

Friday's regional high school football playoff matchups

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AREA ROUND MATCHUPS INVOLVING 11-MAN TEAMS ON THE SOUTH PLAINS COMPILED BY PHIL TERRIGNO

CLASS 6A DIVISION II

FRENSHIP (9-2) VS. ABILENE HIGH (8-3),

7 P.M. FRIDAY, LUBBOCK'S PLAINSCAPITAL PARK - LOWREY FIELD

The Tigers defense must be particularly attentive because: Abilene High has shown a ton of variety lately. Reese Childress, its best athlete and top receiver, only had one legitimate rushing attempt during the regular season. Last week, he ran for 97 yards and two touchdowns. They snapped it to him out of the wildcat, passed to him and handed off to him. Abilene High lost its top running back, Abram Smith, earlier this season. In the first game without Smith, it ran for 14 yards against Midland Lee. In its second game without Smith, quarterback Derek Scott ran for 182 yards. Frenship is also without starting middle linebacker Zach Finley (torn labrums) and nose guard Cole Fontenot is questionable with a foot injury.

"They had to find different ways to get the ball in their best kid's hands," Frenship coach Brad Davis said of Childress. "He's become their go-to. They've put him all over the field and it's smart. It's paying off, but he's that kind of athlete. I remember him from 7 on 7."

Grant Sandercox and Ronald Awatt will face one of the few stout defensive lines they've seen all year: Aside from Amarillo High, Tascosa and San Angelo Central, the Eagles may have the toughest and most experienced defensive line with three senior starters (Miguel Espinoza, Tom Berry and Regan Cooke). Ronnell Wilson and Quay Logan are Abilene High's inside linebackers and its 3-4 defensive scheme allows the linebackers to shoot the gap. The pair has combined to lead the Eagles in tackles. If Abilene High manages to slow Sandercox (1,239 yards and 23 touchdowns in the regular season) and Awatt (1,366 yards and seven touchdowns in the regular season), it might be a chance for quarterback Parker Bingham to link up with leading receiver Jared Mannon (523 yards and five touchdowns) with effective play-action passing.

MONTEREY (5-6) VS. SAN ANGELO CENTRAL (10-1),

4 P.M. FRIDAY, MIDLAND'S GRANDE COMMUNICATIONS STADIUM

Having a standout running back this time of the year matters because: one player can outstanding player can shift the game even if there are discrepancies other places on the field. Plainsmen senior running back Vincent Johnson (1,665 rushing yards and 22 touchdowns), one of the few Division I recruits in this area, is such a player. Monterey's biggest concern is battling through the middle of the San Angelo Central defense, which is its strongest area. Its two linebackers and two safeties, which includes an Army signee, is an outstanding group. In its bi-district game against Bowie, in which the Bobcats were forced to play from behind, it struggled to match Bowie's team speed early on.

The Plainsmen defense must: be extremely active in corralling San Angelo Central quarterback Braden Hucks. Hucks was the Bobcats tailback last year and in addition to being a strong runner, he's an extremely elusive. If there is a weakness on San Angelo Central, it is that it's without an elite tailback currently. If Hucks is given a lot of time to let plays develop, it will be problematic because the Bobcats have three competent wideouts, including one Division I signee.

CLASS 4A DIVISION I

ESTACADO (9-2) VS. STEPHENVILLE (7-3), 7 P.M. FRIDAY, SHOTWELL STADIUM IN ABILENE

Four rushers with over 100 yards against Clint Mountain View last week matters against Stephenville because: Estacado wants to succeed on the ground in running several different players out of its pistol offense. As long as it doesn't turn the ball over, it hasn't been stopped in that facet of its game.

Carl Willard leads a group that will be: crucial against the Yellowjackets. Willard, a senior safety, is responsible for most of the communication in the secondary and the Matadors have strong, mobile corners in Jevon Bascus and Kenaris Jackson. Coach Danny Servance has also used quarterback Jaleen Tennison at safety. Despite losing Texas Tech-commit Jarrett Stidham to injury, Stephenville scored 57 points in a loss to Big Spring and 66 points in a win against Decatur.

LEVELLAND (5-6) VS. ABILENE WYLIE (9-2), 8 P.M. FRIDAY, MIDLAND'S GRANDE COMMUNICATIONS STADIUM

The Lobos must score more than 40 points to win this game because: judging by the numbers its defense has allowed and how potent the Abilene Wylie offense has been, scoring any less than 40 points means that Levelland was not competitive in this game. In its current eight-game winning streak, Wylie has defeated Big Spring and Stephenville, both dominant Class 4A teams.

Levelland is capable of making this happen because: of Nick Gerber (2,911 passing yards and 42 combined touchdowns in the regular season) and wideout Trenton Jones (1,673 all purpose yards and 21 touchdowns) in an offense that averages 533.6 yards per game.

