-6 Vikings.

On the ensuing kick, Bluffton's Beau Stever fumbled, and the ball was recovered by the Vikings. On the very next play, Niese (241 yards passing, 4 TDs) found Trent Siefker for a 22-yard touchdown with 31 seconds left in the third.

"When you get turnovers - and they killed us momentum-wise in the first half because we had a great drive going and we start the game off with a turnover," Kirkendall said.

"We talk about it all the time that you have to convert those turnovers into points, and we don't always go for

See **LEIPSIC, B3**

Oliver sets Elmwood rushing record again, in stunner over Eastwood

By JEREMY SPEER
JSPEER@ADVERTISER-TRIBUNE.COM

BLOOMDALE - Mason Oliver already held the single-game rushing record for Elmwood with his 347 yards earlier this season against Van Buren.

It was going to take a performance like that again to knock off Eastwood, ranked eighth in Division V by The Associated Press.

Not only did Oliver carry the Royals to a win, but he broke his record with 355 yards rushing and five touchdowns in the 56-49 win over Eastwood.

It was Elmwood's first victory over the Eagles in 20 years.

"This will go down as a great program win for us," said Elmwood coach Greg Bishop. "That was a fun high school football game. That's what it's all about."

The Eagles came into this game outscoring their opponents 278-47.

On this night, a dominant



JEREMY SPEER / The Courier

ELMWOOD'S MASON MOSSBARGER celebrates after the Royals win over Eastwood in Bloomdale Friday.

third quarter - fueled by Oliver - made all the difference.

But it was the last play before halftime that may have swung the momentum. With the game tied 28-28 and Eastwood inside the Royals' 20, a

touchdown could have been catastrophic, being that the Eagles were to receive the ball to start the third. But as quarterback Lake Boos rolled to his right with 20 seconds left, he was sacked by Gunner Endicott as the final seconds

ticked away.

Eastwood did jump ahead 35-28 at the beginning of the third when Lake Boos hit Case Boos on a 20-yard touchdown pass. The two were a dangerous combo all game long with Lake Boos connecting on 22-of-29 passes for 360 yards and five touchdowns, while Case Boos catching 11 passes for 187 yards and four touchdowns.

Elmwood roared back when junior Hayden Wickard faked a quarterback draw to hit Endicott in the back of the endzone on a pop pass.

On the next possession, the Royals forced a punt, the first of the game for either team, before marching downfield again on the back of Oliver's running. They went up for good, 41-35 when Wickard rushed in from 11 yards out.

Then came another gigantic moment. A squib kickoff went off the body of an Eastwood player and was scooped

See **ELMWOOD, B3**



COLLIN FRAZIER / for The Courier

LEIPSIC'S QUIN SCHROEDER (4) gets both feet down in the back right corner of the endzone as he scored his second of three touchdowns with Bluffton's Landon Shutler defending him during Friday's game. Schroeder finished with seven receptions for 135 yards and three TDs.

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