

Undefeated D3 State Champs



Times photos: Adam Krebs and Natalie Dillon

TOP LEFT: Monroe hoists the gold ball after defeating West Salem 35-14 in the WIAA Division 3 State Championship game on Friday, Nov. 18 at Camp Randall Stadium.

TOP RIGHT: Seniors Alex Hernandez (left) and Isaac Bunker (right) embrace after ending their final high school football game as State Champions.

UPPER LEFT: Head coach Toby Golembiewski hugs his father, WFOA Hall of Fame coach Jerry after the win.

UPPER MIDDLE: Alex Hernandez (31) and Charlie Wiegel (40) race to the student section to celebrate the championship with fans.

UPPER RIGHT: Alex Hernandez ran for 122 yards against West Salem. He ended the season as the Cheesemakers' leading rusher with 1,609 yards.

LOWER LEFT: Monroe's Mitchell Ferguson makes a TikTok from the student section.

LOWER RIGHT: George Brukwicki kicks off to the Panthers to start the game.

BELOW LEFT: Lane Meier makes one of his five solo tackles of the game.

BELOW CENTER: Tucker Markham celebrates his second rushing touchdown of the game. He would go on to add two more, tying the Division 3 record for most rushing touchdowns and most touchdowns in a game.

BELOW RIGHT: Drew Indergand breaks up a pass intended for Brennan Kennedy. The incomplete pass on fourth-and-eight resulted in a turnover on downs, giving Monroe the ball at their own 37 in the third quarter.

BOTTOM LEFT: Kaden Kuester tackles Andy Johnson in the end zone. Brett McConkey's touchdown pass to Johnson in the fourth quarter was West Salem's second and final score of the game.

BOTTOM CENTER: Keatin Sweeney forces a fumble after McConkey's successful pass to Chris Colico in the second quarter. Tucker Markham recovered, setting Monroe up at West Salem's 36.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Seth Schmidt tackles Kennedy on a kick return.



CONGRATULATIONS
 DIVISION 3 STATE CHAMPIONS!
 MONROE CHEESEMAKERS

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A Community Celebration



Times photos: Adam Krebs and Natalie Dillon
LEFT: Keeping with tradition, the football team gathers in front of the student section after its win to sing the school song. **BELOW FAR LEFT:** Future Monroe football players cheer on their idols. **BELOW LEFT:** The student section erupts after a big play, showing their support with signs. **BELOW RIGHT:** The high school cheer team performs at half under the direction of head coach BreAnna Kapp. **BELOW FAR RIGHT:** Lilly Cherney performs the National Anthem as the team's lucky charm. Cherney had sung the National Anthem at the Cheesemaker's last four playoff games. **BOTTOM FAR LEFT:** The Monroe dance team performed at half time under the direction of head coach Kathryn Zastrow. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Students in the front row get hyped. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The pep band set the tone with its pregame performance under the direction of Erin Hanke. **BOTTOM FAR RIGHT:** The cheerleaders kept the student section energetic.

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Cheese

From B1

helped us out. We were able to absorb the ebb and flow of the game, and then capitalize on our stuff," Golembiewski said.

When the final whistle blew and his players celebrated at midfield, Golembiewski turned to the south side of his sideline, where his father Jerry Golembiewski — a Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Hall of Famer — stood taking pictures, just as he has for years. The father and son embraced in a prideful hug, with smiles ear-to-ear.

"It was so cool to have him along for it. He's from a different era of coaching, and he was with teams that didn't always have great success — there were a couple of conference championships and playoffs, but this had to be really something for him, too, to be on this ride," Toby Golembiewski said.

Monroe also finished the regular season 15 yards from the all-time state single-season rushing record held by Owen-Withee (5,519), set in 2007.

"That would have really been something, but I don't know that I could have lived with myself if we didn't make sure we got all those guys in the game and onto the field. It wouldn't have been the right thing to do," Golembiewski said. "Now it's something to go for next year, too."

Throughout the season, the team had ample opportunities to tack on more rushing yards, but didn't need to, as 10 of Monroe's 14 games were decided by more than 35 points, which triggers the mercy-rule running clock, and the Cheesemakers typically filled that time by putting in the second and third string players.

The gold ball is the sixth in program history, joining the teams in 1986, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1995.

The entire school district got in on the fun as well. Players paraded the middle and elementary school halls the day before the big game, high fiving younger fans. Signs of encouragement temporarily clung to highway posts north of town for fans to view on the way to the game. A firetruck parade back into town after the win welcomed the players and coaches back, and a pep rally at the high school gym kept the energy alive.

