

AQ upset in playoffs; Crusaders win finale

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Fourth-seeded Irondequoit pulled off a big upset in the Section 5 football playoffs last weekend when the Indians rolled over top-seeded Aquinas Institute 34-21 in a Class BB semifinal game at the University of Rochester's Fauver Stadium.

Meanwhile, Elmira Notre Dame (6-3) ended its season on a high note with a 35-0 thrashing of host Dryden Nov. 8.

The Little Irish (8-1) entered their semifinal contest against Irondequoit (5-3-1) Nov. 9 hoping that their time-consuming, ball-control offense could grind out another win.

Unfortunately for AQ, Irondequoit also boasted a similar ball-control style. Consequently, the two squads battled neck-and-neck throughout the first half.

The Indians took the opening kickoff and moved 73 yards in eight plays to score. The successful point-after gave Irondequoit a 7-0 lead.

But Aquinas responded with its own 73-yard, 14-play drive culminating with a 10-yard Matt Piccone touchdown run early in the second quarter. Mike Sloan kicked the extra point, and the score was tied 7-7.

With the ball back in their hands, the Indians marched 89 yards for another score. Another successful kick gave them a 14-7 lead.

The Irish took possession once more, and capped their drive with Piccone's two-yard scoring plunge with just 25

seconds left in the half. The point after kick failed, however, and Aquinas trailed 14-13 at intermission.

Aquinas had the ball to open the second half, but this time Irondequoit's defense managed to stop the Irish. Irondequoit then drove for another touchdown. The successful point-after gave the Indians a 21-13 lead.

The Little Irish responded with an impressive drive of their own, pulling to within 21-19 on Phil Wegman's eight-yard TD run. Quarterback Tony Fanale took the ball in himself on the conversion, and the score was knotted at 21-21.

Early in the fourth quarter, however, Irondequoit regained the lead, capping a 72-yard drive with a 16-yard scoring run. The point-after kick failed, but the Indians had a 27-21 edge.

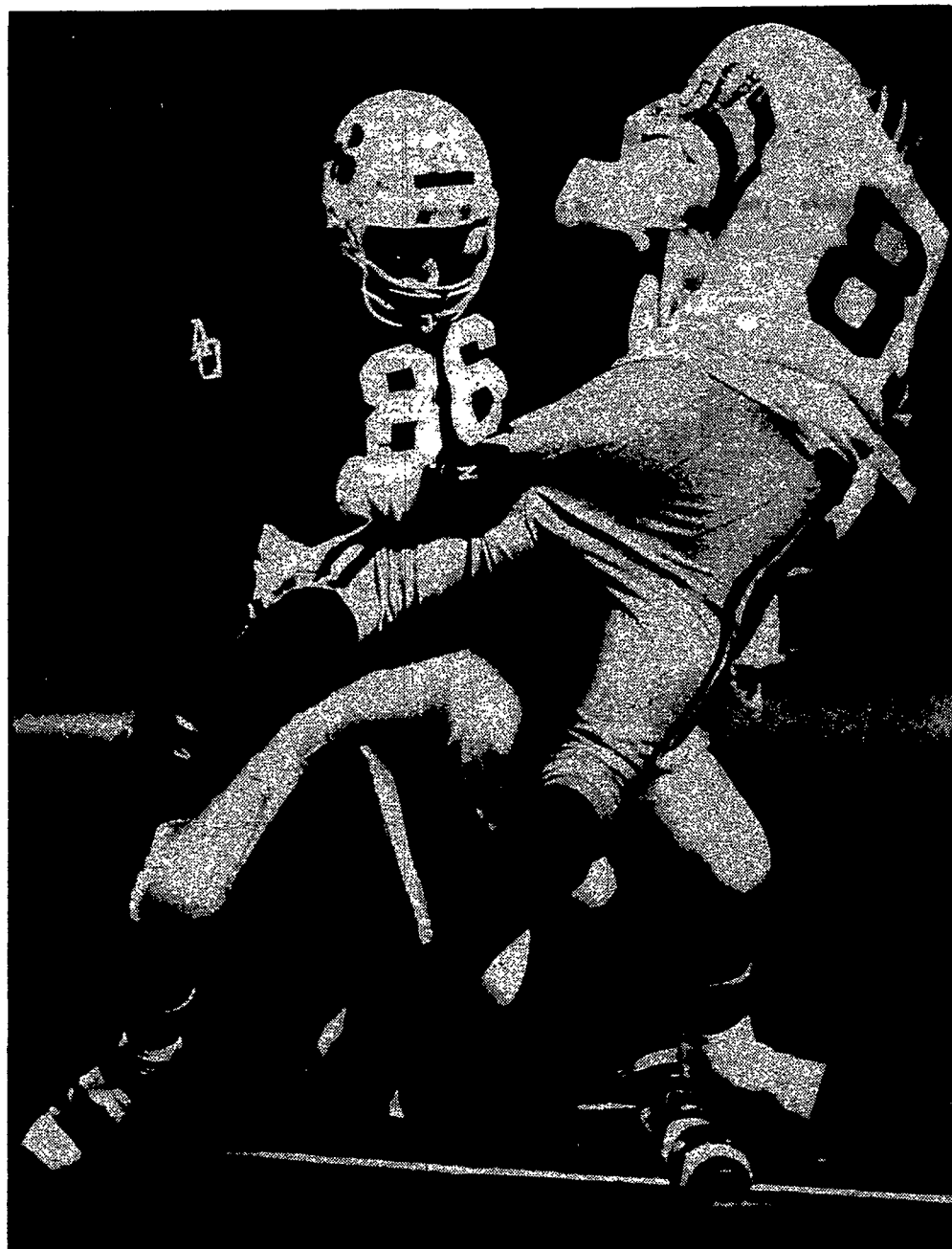
On Aquinas' next possession, the Irish moved to the Indians' 35. Fanale dropped back to pass on fourth-and-12, but got flushed out of the pocket and was tackled two yards short of the first down.

