

Mustang defense shuts down Irish for trip to State game



Russell Britt escapes a Riddle player during one of his 31 total carries for 165 yards in Saturday's semifinal round against the Irish. Heppner advances to State playoffs Sat. Dec. 3 at 12 noon in Corvallis.

By Ashley Conklin

It is said that defense wins football games and the Heppner Mustangs proved that last Saturday afternoon with a 26-8 Class "A" OSAA-U.S. Bank state semifinal playoff win.

The win puts Heppner, 9-3 in the state championship game this Saturday against the Salem Academy Crusaders. The game will be held at Parker Stadium at Corvallis at 12 p.m. as part of a championship doubleheader with the Class "AA" championship game. The Crusaders advanced with a 14-8 win over Dayton and bring a 10-1 record in against the Mustangs.

Heppner used a stellar defensive performance to hold the Irish, 8-4, to 54 yards rushing and 153 total yards.

Quarterback Eric Creech, Riddle's playoff hero against Oakridge the week before, was held to 10 yards on 13 rushes and running back Shawn Billick gained 27 yards on 14 carries in the normally high-powered Irish attack.

Leading the Mustang defense were Steve Arbogast, Jess Jeffrey, Barney Lindsay and Mike Mahoney.

Lindsay and Mahoney were each in on three quarterback sacks and Lindsay had 15 total defensive

points. Arbogast collected 20 defensive points on 12 tackles, including two quarterback sacks while Jeffrey had 14 tackles and 15 defensive points. However, Lindsay and Mahoney were more instrumental in containing Creech on Riddle's option defense.

"The defensive ends (Lindsay and Mahoney) were putting the hits on the quarterback," free safety Dick Devin said, "and our cornerbacks shut down the pitch on the outside."

On offense, Devin had another fine game, completing 11 of 20 passes for 185 yards for 2 touchdowns and no interceptions.

Devin's favorite target, Craig Angell, caught six passes for 50 yards despite drawing double coverage most of the afternoon. However, the biggest offensive weapon for Heppner was running back Russell Britt.

Britt ran for a career-high 165 yards on 31 attempts and gave the Mustangs a more balanced attack than last week when they were able to rush for only nine yards.

"Without a muddy field like last week (at Willamina) the linemen were able to use their quickness which gave the backs more holes to read and made it easier to cut across the grain," Britt said.

"The linemen maintained their blocks and Russell ran the hardest he has all season," head coach Tim Birkby said.

Heppner dodged a bullet early when the Irish couldn't score after having the ball on the Mustang 20-yard line. However, the tide quickly turned for the Mustangs as Devin was sacked in the end zone for a safety by Gary Beebe near the end of the first quarter for a 2-0 Riddle lead.

"I was worried when they scored first," Angell said, "because whenever we score first we always win."

However, on the ensuing kickoff after the safety, Creech let the ball roll and Lindsay scooped it up, giving Heppner the ball at the Irish 42.

Two Devin to Angell passes put Heppner on the Riddle 21 yard line where Britt carried to the four for a first down. Two plays later, Devin ran a quarterback sneak in from the one and Angell's extra point made it 7-2 with 8:42 left in the second quarter.

The Irish were pinned deep on the kickoff and on fourth down the Mustangs got a safety when the snap to punter Preston O'Hara sailed over his head out of the end zone, giving Heppner a 9-2 lead.

The Mustangs went up 12-2 on a 36-yard Angell field goal with 3:17 left in the half after Arbogast recovered a Riddle fumble.

Shawn Billick took the ensuing kickoff for the Irish at the 10 and seemed headed for the opposite end zone until Lindsay ran him down at the Mustang 10-yard line.

"You can't give up on something like that," Lindsay said. "You have to give it your all and I knew they would have a big boost going into halftime if they scored the touchdown."

Instead, the Heppner defense held and David Lee missed a 25-yard field goal attempt with 1:35 left in the half.

Riddle did score to open the third period though, thanks mainly to a 51-yard pass from Creech to Billick off a fake punt that gave the Irish the ball at the Mustang nine-yard line. On third-and-goal from the three, Dan Jones powered in to cut the Heppner lead to 12-8.

The Mustangs marched right back with Devin connecting with Bryan Padberg on a 13-yard scoring pass on third down that gave Heppner a lead after Angell's extra point with 4:31 in the third quarter.

Britt ran 3 times for 19 yards in the drive that was aided by a 15-yard face mask penalty. Jim Brosnan gave



We are the champions-Dick Devin (L) and Bryan Padberg (R) do a little dance after scoring another touchdown in Saturday's game against Riddle.

the Mustangs a first down at the 24-yard line on a fourth down and after Devin's 11-yard completion to Angell, Padberg scored two plays later.

The Mustangs added what pretty much proved to be the knockout punch on a drive late in the third quarter that ended in the fourth quarter.

On a third-and-five from their own 36, Devin hooked up with Padberg on a 45-yard juggling catch down to the Irish 20. On third-and-three from the 13, Devin went seven yards to Angell on the six-yard line and then hit Angell in the corner of the end zone on a six-yard pass. Angell's extra point made it 26-8 with 11:56 in the game and the Irish never seriously threatened the rest of the game.

"We knew if we stopped Creech, we'd stop about 80 percent of their offense," Birkby said. "He was the guy to stop and we did it."

"I'm glad we're in the state championship game," he added. "We need to maintain our intensity we had today in order to win and we have to keep our rushing game going."

In order to stop Salem Academy, the Mustangs must shut down the high-powered Crusader rushing attack. The Crusaders, who lost in the state championship a year ago, may be without the services of star running back Matt Bain, who missed most of the last two playoff games due to a knee injury.

Ticket prices for the championship game run \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. This marks the first time the Mustangs have advanced to the championship game, while Salem Academy will be in the final game for the third consecutive year.

	Riddle	Heppner
First downs	7	18
Rushes-yards	32-54	45-181
Passing	6-14-99-0	11-20-185-0
Total yards	153	366
Returns yards	107	55
Fumbles-lost	3-2	4-2
Penalties-lost	2-20	7-48
Punts-average	4-34	3-30.3

Individual Stats
Rushing: Riddle-S. Billick 14-27; Jones 5-17; Creech 13-10; Heppner-R. Britt 31-165; Jim Brosnan 5-14; Doug Devin 1-5; R. Osmi 1-5; Kollman 2-3; Dick Devin 5-11.

Passing: Riddle-Creech 6-13-99-0; S. Billick 0-1-0-0; Heppner-Dick Devin 11-20-185-0.

Receiving: Riddle-S. Billick 2-73; Lee 2-14; Garza 2-12; Heppner-Angell 6-50; Padberg 2-58; R. Britt 2-46; Hanson 1-31.

Lunch with Santa re-scheduled

Because of the football playoffs, the scheduled lunch with Santa this Sunday has been cancelled. Lunch with Santa has been rescheduled for December 11. Check next week's paper for more details.

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PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

Offensive: **Russell Britt #42**
B/B 150 lbs. Junior

Defensive: **Barney Lindsay #82**
E/E 165 lbs. Senior

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