



River Falls senior wide receiver Wyatt Bell checks to make sure he's on the line of scrimmage during a home game earlier this season. Bell was the hero on Friday night against New Richmond, as he scored the game-winning touchdown in overtime to remain undefeated. Photo by Reagan Hoverman



River Falls junior quarterback Jacob Range huddles the offense and provides the play call to his offense during a game against Holmen earlier this year. Range played the entire game against New Richmond and helped lead the Wildcats to a 25-19 OT victory. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

Walk-off OT touchdown propels Wildcats over New Richmond in BRC opener

By Reagan Hoverman

In a game where River Falls converted seven of eight third down attempts and punted the ball only one time, the Wildcats still had to block a New Richmond extra point just to get the Friday night thriller into overtime.

New Richmond pushed River Falls to the brink in that Big Rivers Conference opener on Friday, Sept. 2, at David Smith Stadium in River Falls. Throughout the offseason, New Richmond became a trendy pick by prognosticators to win the conference this year. The Tigers' depth, speed, and experience at the skill positions make them one of the most dangerous teams in the state, as River Falls learned on Friday night in the 25-19 victory to improve to 3-0.

New Richmond had first and goal from the River Falls five-yard line with less than 90 seconds remaining in regulation. That's when senior running back Andrew Trandahl took a direct snap out of the wildcat formation and followed blockers into the endzone to tie the game 19-19 with a critical extra point looming.

On that ensuing PAT, the River Falls defensive line got a great push, dove and blocked the extra point. Although the Wildcats didn't have enough time to go down the field and score in those last 60 seconds of regulation, the blocked extra point gave River Falls second life and sent the game to overtime.

New Richmond got the first possession of OT starting at the River Falls 25-yard line. After three marginal gains, the Tigers faced a critical fourth and one. That's when the River Falls defensive line got a great push forward and stuffed a running back dive play to end New Richmond's possession.

On the second play of River Falls' OT possession, the Wildcats ran a reverse to wide receiver Wyatt Bell who bounced the run to the outside and found paydirt in the endzone. Bell's walk-off touchdown gave the Wildcats a 25-19 victory over the Tigers.

River Falls head coach Ryan Scherz spoke about the offensive excellence that the Wildcats demonstrated on Friday night, which included spreading the wealth with several weapons on that offense and having success against a stout New Richmond defensive front.

"The offense did some good things and we were 7/8 on third down and punted only once," Scherz said. "We moved the ball consistently against a defense designed to stop the run. And we threw the ball well when we wanted to, as well as when we needed to. I was also happy with how the ball is getting spread around. Three guys had carries, and five guys caught passes. We believe that makes us tougher to defend. We're not a one-man show."

While the offensive certainly had overall success against New Richmond, there were a couple of stumbles along the way which the Tigers promptly took advantage of. On the first play from scrimmage, River Falls fumbled the ball on a routine running back dive.

New Richmond marched down the field and scored on the ensuing possession.

With five minutes remaining in the fourth quarter and a six-point lead, River Falls had possession and a prime opportunity to put the game away. The Wildcats proceeded to fumble, New Richmond recovered and was immediately back in the game. Scherz spoke about his level of concern with the turnovers.

"We are always concerned with turnovers," Scherz said. "With experience, our staff is confident those issues will resolve themselves. Some of our skill players are only in their third varsity games. I have all the confidence in the world in those guys. They are really good players."

New Richmond finished the game with 19 total points, most of which came after the River Falls offense turned the ball over. Giving a talented offense scoring opportunities on a short field typically leads to points. Scherz spoke about turnovers influencing the game for River Falls defensively.

"We gave up 13 points by giving them short fields on turnovers," Scherz said. "When they had to drive the field, we were able to keep them out of the end zone. The defense played very well."

Although New Richmond has an unquestionably good defense, the Tigers have built their brand on offense. New Richmond is known for its college-like spread offense that capitalizes on speed and experience at the most important skill positions including wide receiver, running back and quarterback.

