

FOOTBALL FRIDAY

Lawrence looking to rewrite script

CVC teams face many challenges

BY KEVIN MALONEY
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

There are some around the area who look at the Lawrence High football program and feel sympathy for the way the Cardinals have had to endure one heartbreaking defeat after another come playoff time over the last five years.

But Lawrence head coach Rob Radice prefers to look at his team's recent playoff history in a different light.

"Ten years ago, before my staff and I got here, we barely knew what the playoffs were here in Lawrence," said Radice, who hopes his squad had three more wins in them before he closes out his first decade as head coach.

"So we've set the bar high and we expect our kids to No. 1 get (to the playoffs). Ask (Notre Dame head) coach (Chappy) Moore how many times he's been to the playoffs and how many wins he has. That by no means is a slight. By no means. It's a difficult thing to do to win in the playoffs."

The Cardinals, who will make their ninth appearance in the state playoffs in school history tomorrow afternoon at 1, are hoping that a change in venue will equate to a change in outcome when they hit the road for the playoffs for the first time in five years to take on

CVC FOOTBALL								
COLONIAL DIVISION				VALLEY DIVISION				
Conference		All Games		Conference		All Games		
W	L	PF	PA	W	L	PF	PA	
x-Notre Dame	4	0	110	50	9	0	283	92
Lawrence	3	1	94	105	7	2	211	190
Hamilton	2	2	92	74	4	4	166	147
WW-P South	1	3	52	76	5	4	181	134
Trenton	0	4	44	87	2	7	151	181
y-Princeton	2	1	56	34	6	3	183	139
y-Steinert	2	1	48	31	5	3	94	98
Nottingham	1	2	54	53	3	6	223	256
Hightstown	1	2	24	64	1	8	82	227
PATRIOT DIVISION				VALLEY DIVISION				
Conference		All Games		Conference		All Games		
W	L	PF	PA	W	L	PF	PA	
x-WW-P North	4	0	112	45	6	3	183	139
Ewing	2	2	90	66	3	6	155	226
Allentown	2	2	71	113	4	4	169	201
Robbinsville	1	3	55	70	2	6	99	158
Hopewell Valley	1	3	50	84	2	7	123	165

x - clinched division title
y - co-champions

a Neptune team that eliminated them from the state playoffs last year.

Lawrence is just one of a record four Colonial Valley Conference teams to reach the NJSIAA Group III Central playoffs this season.

Sixth-seeded Steinert, also looking for its first playoff win in school history, will travel to take on the No. 3 seed, Ocean Township, while Princeton, the No. 7 seed, will have the difficult task of trying to upset a talented Monroe team, which enters the showdown with a 7-1 mark and the second seed.

Rounding out the local four-some is eighth-seeded West Windsor-Plainsboro North, which will look to pull off the upset of all upsets when it heads down to try to

POSTPONEMENTS

In case inclement weather forces the postponement or delay to this weekend's football playoff games, visit nj.com/times under "High School Sports Notebook" for the latest updates.

South. All three games are at 7 p.m.

West Windsor-Plainsboro South is back in the state tournament for the fifth straight year, this time as the No. 5 seed where it draws a tough fourth-seeded East Brunswick team tonight at 7 at East Brunswick.

Notre Dame is the lone CVC team that won't have to get on a bus and hit the road as the second-seeded Irish will host one of the state's most storied programs, Bergen Catholic, the No. 7 seed, tonight at 7 under the lights at Monsignor Walter E. Nolan Field in the Non-Public Group IV playoffs.

Two other Times' area teams will also be involved in playoff affairs this weekend. Montgomery will look to avenge a 2007 playoff loss to Howell, where the Cougars, the No. 7 seed, will look to snap a three-game skid at the second-seeded Rebels' expense tonight at 7 in the Group IV Central playoffs.

Florence, the No. 6 seed in Group I Central, will look to exact some revenge from Highland

Park, the third seed, tomorrow afternoon at 1. The Owls snapped the Flashes' streak of four consecutive Group I Central titles by eliminating Florence, 20-17, last year.

Most people affiliated with high school football believe having a home playoff game, and thus a home crowd, provides the team with an inherent advantage.

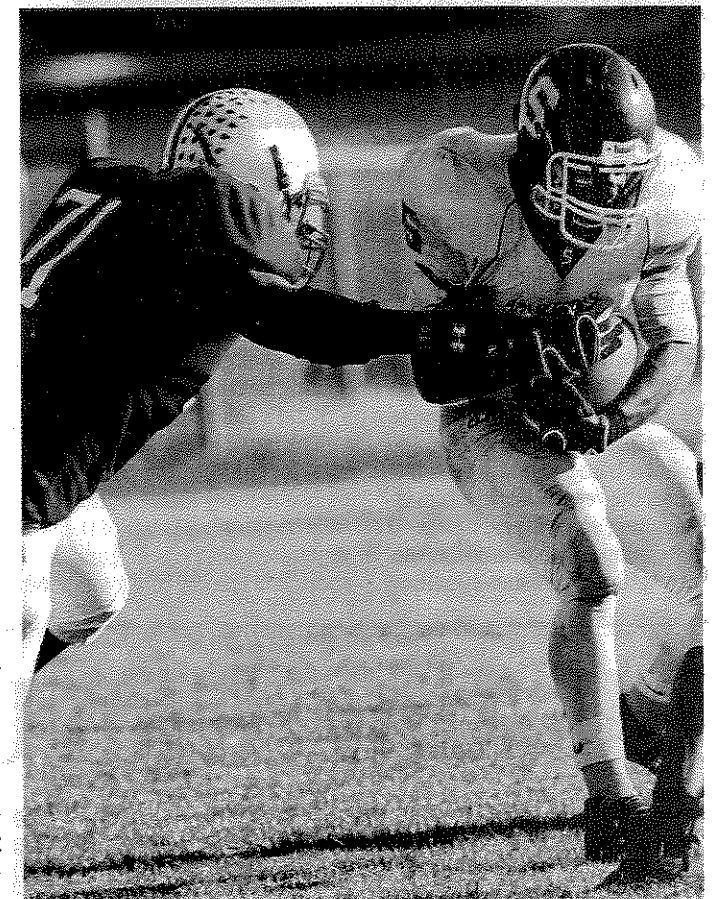
While Lawrence standout defensive lineman Ethan Posey doesn't quite dismiss that notion, there is an equally advantageous aspect of playing in the opposition's house.

"Silencing the crowd is the best cheer you can possibly have," Posey said. "When you know you're coming in and executing and doing what you've been coached to do and you're in an opponents' stadium, everything just goes quiet because people can't believe you're executing at the level you are."

Having game-changing tailback Keith Sherman back in the lineup for the third straight week after the versatile senior was sidelined for five weeks with a torn MCL, should certainly help the Cardinals' chances of executing at a high level.

In the four games Sherman has played this season, not only has he accrued 624 yards and 12 touchdowns on 75 carries, but the offense is averaging 144 more yards per game with him on the field.

"The confidence he brings to



MARTIN GRIFF/THE TIMES

Lawrence High's Ethan Posey (71), shown here tackling Steinert's Judens Goimbert in a game last month, hopes the Cardinals, for once, come out on the winning end of a playoff game.

the offensive side of the ball is phenomenal," Radice said. "I think we missed that. Keith brings that confidence level that 'I can do that. Just keep on giving me the ball and I'll get it done.' He kind

of brings to offense what Ethan brings to the defense, that leadership, that confidence level."

Contact Kevin Maloney at kevmaloney33@nathan.com.