

## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# ROUGH ROAD

## Irish draw Bergen Catholic in playoff opener

By **GEORGE O'GORMAN**  
Staff Writer

Coach Chappy Moore and his unbeaten Notre Dame High football team knew they would eventually have to get past the state Catholic school powers from North Jersey if they were to claim their first NJSIAA state title in 20 years.

But the 9-0 Irish were probably hoping they wouldn't have to meet one of those North Jersey giants in their opening game in the Non-Public A playoffs.

First round playoff matchups announced yesterday by the NJSIAA office in Robbinsville put the Irish against No. 7 seed Bergen Catholic in a first-round game to be played on Friday at 7 p.m. at ND's Msgr. Walter Nolan field.

The other five CVC teams to qualify for the state playoffs will all open on the road — four of them Friday at 7 p.m.

Only Lawrence, which will make its sixth consecutive appearance in the Central Jersey III bracket, will play on Saturday. Rob Radice 7-2 Cards will debut at 6-2 Neptune, the team that knocked them out of last year's first round at home, 21-13.

The Friday C.J. III openers for CVC teams, all kicking off at 7 p.m., have Steinert (5-3) playing at No. 3 seed Ocean Township (6-2), Princeton (7-2) at No. 2 seed Monroe (7-1), and West Windsor North (6-3) drawing the huge challenge of trying to win at perennial Central Jersey power and No. 1 seed Middletown South (8-0).

With half of the C.J. III playoff field coming from Mercer County it's the most teams the CVC has had qualify in one of the state's most competitive sectional brackets in 10 years. Three teams had been the most ever from the CVC to make C.J.III — something that happened in the 1999, 2001-02-03-05-06.

It's the first time Steinert and WW-P North are part of the playoff party since both hosted games in 2003 but lost in the first round.

Notre Dame will be extending its CVC record for playoff appearances to 26, and trying to end a run of four straight first round road losses and also beat the BC Crusaders for the

first time in four meetings.

This game pits two of the legendary coaches in Jersey high school football — Moore and Fred Stengel, who has guided the Paramus-based school to 21 straight playoffs. Although it is No. 6 in one state poll, it is only No. 7 seed in Non-Public A because of losses to No. 1 Don Bosco (26-20) and St. Peter's Prep of Jersey City (26-23).

Bergen Catholic, which last faced ND here in 2003 and held on for a 21-14 win when current NFL player Tiquan Underwood and current Boston College star Rich Gunnell where the Irish's main weapons.

By making it to the playoffs for the first time under coach Chris Casamento and the second time in school history, West Windsor North will become the sixth different CVC school to play at Middletown South's famed "Swamp" although now a state-of-the-art turf facility replaced the grass that so often had turned to mud when the playoffs arrived.

No CVC team has ever won at the Lincroft school, with Trenton coming closest in 1990 when it lost 15-14.

This will be the fifth straight year Todd Smith's WW-P South Pirates are in the playoffs, and the fourth consecutive year they are part of the C.J. III bracket. It's also their first road playoff opener in those five years.

But the Pirates are in a unique situation of entering the post-season off a loss. They fell at Princeton, 31-17, last weekend, although they had already clinched their playoff spot. It's the first time WW-P South and East Brunswick have met.

For Steve Everette's Princeton Tigers it will be their second playoff game in three years when they visit nearby Monroe, which has won six in a row since a 23-21 loss to East Brunswick.

Princeton, with its first 7-win season since 1990 when Keith Wadsworth's squad got to the playoffs with six wins then beat Lawrence 8-0 for what is still the Little Tigers only playoff win. They lost in the C.J. final at home to Carter

ret the next week.

Coach Rob Radice's Lawrence Cardinals are still looking for the first playoff win in their school's history after falling in the first round the last five times. Last year they got bounced at home by Neptune in a 21-13 thriller, with Neptune going on to the sectional final.

The NJSIAA also announced its 'consolation playoff games' for the schools that didn't make the top eight in their section.

Trenton did not get a tenth game because it had four players ejected during the season and NJSIAA rules prohibit teams with three or more ejections from getting into state wide games.

Yesterday West Orange learned at the last moment it had been banned from the playoffs thinking it had qualified eighth with a win over Livingston Friday. But it had three players ejected for fighting and were banished by the state office.

### CVC's NJSIAA Playoff Schedule Friday's Games Non-Public A

Bergen Catholic at Notre Dame, 7 p.m.

**Central Jersey IV**  
West Windsor South at East Brunswick, 7 p.m.

**Central Jersey III**  
Steinert at Ocean Twp., 7 p.m.  
Princeton at Monroe, 7 p.m.

West Windsor North at Middletown South, 7 p.m.

**Saturday's Game**  
**Central Jersey III**  
Lawrence at Neptune, 1 p.m.

### CVC's NJSIAA Consolation Schedule Friday's Games Central Jersey III

Hightstown at Triton, 7 p.m.  
Allentown at Jackson Liberty, 7 p.m.

**Central Jersey I**  
Robbinsville at Middlesex, 7 p.m.  
**Saturday's Games**  
**Central Jersey III**

Hamilton at Freehold Boro, 1 p.m.  
N.Burlington at Nottingham, 1 p.m.

Central Ocean Reg. at Hopewell Valley, 1 p.m.

**Central Jersey II**  
Monmouth Reg. at Ewing, 1 p.m.