New Richmond often runs the ball on early downs to get in front of the sticks and open up the playbook on later downs. On Friday, the River Falls defensive line won those battles at the line of scrimmage and put the Tigers in second- and third-and-long situations which limited explosive plays. Scherz spoke about the game defensively and how his staff shut down one of the best offenses on this side of the state.

"We have really good players at all 3 levels of the defense, and our defensive staff is second to none," Scherz said. "We felt like their running back would get a few 10-12-yard runs, but we also felt like we would get a lot of zero or one-yard yard stops. We were also able to prevent him from breaking a very long touchdown, which is something New Richmond had done in each game."

The 25-19 victory improved River Falls' overall record to 3-0 for the season and 1-0 in Big Rivers Conference play. The Wildcats have played three tough opponents this season, but none compare to next week's rival — the Hudson Raiders.

Hudson has built a name as one of the best Division 1 programs in the state and is currently ranked as the 10th best team in Wisconsin, according to the Wisconsin.com weekly coaches poll. Last week Hudson was unranked but cracked the top-10 this week after starting the year 3-0.

That rivalry game will be played in Hudson on Friday, Sept. 9, and is slated to begin at 7 p.m.

Sophomore medalist propels Prescott girls golf to third Middle Border victory

Ellsworth Panthers finish tied for fourth with Somerset

By Reagan Hoverman

For the first time this season, the Prescott Cardinals had an event medalist not named Ava Salay or Rhi Stutz.

Those two senior standouts finished second and fourth respectively for the Cardinals at the third Middle Border Conference meet of the season at the Pheasant Hills Golf Course in Hammond on Tuesday, Aug. 30. It was sophomore varsity newcomer Jeanne Rohl who posted a medalist score of 40 and made noise on the overall leaderboard for the Cardinals.

Rohl wasted no time getting out to a hot start in the third conference meet of the season. After making par at the opening hole, Rohl made birdie at the 402-yard par five second to get into red figures for the day.

She gave a couple of shots back on the fourth, fifth and sixth holes with three consecutive bogeys before making a birdie at the 333-yard par four seventh hole. By the time Rohl holed her final putt of the day, she had posted a medalist round of 40. Prescott head coach Chad Salay spoke about Rohl's performance at Pheasant Hills.

"I was talking to Maddie (Reiter) on the way in and we were talking about how the sophomore (Jeanne Rohl) came in clutch," Chad Salay said outside the Pheasant Hills clubhouse after the meet. "I even said, I guarantee she wasn't thinking she would come out here and be the low score today. I haven't seen her yet, but she's going to be pumped about it."

While Rohl earned medalist honors at Pheasant Hills, the aforementioned Ava Salay and Stutz faced adversity for the first time this season. Ava Salay made bogey on the opening three holes before settling into the round on the fourth and fifth with back-to-back pars. Salay finished with a 41 while Stutz posted a 43.

Other Prescott scores include senior Maddie Reiter 42, senior Madasyn Rundquist 43, and sophomore Kendra Ogilvie 57. Prescott's team score of 166 won the meet over second-placed Altoona-Regis by 16 strokes. It marks the third consecutive MBC victory for the Cardinals.

Chad Salay spoke about Ava Salay and Stutz not having their A-game for the Pheasant Hills meet and how facing some adversity early in the season might be a positive experience for his Cardinals team instead of just cruising to victory after victory.

"It was good to test a little bit of that (competition) because we haven't had it," Chad Salay said. "It was tight in the middle of that round. I think we were only up by seven. We're going to have that this year so it's good to feel that a little bit."

While Salay and Stutz felt as if they left multiple shots out on the course, Rohl posted one of her best scores of the season, and Reiter's 42 was one of her best scores of the season. Chad Salay emphasized the importance of teammates picking up the slack when certain players don't have their best stuff on any given day.

