

## FOOTBALL

# Central plans to counter Newark's size with speed

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**BY AARON BLANKENSHIP**

ThisWeek Staff Writer

The Newark High School football team was held to (minus)-5 yards rushing last Friday in a 28-7 loss to Grove City as it dropped to 1-6 overall and 0-4 in the OCC-Ohio Division.

Pickerington Central's defense has been especially stingy against the run, allowing 427 yards on 215 carries through seven games as the Tigers are 7-0 and 4-0.

Regardless, Newark coach Jeff Buchanan said his team will attempt to run right at Central on Friday when the Wildcats play host to the Tigers.

Newark's I-formation offense is led by quarterback Chase Mathie, tackle Dannell Smith, tight end Taylor Huffman, split end La'Velle Spivey, tailback D'Andrea Mitchell and wide receiver Rahlin Watson.

Mathie threw an 18-yard touchdown pass to Watson last Friday, but also threw two interceptions. Since switching from quarterback to receiver, Watson has 13 catches in three games.

"Their defense is so fast and athletic," Buchanan said. "They get to the ball so quickly that you can't run away from them. To have any chance of winning this game, we'll need to run the ball at them successfully and see if we can create a passing game off some (play-action). We have a nice group of players up front and they'll need to have their best game this week."

Central coach Jay Sharrett said his linebackers and backs will need to use their speed to race to the point of attack and keep Newark's receivers covered.

The Tigers' multiple-front defense -- led by backs Patrick White and Jamie Wood, linebacker Zach Boren and lineman Blaine Burgess -- has given up only four touchdowns and has forced 18 turnovers.

"Newark has a large offensive line, so we've got to be fast and not let them lean on us," Sharrett said. "They run north-south pretty hard, so we've got to meet them at the line of scrimmage and stabilize them. We've got to be prepared for play-action pass, too, because they're very good at disguising it."

Sharrett said Central will run at Newark's 4-3 defense, which is led by end Nic Barber, tackle Smith and back



BY TIM REVELL/THISWEEK

**Paris Wadlington of Central grabs Groveport quarterback Jordan Elmore last Friday. The host Tigers rolled to a 49-21 victory. They will play Friday at Newark.**

Terrence Steele.

"It's hard to get Newark's defense out of position with misdirection plays because they know their assignments, so we'll have to move them with good drive-blocking," Sharrett said. "We'll need to get our short-passing game going, too. When we're mixing in our passing game and running the ball well, and we have a number of different people running and catching the ball, that's when we're most effective."

Nick Raymond is 61-for-118 passing for 888 yards with 11 touchdowns and four interceptions.

But Raymond suffered a separated left shoulder making a tackle midway through the second quarter last Friday during a 49-21 victory over Groveport and he didn't return.

Raymond sat out the second half of a 40-7 victory over Gahanna on Sept. 26 after taking a hit on a passing play.

Backup quarterback John Montgomery is 3-for-8 passing for 68 yards with one interception.

"Nick has already been cleared to play, but we'll see how he's feeling as the week goes on, so we'll list him as questionable," Sharrett said.

"John Montgomery will be ready to go if needed and we know both of our quarterbacks can get the job done."

Tyler Hammond has rushed for 552 yards and five touchdowns on 82 carries and Boren has rushed for 195 yards and six touchdowns on 47 carries.

White has 18 catches for 289 yards and three touchdowns, Wood has 14 receptions for 202 yards and two scores and Jared Miller has 13 catches for 201 yards and three touchdowns.

"We've struggled more against the run than the pass, and we'll need to do a better job of tackling in this game," Buchanan said. "They've got great athleticism, so there's no margin for error. We can't make mistakes or give them any opportunities to make big plays."

At a glance

NEXT GAME

CENTRAL at NEWARK

•When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

•Last meeting: 2002, Pickerington 23-7

•Newark (1-6 overall, 0-4 OCC-Central) to date: Lost to Zanesville 30-14; lost to Dayton Dunbar 35-3; defeated Thomas Worthington 19-13; lost to Gahanna 45-7; lost to Reynoldsburg 10-3; lost to Groveport 20-6; lost to Grove City 28-7

•Top Wildcats: Nic Barber, Taylor Huffman, Chase Mathie, D'Andrea Mitchell, Dannel Smith, La'Velle Spivey, Terrence Steele and Rahlin Watson

LAST GAME

CENTRAL 49, GROVEPORT 21

•Star: Nick Raymond, who completed 6 of 10 passes for 124 yards and three touchdowns before leaving with

a shoulder injury in the second quarter

- Key play: Patrick White returned a missed field goal 97 yards for a touchdown as time expired in the second quarter to give the Tigers a 27-10 lead.

- Key stat: The 21 points allowed by Central was more than it had allowed in its first six games combined (20).

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