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Football Weekly: NHS' Barber full of fire Wildcat defensive lineman plays with a lot of energy

BY JOSH HACHAT • SPORTS WRITER • SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

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NEWARK -- Opposing offensive linemen might smile when they see the slim 6-foot-4, 200-pound figure of Newark's Nic Barber lining up opposite them.

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But while their first thought might be that they're in for an easy night, their next thought might be wondering where the senior went.

In many cases this year, Barber has flown past the bigger linemen, wreaking havoc in opponents' backfield with a blend of quickness and athleticism.

"He's a handful," Newark coach Jeff Buchanan said. "When he gets matched up with someone on the offensive line, it's difficult for linemen to block him because of his speed. You have to account for him all the time."

Offenses are learning that the hard way, especially in recent games.

Barber was instrumental in the Wildcats' 19-13 win against Thomas Worthington, and he played well in last week's 45-7 loss to Gahanna in the Ohio Capital Conference-Ohio Division opener.

This came after a bit of a slow start, which was understandable considering he was one of several current seniors who didn't play in 2007.

The year away led to more excitement heading into this season.

"I was very anxious," Barber said. "I'm glad I'm able to get in there and play."

Barber played some varsity as a sophomore and hasn't played defensive end since fifth grade, but he admitted it took some time to adjust from his year away, along with Buchanan's new schemes and defensive



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Newark quarterback Rahlin Wat during Week 4 game at Gahanna. The game was on Friday at White Field. (Darrin ...)

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The Raiders easily could be 2-2. Their start keeps up with how things have been in Reynoldsburg, which runs the offense and operates out of a 4-3 on defense. They suffered a 24-7 loss and fell to Grove City in the Capital Conference-Ohio Division opener.

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Barber was thinking too much to start the season, but he has found a rhythm in recent weeks.

"He's getting a feel as to what's expected of him," Buchanan said. "We have him focus on defense and keep his responsibilities limited so he can use his athleticism and let him read and react."

Barber said he has gradually become more comfortable during the year.

"I've been working hard," Barber said. "It started a little bumpy, but things are starting to go better."

"I've really worked on my speed getting off the ball, trying to get to the quarterback. I just want to do anything to help the team."

He's done plenty thus far, and Buchanan often has singled him out for praise because of his high energy level.

TW felt the brunt of that energy two weeks ago. Barber consistently applied pressure from the end, forcing quarterback Sam Bohon into several hurried throws.

He finished with two sacks, an interception and several batted balls.

Against Gahanna, Barber had a sack and batted down two more passes. Unfortunately, a third deflection redirected a pass to receiver Brandon Magbagbeola, who ended up racing 91 yards for the go-ahead score.

But when asked what he always notices about Barber, Buchanan quickly answered.

"The level at which he plays," Buchanan said. "He is an example to everyone on the team (of) how hard you have to play to be successful. He goes full speed all the time. I want that effort to be contagious."

Barber hopes it spreads Friday against Reynoldsburg, with Newark seeking its first home win of the year.

"We're anxious to prove we can play some football," Barber said. "Hopefully we'll use that anger to help us play harder and attack with some intensity."

Zanesville 30, **NEWARK 14**

Dayton Dunbar 21, **NEWARK 3***

NEWARK 19, Thomas Worthington 13

Gahanna 45, **NEWARK 7**

UP NEXT: Reynoldsburg

Sept. 26: at Groveport

Oct. 3: at Grove City

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