

SPORTS

Centaur's Face Major Playoff Test

Powerhouse Alemany Comes Here Friday

By Dale Williams
Observer Reporter

For a short time during last Friday's first-round CIF Southern Section Western Division playoff game, the Culver City High football team had a flashback.

And it wasn't good.

In the second quarter, the Centaur's resembled the team that lost three in a row during the middle of the season, a team that was plagued by turnovers and other mistakes. During that three-game losing streak, when Culver City made mistakes, it couldn't turn things around.

But for most of the game against Downey, the Centaur's looked like the team that finished the regular season with a four-game winning streak and won a share of the Ocean League title. And that was the team that ultimately showed up in time for the Centaur's to beat the Vikings, 25-7, with a dominating defensive performance and an efficient, if not spectacular, offensive performance.

Culver City (8-3) won its fifth consecutive game and advanced to play in the quarterfinals Friday night at home against Alemany (10-1), which is the No. 2 seed in the Western Division playoffs.

Alemany's only loss this season was to Notre Dame of Sherman Oaks, the No. 4-ranked team in the state.

"Alemany is by far the best team we will have played since Los Alamitos in 2003," Centaur's coach Tom Salter said. "We're going to have our hands full."

Culver City had its hands full in the first half against Downey (5-6) and led just 13-7 at halftime.

Culver City hadn't turned the ball over in three games, but against Downey the Centaur's had four turnovers - one in the first quarter, and three in the second. That helped keep Downey in the game.

The Centaur's took a 13-0 lead on a one-yard run by quarterback Marquel Carter and a five-yard pass from Carter to Julian Walker, who played in his first game of the season after being ineligible for academic reasons.

But Culver City couldn't blow the game open because of the turnovers, and Downey scored just before halftime to make it close heading into the second half.

"We played a real good first quarter, but then we reverted back to our three-loss form in the second quarter," Salter



Devin Sylvester (16) almost breaks another catch for a TD. Sylvester had four receptions for 107 yards and one touchdown in Culver City's first round 25-7 playoff win over Downey.

photo by George Laase

said. "We were stopping ourselves." But unlike in those losses, Culver City regrouped at halftime and eliminated the turnovers. Carter threw touchdown passes of 45 yards to Devin Sylvester in the third quarter and one yard to Victor Burnett in the fourth to give the Centaur's a comfortable lead, and the defense did the rest.

Culver City held Downey to 153 total yards. Downey averaged less than three yards per play.

Meanwhile, the Centaur's had 404 total yards. Carter threw for 250 yards and three touchdowns (with two interceptions and a lost fumble), and he also ran for 96 yards and a touchdown. Sylvester caught four passes for 108 yards and a touchdown, Walker had five receptions for 52 yards and a TD, and Edwin Tillman had four catches for 67 yards.

On defense, Burnett had 16 tackles, Derick Sanchez had 1, Brian Carey had 11 and a fumble recovery and Ed Howard had seven tackles and two pass breakups.

"We played as well defensively as we had all year," Salter said.

Culver City is in the CIF quarterfi-

nals for the third straight year, but faces one of its toughest opponents in years in Alemany, which beat Highland 47-7 in its first-round playoff game. The Warriors are led by junior running back Malcolm Marable, who has rushed for 1,505 yards and 22 touchdowns, and senior quarterback David Metcalf, who has passed 1,434 yards and 10 TDs.

Alemany won the Mission League and is coached by Dean Herrington, who was an offensive coordinator at longtime powerhouse Hart of Newhall and also coached at College of

the Canyons.

"Alemany is by far the best team we've played all season," Salter said. "They beat Loyola and played Notre Dame tough. They're very talented. They don't have any weaknesses. They have a great running back who's really fast, a good quarterback who can throw and run, and talented receivers. They can do anything they want offensively. If we play our best game, with no turnovers, we have a shot."

Culver Football Results

Sept. 12	Culver 42 - St. Bernard 28
19	Culver 33 - Peninsula 14
26	Culver 21 - Gardena 20
Oct. 3	Crenshaw 21 - Culver 14
10	Redondo 23 - Culver 22
17	Inglewood 36 - Culver 28
24	Culver City 47 - Morningside 20
31	Culver City 35 - Santa Monica 28
Nov. 7	Culver City 42 - Hawthorne 21
14	Culver city 57 - Beverly Hills 27
21	Culver City 25 - Downey 7

West LA Football On The Rise

In the last three football seasons West Los Angeles College won three games and lost 37.

This season, the first for Coach Marguet Miller, the team went 4-6. Three of the losses came in the final seconds.

"We lost those games by three, two and one point," said Miller. "Our program is right there. I like what we have going on."

Recruiting has begun for next season and Miller believes he and his staff are ahead of their pace of a year ago. When there's a coaching change a school often gets a late start in recruiting.

West LA was a high-scoring team

in 2008, which comes as no surprise as Miller had been an offensive co-ordinator at Pasadena City College in 2007 known for having a wide open attack.

"We play exciting football," he said. "Players enjoy that style."

One of West LA's wins was 45-34 over Santa Monica College. But the season's last game was a 42-40 loss to LA Southwest.

"We're recruiting for both sides of the ball,"



Sports editor Mitch Chortkoff's Weekly Column

said Miller. "Not just for offense and not just for defense."

When all-conference recognition was handed out 13 West LA players were honored. The talent level improved considerably over a year ago.

West LA took a major step in its athletic program by bringing back baseball last season following a 21-year absence. A couple of other sports have been added since then.

They're no longer the Oilers. A name change to Wildcats will further the school's efforts to move forward.

The next major sport to begin will be basketball.

West LA remains far behind Culver City High in the minds of most fans of the local teams. There is huge interest in Culver City High's football season which has moved into the second round of the playoffs.

Community colleges have playoffs too and a West LA goal for future years is to qualify and attract the attention of more fans.