In fact, the energy was electric at Camp Randall itself. While the temperatures for the state championship were cold — with wind chills in the single digits — the sun still came out and some snowflakes flew around the bowl, adding to the ambiance. Monroe junior Lilly Cherney wowed the crowd with a stunning rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner in pregame. Monroe's pep band was able to play, and both Monroe dance and cheer squads were able to perform at halftime. The student section even got in on the act, posting chants

to social media during the game.

"The energy from everyone who showed out across the town — how we all banded together and support our teams fueled us out there," Markham said.

A LONG TIME COMING

As a program, Monroe reached the state title game eight times in an 11-year stretch from 1986-1996 under former coach Pat Martin. A dry spell during the late 2000s and early 2010s under a pair of head coaches had seen the Cheesemakers go from a once-feared program to cellar dweller.

Then in 2016, Golembiewski came up from Orangeville to take over the fledgling program. In his first season, the Cheesemakers went from worst to first in the Badger South and reached Level 3 of the playoffs. Monroe made it back to Level 3 in 2019, and in 2021 had its hopes of state dashed in Level 4 against eventual champion Pewaukee.

"They were able to complete a big process, and it was about four years coming," Golembiewski said. "They were smart enough to learn from all of those experiences through those years and put them together. And also work hard enough on their bodies to prevent injury, and lucky enough to not get injured. ... What a great bunch of guys. This will not be forgotten."

This year, Monroe returned a strong senior class — including its entire offensive line, top two running backs, quarterback and linebacker. Playing in Golembiewski's offensive Wing system since before middle school, the class knew what it was doing on the field, had the experience playing against the state's best, and had a chip on their shoulder. They were

also expected by several other programs to make a deep run

"We had that target on our back all year, but with two-a-days and everything before — the summer programs working our butts off — just to make it up to the state championship is what counts," Dean said.

"We've been working so hard our entire career — we never gave up, never let up. We were so close last year, and we knew we needed to get here and win it all," Sweeney said.

The entire offseason of focused and dedicated training and conditioning paid off in the long run. The Cheesemakers plowed through the regular season with workmanlike ease — never getting too elated at a big play, but also never getting too down on themselves after a bad play.

"We knew last year when we fell short that it wouldn't happen again, and we made sure of it — and it showed," Bunker said.

The starting offensive line was made up of four seniors and Herbst, a junior. They played together for all of 2021 as well.

"Starting last year with me being a sophomore, I wasn't having the best game, but they picked me up. We really all came together and really put the beat down moving forward. It really means a lot to us," Herbst said.

Herbst joins his father, assistant coach Gerry Herbst, with a state championship as a Cheesemaker. In fact, several players on the team share the same feat now with their fathers.

"It's pretty cool. Dad also has two runner-ups, and mom has some in basketball. It feels awesome," Taylor Herbst said.

"It feels awesome to bring the town back to this football spirit," said Markham, whose

father Ron also played at state for Monroe decades prior. "To win the gold ball and bringing everyone together like this ... it's really awesome and a great feeling to know everyone is behind you and supports you."

Ten of Monroe's 14 wins were by more than 35 points, with seven ending in shutouts. The closest battle of the season came in Level 2 with a revenge game against Pewaukee, the only game of the season decided by less than 21 points. Monroe had let a two-score lead disappear in the second half, and Pewaukee took a touchdown lead with a scoop-and-score fumble recovery with just over a minute left. The Cheesemakers quickly drove downfield, scored, and successfully completed a two-point conversion for a 22-21 win. It was the only game of the season Monroe was challenged in the fourth quarter.

After the win, Monroe went back to business, tearing apart West Bend East in a rain-soaked game, then ousting New Berlin West in a Level 4 game played in freezing temperatures.

That allowed the Cheesemakers to have one final week of practice together, and for those seniors to soak in the final days of strapping on the pads.

"It's the best possible way to end a football career. It's sad it's the end, but I wouldn't want it any other way," Brukwicki said.

"It couldn't have ended a better way. The guys worked so hard for so long, and it's a great team win for sure," Markham said. "We've had this same group of guys for so long, and this same goal. Now we achieved our goal together, and that's the best feeling you can ever have."

D3 State Records

Most Rushing Touchdowns
4- Tucker Markham, Monroe, 2022
 Cornelius Whiteside, Wisconsin Lutheran, 2005
 Rodee Schneider, Slinger, 1998
 Nick Isaacson, Milton, 1989

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 Cornelius Whiteside, Wisconsin Lutheran, 2005
 Matt Kimmler, Sheboygan Falls, 2000
 Rodee Schneider, Slinger, 1998
 Nick Isaacson, Milton, 1989
 Jim Pieper, Plymouth, 1976



Times photo: Natalie Dillon
 Tucker Markham ran for 170 yards with four touchdowns. Entering the game, Markham was averaging 45.1 rushing yards per game.