

CVC has six in playoffs, but only Irish at home

BY KEVIN MALONEY
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Mercer County football fans clamoring for a full slate of Friday night football are going to get their wish this weekend when the NJSIAA playoffs get under way.

The catch is, unless you're a Notre Dame fan, you'll need to venture outside Mercer County to take in those games.

Notre Dame is the lone representative of the six Colonial Valley Conference playoff teams to earn a home playoff game on Friday night.

Princeton, Steinert, West Windsor-Plainsboro North and West Windsor-Plainsboro South will all be hitting the road Friday night, while on Saturday Lawrence has a road visit to Neptune, where it hopes to exact some revenge.

Notre Dame (9-0), the lone undefeated team in the CVC and the No. 2 seed in Non-Public Group IV, will face a stiff test when Bergen Catholic (7-2), one of the most storied programs in state history, takes the trek to Monsignor Walter E. Nolan Field.

Notre Dame, making its 11th consecutive appearance in the

postseason, will look to earn its first playoff win since 2004. The Crusaders of Bergen Catholic are appearing in the postseason for the 21st consecutive season. That's the second-longest streak in state history behind the current run of 24 in a row by St. Joseph of Montvale.

Lawrence, behind a 7-2 record during the regular season, is the highest-ranked team among the four CVC teams in Central Jersey Group III, as the No. 5 seed.

The Cardinals, making their sixth consecutive trip in the postseason but first on the road since 2004, will travel to take on a Neptune (6-2) team that captured a 21-13 win at Lawrence last November.

Steinert (5-3) parlayed a streak in which it won five of six games to earn the No. 6 seed as well as an appearance in the playoffs for the first time since 2003, when it lost to eventual state champion Brick Memorial, 7-6. The Spartans will face an Ocean Township (6-2) team making its 18th appearance in the playoffs in school history.

Princeton used a 7-2 mark to secure the eighth postseason berth

in school history and the No. 7 seed in Central Jersey Group III. The Little Tigers will square off against a highly touted Monroe (7-1) team, whose only loss came to East Brunswick (No. 4 in Central Group IV) in late September.

WW-P North (6-3), which hung on to snag the eighth and final berth in the section, will be making its first postseason appearance since losing to Montgomery, 26-0, in 2004.

The Knights, who could establish a new single-season mark for wins in a season with a victory, drew the top seed, Middletown South (8-0), which has allowed just 33 points while pitching four shutouts on the season.

The most successful CVC team come playoff time over the last few seasons, WW-P South (5-4), is back for the fifth straight season under head coach Todd Smith. The Pirates (the No. 5 seed), just two years removed from an appearance in the Central Jersey Group IV Central final, will travel to take on East Brunswick (5-3), the No. 4 seed.

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NJSIAA FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

CENTRAL JERSEY

GROUP IV

8-Middletown North at 1-Sayreville, 7 p.m. Friday

5-West Windsor-Plainsboro South at 4-East Brunswick, 7 p.m. Friday

6-Brick Memorial at 3-Hunterdon Central, 7 p.m. Friday

7-Montgomery at 2-Howell, 7 p.m. Friday

GROUP III

8-West Windsor-Plainsboro North at 1-Middletown South, 7 p.m. Friday

5-Lawrence at 4-Neptune, 1 p.m. Saturday

6-Steinert at 3-Ocean Township, 7 p.m. Friday

7-Princeton at 2-Monroe, 7 p.m.

Friday

GROUP I

8-Shore at 1-Asbury Park, 1 p.m. Saturday

5-Brearley at 4-South River, 1 p.m. Saturday

6-Florence at 3-Highland Park, 1 p.m. Saturday

7-Spotswood at 2-Metuchen, 1 p.m. Saturday

NON-PUBLIC

GROUP IV

8-Red Bank Catholic at 1-Don Bosco Prep, 7 p.m. Friday

5-Seton Hall Prep at 4-St. Augustine, 7 p.m. Friday

6-St. Peter's Prep at 3-Paul VI, 7 p.m. Friday

7-Bergen Catholic at 2-Notre Dame.

7 p.m. Friday

CONSOLATION GAMES

Hightstown at Triton, 7 p.m. Friday

Robbinsville at Middlesex, 7 p.m. Friday

South Hunterdon at New Egypt, 7 p.m. Friday

Allentown at Jackson Liberty, 7 p.m. Friday

Roselle Park at Bordentown, 1 p.m. Saturday

Monmouth Regional at Ewing, 1 p.m. Saturday

Northern Burlington at Nottingham, 1 p.m. Saturday

Central Regional at Hopewell Valley, 1 p.m. Saturday

Hamilton at Freehold Borough, 1 p.m. Saturday