SEMINOLE (5-6) VS. GRAHAM (9-2), 7 P.M. FRIDAY IN GRAHAM

This version of Graham might be stronger than last year's team and that matters because: the Estacado Matadors were wiped out by Graham last postseason. The Steers are a week removed from defeating a traditionally strong Brownwood team, 52-11. Seminole lost a home-and-home flip with the Steers in this contest and must travel more than three hours each way.

CLASS 3A DIVISION I

BROWNFIELD (7-4) VS. WALL (10-1),
6:30 P.M. SATURDAY, RATLIFF STADIUM IN ODESSA

If Brownfield's special teams unit struggles, it will be debilitating for the Cubs because: it is unlikely that coach Bryan Welps' team could replicate the 35-point swing it delivered against Childress in this contest with Wall. Brownfield was down 28-0 against Childress largely because its special teams unit was poor in making cover tackles and it allowed Childress to chew up much of the field.

The Cubs offense must start quicker because: it must keep pace with Wall. Luckily, Brownfield's offense has been outstanding. It averages 463 yards and 38.87 points per game. Running back Simon Jacquez had combined for nearly 2,000 yards and 20 touchdowns. Jezreel Griffin and Jordan Demps (46 catches for 635 yards and five touchdowns) have been superb options for freshman quarterback Jaelyn Nolan, who has been precise in distributing the ball and pulling it down and running when necessary.

DENVER CITY (8-3) VS. BROCK (10-1),
7:30 P.M. FRIDAY, SAN ANGLEO ISD STADIUM

The Mustangs escaped its bi-district game against Littlefield because: Saul Gutierrez is extremely elusive at quarterback and is able to strafe to either side of the offensive line to avoid pressure before getting his throws off. Denver City had a chance to down Littlefield with six seconds left, but it missed a field goal and following a Wildcats penalty, failed to get another kick off. In overtime, Gutierrez nailed a touchdown throw and Littlefield fumbled its two-point conversion attempt.

Denver City's advantage against Brock is: its speed around the edges. Cole McLeroy and Daniel Garcia (1,224 rushing yards and 17 touchdowns in the regular season) are extremely quick, shifty runners. On the occasions in which it must throw, tight end Hunter Hemmeline (16 catches for 441 yards and two touchdowns) is a strong target.

CLASS 3A DIVISION II

IDALOU (8-3) VS. SONORA (8-3),
7:30 P.M. FRIDAY, MIDLAND GREENWOOD

The Wildcats 65-13 win over Henrietta was surprising because: the margin of victory was so large. Against Sonora, Idalou finds itself against another team with a go-forward rushing approach and a proud tradition. Earlier this season, Sonora lost to Denver City, 36-29.

Idalou junior running back Brandt Schilling has been the biggest offensive contributor for coach Jeff Lofton. Schilling has rushed 198 times for 1,434 yards and has 21 combined touchdowns.

POST (8-3) VS. CISCO (11-0),
7 P.M. FRIDAY, SWEETWATER

The Antelopes defense must be outstanding because: in eight of 11 of Cisco's game this year, it has scored 41 or more points.

Safety Cambry Gilbert (76 tackles), linebacker Alejo Rodriguez (124 tackles and seven sacks) and defensive lineman A.J. Reed (nine sacks), will be crucial in stopping the Loboes, which have been ranked first in the AP Class 3A Top 10.

"I've been very pleased with our attitudes going in," Post coach Michael Pittman, who was an assistant coach with Crane when it beat Cisco in the 2009 postseason, said. "Our kids think we have a good shot. It's kind of always the same thing with us. It's going to boil down with out offensive and defensive lines. We have pretty good skill kids on our line and they've been playing very well. I think we're playing our best football right now."

CLASS 2A DIVISION I

ABERNATHY (10-0) VS. HAWLEY (7-4),
7:30 P.M FRIDAY, BIG SPRING

The quarterback and running back combination of Garrett Royal and Nik Clarkson has been: nothing short of remarkable and arguably the most impactful tandem in this area. Royal has passed for 1,264 yards, rushed for 1,120 yards and combined for 32 touchdowns. Clarkson has been Abernathy's other big rushing threat and Cassaus Cunningham has been a strong target, picking up 11 touchdowns and 721 rushing yards.

Hawley topped Christoval 40-13 last week to advance to the area round while Abernathy had a bye in bi-district play.

CLASS 2A DIVISION II

CROSBYTON (10-0) VS. SUNRAY (5-6),
7 P.M. FRIDAY, CANYON'S KIMBROUGH MEMORIAL STADIUM

There will be a time when Crosbyton is tested this postseason, but Friday against Sunray will not be it because: although Sunray has had competent matchups with Stratford and Spearman, it will be overwhelmed by the Crosbyton rushing attack.

The Chiefs had a bye in the bi-district round after rolling through its regular season. Nathan Childers (168 carries for 2,117 yards and 32 touchdowns) has managed to carry the entire offensive and Bobby Childers (nine receptions for 248 yards and five touchdowns) has been a positive outlet in the few times Crosbyton has had to pass.