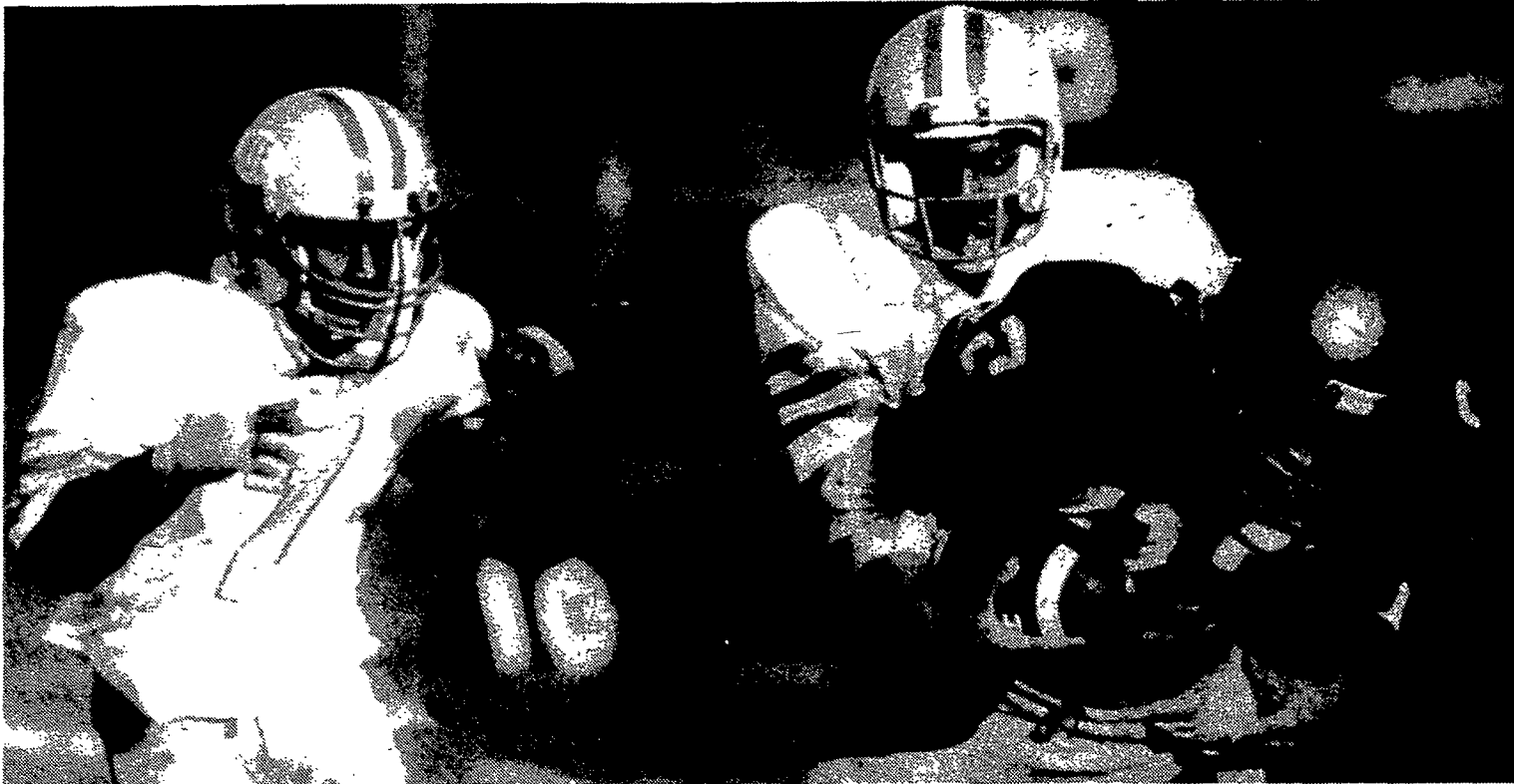


# Mooney caps impressive year, earns first playoff berth



After receiving a pass from Mooney's Scott Baker, Robert Ford (# 7) and William Robinson tackle Jim Pavone at the 15-yard line, setting Mooney up in a scoring position in the second quarter.

By Kevin Myers  
The Cardinal Mooney football team beat Jefferson 21-16 Saturday, Nov. 2, to earn its first playoff berth ever in the Section 5, Class AAA Sectionals.

