

Robert F. Hall Wolfpack rumble into ROPSSAA football playoffs after impressive season

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The ROPSSAA football season schedule has been completed, and with the snow, sleet, and tough weather conditions, comes the tenacity of late fall football playoffs.

The Robert F. Hall Wolfpack are pawing at the chance to get their first taste of the postseason after one of their more successful seasons in recent years, capping off a 5-1-0 season on Halloween day last week against the Mayfield Mavericks.

Under rainy conditions, the Wolfpack used a tough ground game to move the chains fast and early, recovering a fumble in the final two minutes of the first half before returning it for a touchdown just two plays later to make it 18 ? 0.

Hall's defensive line held tight throughout the season finale, finishing off with a score of 28 ? 1, foreshadowing what a quarterfinal rematch with Mayfield that has the odds surely swinging in Hall's favour.

Wolfpack head coach Jason Sweeney said commitment has played a key role in generating this year's success.

?As a Varsity squad, there are Grade 9s and 10s on the squad playing senior ball, yet they come out every day, knowing they will get very little playing time,? said Sweeney. ?That dedication has been the key to our success every year as those players learn and step into starting roles in their senior years.

Sweeney and the rest of the football staff had hopes of fielding a junior age team this year, though cuts from the Ford government dashed any chances, not wanting to risk the uncertainty of lost coaches and unused equipment.

Yet this year's crop of varsity athletes were able to put up a whopping 141 points over their six-game schedule, joining St. Thomas Aquinas far above and beyond the rest of the division in terms of output.

?This year, the standouts have been our offensive line, who have been dominant,? said Sweeney. ?Every one of them could be up for an All Star spot.?

Hall's only loss of the season came at the hands of Aquinas in early October, falling 28 ? 14.

And so, a couple of movers and shakers in the final week of the regular season has set up a rematch between Hall and Mayfield.

Mayfield earned their playoff ticket by the means of a wild card entry, after Meadowvale lost to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the final game of the regular season.

The two face off on Friday at noon on Hall's field, while Philip Pocock will take on St. Martin in the day's other quarterfinal.

Sweeney stressed the importance of his Pack needing to continue moving the ball through the air despite the cold temperatures, though as the saying goes: defense wins championships.

?Defense is always the key to any success in the postseason, and this will be no different.?

Both the undefeated St. Thomas Aquinas and Mount Carmel received byes to the semifinal round after finishing at the top of the North and South divisions respectively, with the winner of Hall/Mayfield taking on Mount Carmel on Nov. 14.

Hall was knocked out of the ROPSSAA playoffs in the quarterfinal round last season, falling to David Suzuki after putting up a record of 4 ? 2.