"Rhi (Stutz) and Ava (Salay) aren't going to be happy for sure, but Maddie Reiter had a good score," Chad Salay said. "I told her she had a great round today and that she should be happy. Jeanne is way below her average. That's just what you need in team golf; when your top players struggle a little bit you need to be picked up by your other ones and that's what happened today."

Throughout the first three weeks of the season, Reiter posted varsity-caliber scores but had to grind for rounds



Ellsworth senior Kayley Bayer hits iron off of the tee on the 136-yard par three sixth hole at the Pheasant Hills Golf Course on Tuesday, Aug. 30. Bayer's 49 led all scoring for Ellsworth in the third conference meet of the season. Photo by Reagan Hoverman



Prescott sophomore Jeanne Rohl rolls in a par putt on the final hole of the Middle Border Conference event at the Pheasant Hills Golf Course in Hammond on Tuesday, Aug. 30. Rohl's nine-hole 40 earned medalist honors for the meet, the first of her varsity career. Photo by Reagan Hoverman



Prescott senior Rhi Stutz hits fairway metal on the fourth hole at the Pheasant Hills Golf Course. Stutz has consistently lowered her scores this season and has become a top tier one-two punch with Prescott ace Ava Salay. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

that previously came easier. Coach Salay stated that Reiter's 42 on Tuesday afternoon was a sign that she is on track to shoot lower scores moving forward.

"(Maddie Reiter) just mentioned that she feels like she's found her swing a little bit," Chad Salay said. "Some things that she was missing before, she feels like she's dialed in a little bit. She's confident and it feels like she's going in the right direction, which is huge for us."

Pheasant Hills featured fast greens and breezy wind on Tuesday afternoon, which almost certainly played a factor in the overall scoring for the meet. Every team posted scores worse than what they had been shooting throughout the opening three weeks of the season.

Prescott gained valuable experience playing Pheasant Hills in windy conditions on Tuesday afternoon. The course was blowing at approximately 10-15 mph from the northwest, which Chad Salay stated is a typical late-season wind for the course.

Earlier this year, Pheasant Hills was selected as one of the WIAA Regional tournament host sites, meaning Prescott will play the same course in likely similar conditions later this season with a trip to sectionals on the line. Chad Salay spoke about Tuesday's valuable experience in the wind.

"This was the first day we've actually probably played in some actual wind," Chad Salay said. "I told the girls going out that it's a northwest wind, that's pretty typical for a late-season wind out here. It was good to look at it as preparation for the regional we'll have out here later this fall. This is the

prevailing wind in the fall for sure. It makes it tougher, but it's good preparation."

Panthers earn fourth-place finish

Prescott wasn't the only team getting valuable experience in the tough conditions on Tuesday afternoon. Ellsworth posted a team score of 215 in the tough conditions which tied the Panthers for a fourth-place finish with the Somerset Spartans in the six-team meet.

Ellsworth scores include senior Kayley Bayer's team-best 49, freshman Lexi Marks posted a 52, freshman Nora Feuerhelm 56, senior Katie Gillespie 58, sophomore Aaliyah Huppert 59, and freshman Addy Huppert rounded out the scoring with a 60.

Throughout the season, Ellsworth head coach Carson Huppert has spoken about his girls' ability to grind and compete on the golf course, regardless of conditions. That proved to be true on Tuesday afternoon at Pheasant Hills as the Panthers came within one shot of finishing solo fourth as a team.

The Panthers are in the mix with Saint Croix Central, Somerset, and Osceola below the two best teams in the conference — Prescott and Altoona-Regis. Ellsworth has come within 10 shots of finishing third at multiple meets this season, which head coach Huppert has set as a realistic goal for his girls.

Ellsworth will get that chance at the next conference meet on Thursday, Sept. 8, at home in the fourth Middle Border Conference meet of the season. That match is slated to begin at 4 p.m. at the Ellsworth Country Club.