

# Super Thursday looms in high school football

By **Bernie Puchalski**

Championship dreams will be on the line on two football fields Thursday afternoon at 1 p.m.

The Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs will be at unbeaten St. Mike's in the AAA final and the West Park Warriors will travel to the West Lincoln Leisureplex to take on the unbeaten South Lincoln Bears.

The Bulldogs will be hoping to avenge a 28-7 loss to St. Mike's during the regular season.

"We need to match their physical play on the line of scrimmage. We lost the battle on the line of scrimmage last time and we need to step it up on Thursday," Churchill head coach Peter Partridge said.

Partridge needs his squad to play a complete game, avoid the brain cramps that have hindered the Bulldogs at times and start better than it did last week in a semifinal victory over Stamford.

He describes St. Mike's as a nice combination of size, skill, and speed, big up front and possessing a number of fast, athletic players who make plays for them.

"We must neutralize the big play, which has been one of our issues this year."

The Mustangs are expecting anything but a cakewalk Thursday.

"It's going to be tough. It will be close and hard-hitting," St. Mike's head coach Dominic Scozzafava said.

He felt the score of the regular-season encounter wasn't indicative of the game.

"It was a closer game than the score would indicate. They are a very solid team and they have some good skilled players."

The Mustangs are fighting some injuries heading into the game with "lower-body injuries" to a number of key players.

St. Mike's played its semifinal game last week at the artificial turf field on Kalar Rd., but will host the game at the St. Mike's field Thursday. The problem last week was that the field was rolled and a large tractor used to do the rolling tore up the turf.

"It was terrible, but it's much better. Thank goodness we haven't had any rain in almost a week," Scozzafava said.

The field was rolled again by hand and if the rain holds off, it shouldn't be a factor.

Fearless and foolish prediction: St. Mike's 21 Churchill 14.

A Final

The South Lincoln Bears are expecting more of the same when they play the West Park Warriors in the A final.

The Bears clinched home-field advantage by defeating West Park 10-7 Oct. 21.

"I think it's going to be a one-possession game. There's no way it's going to be a blowout on either side," Bears coach Zack Silverthorne said.

To be successful, the Bears must avoid turnovers.

"Last time we played, they had seven turnovers and we had six turnovers. We have to protect the ball and hopefully we don't get as many penalties as last week," he said.

When South Lincoln played West Park Oct. 21, it was missing nine regulars. The team is pretty much healthy and quarterback Dan Macaro, injured in the West Park game, is surprisingly expected to play.

"He got clearance to play today and that's a shock and a good thing for our squad," Silverthorne said.

The South Lincoln coach knows he has to shut down West Park's dynamic receiver/returner Dylan Howard to record the win.

"If we keep him off the scoreboard, they can't beat us."

Howard was injured in West Park's semifinal victory over hard-hitting Eastdale and is possible for the game. Doubtful is impact lineman Nico Scott, who is a force on both sides of the ball and a team leader.

"Hopefully, it will be a close game for our sake," West Park head coach Frank Popoli said.

Popoli has struggled all season with getting enough players out to practice and in the semifinal, the team looked disorganized at times.

"We had 22 kids show up last (Monday) night and that's a lot better than 14 and 15."

Popoli is anything but over-confident heading into the game and the team knows it is an underdog.

"They're a good team. It's going to be a tough game, but hopefully we can limit the turnovers, penalties and mistakes," he said.

Fearless and foolish prediction: South Lincoln 10 West Park 7.

#### AA Semifinals

In AA semifinal action Thursday, St. Catharines Collegiate (3-3) will play Holy Cross (6-0) at 1 p.m. at Kiwanis Field and Centennial (4-2) is at St. Francis (5-1) at 2 p.m.

In the regular season, Holy Cross toppled Collegiate 49-7 Oct. 6 and St. Francis blanked Centennial 21-0 Oct. 27.

Fearless and foolish predictions: Holy Cross 28 Collegiate 7; St. Francis 21 Centennial 14.

#### AAAA Semifinals

With the St. Paul Patriots (6-2) home and cooled out as the region's representatives in the Golden Horseshoe playdowns, the league has decided to make this week's final two regular-season games the league's semifinals.

Blessed Trinity (1-6) will be at Notre Dame (5-2) Thursday at 1:30 p.m. and Denis Morris (1-6) will host Lakeshore Catholic (5-2) Friday at 2 p.m.

During the regular season, Lakeshore beat Denis Morris 42-0 on Sept. 22 and Notre Dame thumped Blessed Trinity 56-6 on Sept. 23.

Fearless and foolish predictions: Lakeshore 35 Denis Morris 7; Notre Dame 35 Blessed Trinity 14.