

Toughest foe yet for Defenders

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By Harold Raker

ELYSBURG—How much better and more advanced is Southern Columbia than other football teams in the area?

Ask Warrior Run coach Mark Burrows, whose Defenders have the unenviable task of visiting the unbeaten and No. 1-ranked Class A (Pennsylvania Football News) Tigers to end Warrior Run's season Friday in a Heartland Athletic Conference Division II game.

"Their program is to the point now where, when you look at them on your schedule, I don't know that anybody could have said 'this is the year we could get them.' This team, watching them on film, is just phenomenal, technically good, physically good, they are quick, fast and they just do everything right," Burrows said.

And, he noted, you can add passing (by sophomore quarterback Nick Becker) to the mix.

The Tigers (9-0, 4-0) have rushed for just a tad less than 3,000 yards so far, and thrown for nearly 1,300 more, and are the favorite to enter the District 4 Class A playoffs as the No. 1 seed.

"I have the utmost respect for their staff and their kids," Burrows said. They have built the tradition and build that atmosphere that we will strive to (reach)."

But Southern coach Jim Roth, who, along with the coaches and players, know they are heavily favored, said the game should help the Tigers prepare for what they may see in the playoffs.

"They run the ball a lot, but they give you a variety of offensive formations, and we're going to see that in the playoffs," Roth said. "In the first round, whether we get Muncy or Bloomsburg, they both do a lot of it, and, depending on what happens, with (current No. 2 seed) Wellsboro, I hear they are a wide-open passing team."

Besides, Roth said, the coaches are always looking to improve in all areas.

He said one area in particular is in the Tigers' overall blocking.

"Some of it may be a result of getting in games and getting big leads and the kids lose their edge a little bit," he said. "We have to stay aggressive with that."

Roth said the Defenders, versus Wyalusing (a loss last week) and Montgomery (a wind the previous week), ran a lot of power sets and also ran a 6-3 defensive front.

"We may very well see that (in the playoffs) and, if that happens, it will be a challenge to block that with the running game."

He said playing time, or lack thereof, is not a concern because he would rather have players who are fresh for the possibility of a long season.

The up side, he said is, "We have not played in a lot of four-quarter physical games and got beaten up, where you might expect a lot of injuries."

Burrows said the positive aspect of this game for his players is that they get a close-up look at what it takes to put a competitive team on the field physically.

"Southern's team is where everybody wants to be and what everybody strives to be," Burrows said.