

That's more like it

■ **Football playoffs return to normal for PHS after unusual format last season**



PLYMOUTH PICKS UP another shutout, as Andru Miller (19) and Caelen Lund (33) make a tackle. - Photos by Tyler Luedtke

The real football playoffs have returned.

"It's just exciting to be back in playoff atmosphere, getting ready for a Level 2 game in late October," Plymouth coach Dan Knaus said. "It feels good."

The top-seeded Panthers crushed No. 8 Milwaukee Madison, 51-0, last Friday in a Division 3 first-round game.

Last season, the 'playoffs' consisted of only two games and no champions were determined because of the pandemic.

"This season is way better in regards to that," Knaus said. "Last year, it was just like two extra games and didn't feel like a playoff of any type. It just felt like another regular-season game. It's really nice to have the normal format."

Plymouth, ranked fifth in the state, improved to 10-0 for the first time since 2012 by scoring seven touchdowns in the first half against a Madison squad that won three games all year – and two were via forfeits.

So it was no surprise the Panthers attempted just one pass and finished with 200 yards rushing.

"We pretty much called two running plays the whole game," Knaus said.

Dylon Sass and Ian Struve each scored twice, and JV quarterback Jordan Schmitt picked up his first varsity touchdown.

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- Dan Knaus



ALEX AMES (8) tries to get more yards Friday in a playoff win over Milwaukee Marshall. - Photo by Tyler Luedtke

HIGHLIGHT OF GAME

Having already caught his first touchdown pass earlier this season, Jake Shutter returned a blocked punt for a score to add to his resume.

"I was just containing anything that would come to the outside or if they wanted to do a fake punt, that's my job to stop that," the linebacker said.

But then Shutter saw the punt blocked by who he thought was Marco Troka.

"It just fell right into my hands," said Shutter, who scored from 21 yards out.

He then was credited with a safety to give Plymouth a 30-0 lead in the second quarter, but admits several teammates helped out.

"A lot of people came in because it was a pretty big running back," Shutter said. "We needed a lot of people to bring him down."

STUDYING PAYS OFF

Plymouth was one of 43 schools across the state to be recognized by the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association for its grade-point average by its seniors.

The Panthers' GPA was 3.38, and Mason Brill-Meerdink, Kellan Mella and Jake Steinhart also received individual academic all-state for having one of at least 3.75.

GAME PREVIEW



No. 5 Pewaukee (8-2) at No. 1 Plymouth (10-0), 7 p.m. Friday in a Division 3 second-round playoff game.

SCOUTING REPORT OFFENSE

Pewaukee, which has won five games in a row (one by forfeit), averages 33 points per game. But in its two losses, including one to Catholic Memorial (ranked No. 1 in the Division 4 state poll) the Pirates have managed a total of only 10 points. ... The Pirates have scored 33 rushing touchdowns compared to just four passing. Five different players have at least four TDs on the ground, and Carter Pearson (No. 31) gains 10.6 yards per carry.

DEFENSE

Pewaukee allows only 7.2 points per game and has given up three touchdowns in the first half. ... The Pirates have five shutouts, including three in their last four contests. ... Max Sheridan (No. 7) and Nick Dettlaff (No. 8) have a combined 24 tackles for loss, three sacks and one interception.

PORT COMPARISON

Pewaukee lost to the Pirates, 15-7, on Aug. 27 by giving up two touchdown passes and 100 yards receiving to Patrick Lippe. The Pirates rushed for 218 yards but completed just three passes.

Plymouth defeated Port Washington, 14-6, on Sept. 24, after limiting Lippe to four catches for 14 yards and giving up a touchdown with just 45 seconds left in the game. The Panthers rushed for 196 yards and completed nine passes.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Plymouth beat Pewaukee, 10-6, in a 2019 second-round game. The day started with snowblowers on the Finke Field after a small dumping and ended with the Panthers in the quarterfinal round for the first time since '13.

"Last time we played them, I think we each had five possessions in the entire game," PHS coach Dan Knaus said. "We're both grind-'em-out, clock-running teams, so we've got to take care of the ball and do all the little things right."

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