



PHOTOS BY MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Regis' Brandon Woodcock (25) carries the ball against St. Paul on Friday, Oct. 28, at the St. Paul rodeo grounds. Regis won the game 27-7 to secure the championship of the Tri-River Conference.

# No. 1 Regis team to beat in Class 2A state playoffs

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ST. PAUL—Regis High School football coach Kyle McGrath shook hands with St. Paul coach Tony Smith at midfield after the Rams' 27-7 victory on Friday, and then ran full speed toward his players gathered at the goal line and slid.

Call it a jubilant baseball-like slide. The victory on a muddy field at St. Paul Rodeo Arena clinched the outright Tri-River Conference championship for the top-ranked Rams, who will host a first-round game next weekend in the Class 2A state playoffs.

"We usually do the jump high, and I came in and everyone kind of parted like the Red Sea," McGrath said of his post-game ritual. "I didn't want to fall on my face so I just went with the baseball slide."

After sharing the league title the past two seasons, the Rams (7-2, 4-0 Tri-River) were searching for the outright crown in 2016.

Friday's win didn't come easy. No. 5 St. Paul (5-3, 2-2 Tri-River) led 7-6 at halftime, and forced Regis to punt after a three-and-out series to open the third quarter.

But the Rams dominated the rest of the way.

Regis went 80-yards for a score on its next possession, culminated by junior running back Brandon Piete's 6-yard touchdown run for a 12-7 lead.

A fake punt – senior quarterback Bryce Piete hit his younger brother Brandon on a 30-yard completion – set up a 17-yard touchdown pass to senior tight end/linebacker Eric Gustin. A 2-point conversion pass to Gustin extended the lead to 20-7 with 8:48 remaining.

Senior defensive lineman Tanner Williams closed the scoring with a 52-yard touchdown on a fumble recovery.

"I kind of challenged those guys at halftime," McGrath said. "I said, 'it's on you, guys.' We've been saying players make plays, players win games."

Players from both teams were covered in mud on a field that was best suited for horses and cattle.

But conditions were the same for both teams and there was much on the line.

St. Paul, which is playoff bound for the first time since moving up to 2A in 2014, would have shared the league title with a win.

The Buckaroos (5-3, 2-2) were valiant, led by senior running back Fernando Dela Cerda, but Regis was the better team on both sides of the ball.

Brandon Piete overcame two first-half fumbles to rush for 120 yards and two touchdowns, Bryce Piete passed for 127 yards and a score, and the Rams defense, which had shut out their previous three opponents, forced three turnovers.

"I'm confident we can do big things," said senior receiver/cornerback Brendon Woodcock, who had three receptions



Regis players lift up Brandon Woodcock after he intercepted a pass from St. Paul.



Regis' Ryan Boyd talks to teammates on the sidelines.

and two interceptinos.

After losing to eventual state champion Heppner in the state semifinals last season, Regis is the team to beat this year.

The Rams enter the playoffs on a five-game winning streak and have outscored their opponents 154-14 during that stretch.

"We're a better team (this season)," Brandon Piete said. "The games in the

past that we lost, we knew we should have won. We have the confidence. We think we can do it."

Gustin, who had 11 1/2 tackles and a forced fumble against St. Paul, said the playoff goal is simple: "Just don't get complacent."

Based on how the Rams played Friday with an outright Tri-River championship on the line, it's difficult to imagine this team getting complacent now with the

## REGIS 27, ST PAUL 7

Regis – 6-0-6-15 – 27

St. Paul – 0-7-0-0 – 7

### FIRST QUARTER

**Regis:** Brandon Piete, 6-yard run. PAT no good

### SECOND QUARTER

**St. Paul:** Jackson, 10-yard pass from C. Smith. Dela Cerda kick

### THIRD QUARTER

**Regis:** Brandon Piete, 6-yard run. 2-point conversion run no good

### FOURTH QUARTER

**Regis:** Gustin, 17-yard pass from Bryce Piete. Gustin reception for 2-point conversion

**Regis:** Williams, 52-yard fumble return. Pelayo kick

stakes even higher.

Four Tri-River teams entered Friday's regular season finales ranked among the top six in the OSAA power rankings.

Regis made it through the state's strongest 2A conference unbeaten. That bodes well moving forward.

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