For the Cardinals' new coach, John Heck, the playoff berth is a sweet success. Heck has turned the team — which was 0-8 last year and 2-14 the two previous years — into Mooney's first winning team since the 1970s. But the way Mooney played Saturday against Jefferson was not so pleasant. "As a team, we lost our composure," he said. "The kids were not playing with full intensity. It should have been a comfortable 28-0 win."

The Cardinals dominated the first half of the game. They scored on their first three possessions: twice in the first quarter, and again in the second quarter, to clench a 21-0 lead at halftime.

With the aid of a Jefferson fumble, the Cardinals started their first drive on the Statesmen's 26-yard line. Defensive back

Mike Fusilli fell on the fumble, which occurred shortly after the opening kickoff. The Cardinals were not able to convert another first down, though, on third-and-four, and Joe Johnston's 30-yard field goal attempt fell short.

But Johnston's efforts were not to go unrewarded. Jefferson was called for roughing the kicker, a 15-yard penalty, and the Cardinals were awarded the first down on the 10-yard line. Quarterback Scott Barker hooked up with split end Fusilli, now on offense, in the right corner of the end zone for the touchdown. Johnston kicked for the extra point, putting the Cardinals ahead by seven.

Barker threw for another touchdown in the first quarter, after a pumped-up Cardinal defense held the Statesmen offense to only three yards and forced them to punt. The Cardinals converted for the first, on fourth-and-inches, with a quarterback sneak, but were then called for clipping on first

down. On second down, the Cardinals still needed 20 yards for the first. But Barker placed a perfectly thrown ball over the left shoulder of tight end Jim Pavone for a 50-yard touchdown play. Johnson scored the extra point, stretching the lead to 14-0.

The Statesmen's next drive covered 60 yards, but the Jefferson team remained scoreless after outside linebackers Tony Messura and Mike Yodus sacked Jefferson quarterback William Robinson at the 22-yard line on fourth down.

In the second quarter, on their third possession, the Cardinals were forced to start on their own side of the field for the first time in the game. But a beautiful fake handoff by Barker, and a 19-yard sweep by running back John Koonman brought the Cardinals right back into the Statesmen territory.

On the following play, Barker completed a 15-yard pass to Pavone, who was tackled at

the 23-yard line, and then Koonman carried nine yards to the 12-yard. Joe Bonnell scrambled to the two-yard line on second down on a pitch-out from Barker. Two plays later, Barker sneaked in for the touchdown. Johnson kicked again for the extra point.

In the second half, Robinson looked more like Jefferson's halfback than its quarterback, and Mooney looked more like the underdog than the playoff-bound favorite. Robinson ran six times for 61 yards and a touchdown on the Statesmen's first possession of the half. Robinson also ran the ball in for the two-point conversion.

The Cardinals had yet another chance deep in Jefferson territory on their next possession, after blocking a Statesmen punt. But Barker was intercepted on first down.

The Statesmen had control of the ball for most of the second half, and with the aid of Jefferson's "trick" offensive lineup (shifting all the linemen to the left side of the field), Robinson continued to gain yardage. "It's almost impossible to cover the pass and the run against it," Heck said, referring to the peculiar lineup. "Essentially," Heck said, "it is an organized scramble."

Robinson threw a 12-yard touchdown pass to Roy Atkins in the fourth quarter and ran for the two-point conversion, narrowing Mooney's lead to 21-16, but the Statesmen ran out of time.

An unexpected McQuaid defeat to Franklin Saturday annulled Mooney's expected match-up with Fairport in the first round of the sectional tournament. Mooney will instead play second-ranked McQuaid, and Fairport will play fourth-ranked Brockport.

Mooney lost to its Catholic foe, McQuaid, earlier this season. "I think they were a better team than us that game," Heck said. "Our kids will have to be hungry and play flawless football to beat them in the sectionals." He said, however, that his game plan will not change as a result of the team's unexpected pairing with McQuaid. "The teams (McQuaid and Fairport) are similar," Heck said. "They both like to run, but do a good job of play-action passing. They both have a good number of players, and good size. And they both have aggressive offenses."

Mooney will play McQuaid Saturday, Nov. 9, at 6 p.m. at Fauver Stadium on the University of Rochester Campus. The Fairport vs. Brockport game is scheduled to follow at 8:30 p.m.

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