

Polar opposites

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■ 4A West Region:

No. 3 Paint Branch at No. 2 Whitman

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Whitman and Paint Branch enter their 4A West Region first-round matchup on opposite sides of the spectrum.

The Vikings, as healthy as they have been all year, got a big confidence boost with a come-from-behind victory in a win-you're-in game at Churchill. Meanwhile, injury-riddled Paint Branch is coming off the worst loss of its season.

Working in Paint Branch's favor is its 5-0 record on the road, not to mention a bigger, more athletic roster. That is fine by the Vikings, who have been outsize in several games this year.

"Danny Lee has just been tremendous all year for us in the middle," Whitman coach Jim Kuhn said. "What happens in our scheme of

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VIKINGS

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things is teams have to put two guys to account for Danny every play. You block him with one guy and he will beat that block every time. He really deserves a lot of the credit."

The Vikings can be deliberate, but effective. Against Churchill on Friday, there were only five total possessions in the second half; Whitman had three of them, scoring twice.

Junior Henry Kuhn has come into his own as a second-year starting quarterback, with three big-time targets to choose from: 6-foot-1, 180-pound sophomore Michael Flack and speedy seniors Craig Fraser and Larry Kline.

They can pound it, too, with third-year starting running back Kevin Cecala.

Paint Branch sophomore Bene't Willis eventually figures to be what Cecala currently is. In his first year taking handoffs for the Panthers, he has gained more than 900 yards on the ground.

And when healthy, Paint Branch senior quarterback Tracy Martin is maybe the preeminent dual threat in the county. In addition to his passing numbers, he has rushed for more

than 400 yards and 3 touchdowns. He is also blessed with a unique weapon, 6-foot-2, 200-pound senior Ivan Tague, who leads all county receivers in touchdown catches.

The question is: Will Martin be physically ready?

"When we're healthy, we're very

NO. 3 PAINT BRANCH (8-2) AT NO. 2 WHITMAN (8-2)

Class 4A West Region semifinal

7 p.m. Friday

Last meeting: None since 1998

■ Paint Branch Panthers

Last playoff appearance: 2000 (sixth)

Best finish: Class B state champions (1975)

Head coach: Michael Nesmith (third year, 22-8 record)

Leading rusher: Bene't Willis (116 carries, 891 yards, 12 TD)

Leading passer: Tracy Martin (55 of 126, 908 yards, 13 TD, 7 int.)

Leading receiver: Ivan Tague (37 catches, 563 yards, 8 TD)

Leading defenders: LB Ivan Tague, DB Tracy Martin

Points scored: 268

Points allowed: 141



■ Whitman Vikings

Last playoff appearance: 2007 (fourth)

Best finish: Class AA finalist (1978)

Head coach: Jim Kuhn (Third year, 18-13 record)

Leading rusher: Kevin Cecala (189 carries, 837 yards, 9 TD)

Leading passer: Henry Kuhn (94 of 186, 1,193 yards, 11 TD, 6 int.)

Leading receiver: Michael Flack (40 catches, 550 yards, 7 TD)

Leading defenders: DE Danny Lee, DB Michael Flack, DB Carson Kline

Points scored: 206

Points allowed: 129



multiple," Panthers coach Mike Nesmith said. "Tracy has been hurt the last month and you've seen Tague's numbers go down. When we're healthy, we can throw as well as run, and it puts defenses in a bind trying to decide what they're going to take away from us."