

C Gazette 11/10/09
Playoff football makes debut on Baltimore Rd.

■ **2A West Region:
No. 4 Middletown at No. 1 Rockville**

BY DAN GREENBERG
STAFF WRITER

Before the season began, Rockville football coach Kevin Bernot observed the difference between his former locale — Sherwood — and his current one.

Note the past tense.

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RAMS

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After winning a 4A state championship last fall as an assistant, Bernot noticed "athletes walking the hallways here who don't play football, which just didn't happen where I was." But as maybe the county's most pleasant surprise of 2009, the Rams are now a legitimate title contender at the onset of the 2A West Region playoffs.

As the No. 1 seed, they will host a first-round playoff game — against Frederick County's Middletown — for the first time in school history.

Surely, their new man at the helm could not have seen that coming?

"I'm always thinking about getting to the playoffs; it was kind of an extension of the season at Sherwood," he said.

So how did the Rams go from also-rans to 8-1?

The answer begins and ends with the county's leading rusher, junior Crusoe Gongbay has been unreal, despite missing the better part of two games. But in the other seven he has 180 carries, 1,494 yards and 20 touchdowns.

"We have the best back in the county," Bernot said. "I think if you put Crusoe at QO or Sherwood, he's going to be the leading rusher."

But Bernot is just as quick to point out that the Rams are no one-man gang. They have shined on the other side of the ball, and the linebackers have been marvelous, with sophomore revelation Derico Williams and leading tacklers Kevin O'Brien and Robbie Parker.

NO. 4 MIDDLETOWN (6-4) AT NO. 1 ROCKVILLE (8-1)

Class 2A West Region semifinal

7 p.m. Friday

Last meeting: None

■ **Middletown Knights**

Last playoff appearance:
2008 (17th)

Best finish: State runner-up (1981, 1991, 2002)

Head coach: Kevin Lynott
(second year, 14-8 record)

Leading rusher: Koby Cavanaugh
(142 carries, 669 yards, 9 TD)

Leading passer: Sam Glushakow
(63 of 137, 901 yards, 11 TD, 5 int.)

Leading receiver: Pat Ryan (16 catches, 292 yards, 5 TD)

Leading defenders: DE Will Lyons, LB Koby Cavanaugh, DB Pat Ryan

Points scored: 279

Points allowed: 196



■ **Rockville Rams**

Last playoff appearance:
2007 (third)

Best finish: Class 2A state quarterfinals (1997)

Head coach: Kevin Bernot
(first year, 8-1 record)

Leading rusher: Crusoe Gongbay (180 carries, 1,494 yards, 20 TD)

Leading passer: Chris Brown (15 of 55, 214 yards, 3 TD, 0 int.)

Leading receiver: Rob McTigue (6 catches, 94 yards, 2 TD)

Leading defenders: LB Kevin O'Brien, LB Derico Williams, CB Wayne Jackson

Points scored: 276

Points allowed: 126



Bernot is well aware of his team's one glaring question mark: If the ground game is slowed, can it count on the pass? If the Rams are to make a deep playoff run, they will likely have to at some point.

Even when Gongbay was out, quarterback Chris Brown did not have to air it out; Nate Nolasco and Parker both produced 100-yard games against Northwood.

"Robbie can throw it well," Bernot said. "We can put Robbie and Crusoe back there, direct snap to Crusoe, or snap it to Robbie, who can run or throw. We've got some different things going on."

In some respects, the opponent is a bit of a mystery, at just 6-4 but with a playoff pedigree. The Knights — who beat previously unbeaten Clarksburg in the first round a year ago — struggled to grab the fourth seed, needing a 36-point second-half explosion to top Walkersville in a win-you're-in Week 10 game.

On the other hand, "they're not tricky," according to Bernot. What they are is balanced, with a dual-threat quarterback in Sam Glushakow and a bell cow running back in Sam Michels, who rushed for 139 yards and three touchdowns Friday.

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