Irondequoit scored two plays later on a 61-yard run. The successful kick gave the Indians a 34-21 win.

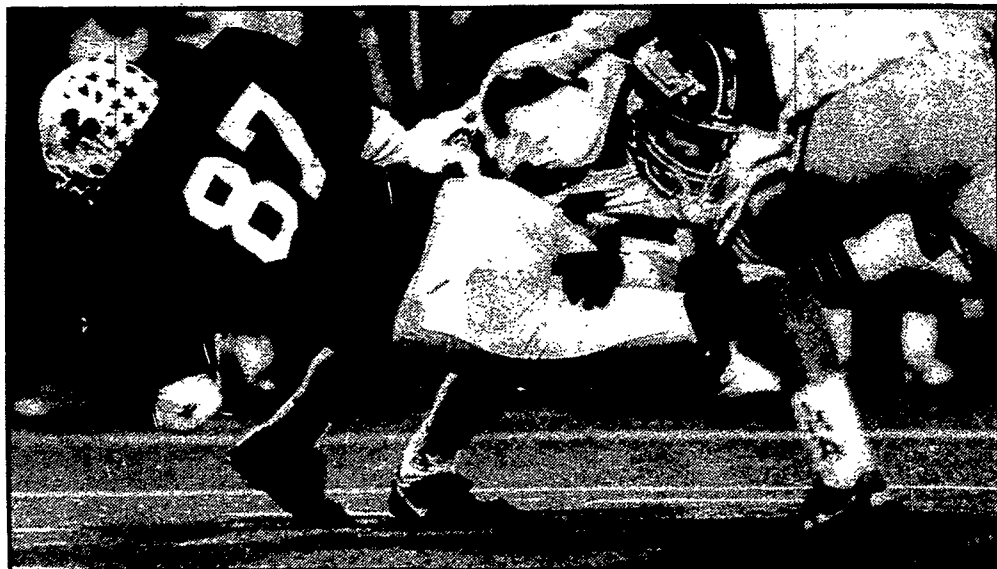
Little Irish Coach Joe Munno said the key to the loss was his team's inability to stop Irondequoit. The Indians scored on all five of their possessions.

"They didn't do anything that we did not expect," Munno said. "We just didn't play defense."

Meanwhile, over in Section 4, Notre Dame's Crusaders consoled themselves for not receiving a post-season bowl bid by crushing Dryden 35-0.



Jason Madigan of Aquinas tackles Irondequoit's Dana Greathead on the AQ goal line during the Section 5 Class BB semifinal game at the University of Rochester's Fauver Stadium Nov. 9. Despite Madigan's efforts, Greathead went on to score the touchdown.



Irondequoit's Todd Psnak sends Aquinas rusher Marc Johnson airborne during the Indians' 34-21 win over Aquinas at Fauver Stadium.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

Notre Dame won its third Division IV game in four tries by limiting league rival Dryden (1-3) to just 58 yards of offense.

Meanwhile, the Crusaders' offense churned out 372 yards.

Freshman Joel Stevens, in only his second game on the varsity, led the ND rushing game with 133 yards on 17 carries. He also scored one touchdown.

The Crusader onslaught began in the first quarter when Notre Dame's Mike Cornacchio recovered a fumble at the Dryden 20. Jason Cresswell scored on six-yard run, and Pat Palmer's successful kick gave ND a 7-0 lead.

Stevens scored later in the quarter on a two-yard plunge, Palmer again connected on the conversion kick, and the Crusaders led 14-0.

Notre Dame added a one-yard Cresswell scoring run in the third

quarter. The lead was 21-0 after Palmer's successful kick.

The Crusaders added two more scores in the fourth quarter — Palmer on a three-yard run, and Dan Wilson on a one-yard plunge. Palmer was successful on both point-after kicks for the final 35-0 margin.

The key to the game, ND Coach Mike D'Aloisio noted, was his defenses' ability to dominate the game from the outset. Defensive end Cornacchio accounted for four sacks and recovered two fumbles. The Crusaders' defense recovered four Dryden fumbles in the game.

D'Aloisio pointed out that quarterback Bryan Woodworth, who compiled 98 yards on 8-for-19 passing in the game, finished as the top-rated passer in Section 4 this season. Woodworth tallied 1,330 yards on 92-for-182 passing.



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