

Examiner Sports

Mass(i) Quantities!



Carmel Consumes Newburgh, 47-13, Rams Advance to 1st NYSPHSAA Class AA Finals #NoPlaceLikeDome



RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Led by the likes of touchdown-scoring senior RB's Josh Massi (5) and Dylan Shields (inset, 28) and senior OL Dominick Telesco (L) and QB Kevin Dall (14), the Carmel Rams exploded for 301 rushing yards en route to their 47-13 NYSPHSAA Class AA semifinal win over Section 9 champion Newburgh last Saturday night at Middletown High School where the state-ranked (No.5) Rams (12-0) advanced to Saturdays NYS title tilt (3 p.m.) against state-ranked (No.11) Section 6 champion Buffalo Bennett in search of Putnam County's first state grid crown... see Class AA Grid Notebook

Carmel Routs Newburgh, 47-13, in NYSPHSAA Class AA Semis

State-Ranked (No.5) Rams Seeking Putnam County's 1st NYS State Title



Carmel QB Kevin Dall has come on strong in NYS Class AA playoffs as both a passer and runner for the state final-bound Rams behind stout OL Scott Danvin (79).

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays

MIDDLETOWN -- Captivating Class AA Carmel is going to Syracuse this coming weekend to challenge for the NYSPHSAA championship, something which no team from Putnam County has ever won before and none have even competed for since

Brewster placed second in 1997 (Class B) and 1999 (Class A).

After falling behind 7-0, Carmel reeled off 47 unanswered points en route to the state-ranked (No.5) Rams' 47-13 romp of Section 9 champion Newburgh (No.9 in NYS) in the NYS Class AA state semifinals at Faller Field on the campus Middletown High School last Saturday night.



Carmel RB Josh Massi breaks off a big screen pass gain in Rams' 47-13 NYS Class AA playoff rout of Newburgh Saturday.

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS



Carmel WR Nick DiLeo snags key 1st quarter catch in Rams' 47-13 NYSPHSAA Class AA semifinal win over Newburgh Friday at Middletown High.

With the win, Coach Todd Cayea's unbeaten Rams (12-0) advanced to the Carrier Dome in Syracuse for the first time in program history where the Rams will take on Section 6 champion Buffalo Bennett (10-1) for all the marbles at 3:00 p.m. Saturday.

Carmel has now outscored its opponents by a combined 472-69 after shredding Newburgh (10-2) for 301 rushing yards with senior QB Kevin Dall taking his game to the next level under center. Dall (7 for 10, 166 passing yards) fired touchdown passes to WR Nick DiLeo (3 catches, 55 yards) and TE T.J. Fusco in the second quarter and

went for 60 rushing yards on four carries. He also connected twice with WR Patrick Kiernan for 75 huge yards.

"For starters, we came with great energy tonight and willed our way to this win," said Rams senior RB Dylan Shields, who gouged Newburgh's interior defense for 76 yards and two scores and just seven carries. "Our O-line was firing off the ball all night giving me great lanes, and Kevin (Dall) was running the passing game like a machine. It was a great team W, and now we get to play in the dome, which is every player's dream to play in."

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Carmel RB Dylan Shields follows FB Nick Rosaforte for plus gain in Rams' 47-13 NYS Class AA semifinal rout of Newburgh Saturday.

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Class AA Grid Notebook

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Ram RB's Josh Massi (14 for 69, 1 TD) and Nick Rosaforte (4 for 61, 1 TD) had big games behind their terrific offensive line, featuring Scott Ganvin, Owen Boland, Dominick Telesco, Anthony Briante, Jack Kane and TE T.J. Fusco, who saw a huge contingent of @CarmelCrazies_ fans get behind them in enemy territory.

"It's unreal, we've always dreamed about playing for a state title and playing in the dome," Carmel WR/DB Andrew Fiore said. "It's also been Coach Cayea's dream and I'm happy we can do that for him. But we're not done yet. We have one more game to go.

"This is 100 percent the best team I've been a part of," Fiore added. "We're all a family, and it's nice having the support of the community because we're also doing this for them."

Carmel sophomore LB Matt Risley, who had a late rushing TD, was in on a team-high seven tackles while Rosaforte added four tackles and a pick.

The program has become a staple of the community under Coach Cayea, who has given it his all for 27 seasons. Whether this is his last season or not, he's done some of his best coaching in 2021.

"These kids have accepted the standards that come along with our program," said Cayea, who last reached the Class AA semis in 1998. "Accountability, trust, caring, empathy and treating each other with respect. They are good student athletes who genuinely love one another and the team-first attitude is always on display. So many different kids accept their roles and do them to the best of their God-given ability. Focus and effort are also a staple with ignoring the uncontrollable factors. It's been a hell of a run."

And that, right there, might be the understatement of the year.



Dawgs in trenches -- (L-R) Owen Boland, Scott Danvin, Anthony Briante, Dominick Telesco and Jack Kane -- hustle to line in rout of Newburgh.



Much to the happiness of the Carmel sideline, TE T.J. Fusco hauls in TD catch in Rams' NYS Class AA semifinal playoff rout of Newburgh Saturday.

Carmel RB Nick Rosaforte breaks a long-gainer in Rams' 47-13 NYS Class AA playoff rout of Newburgh.

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Panther Defense and Two Picart TDs Pave the Way to the State Final

By Andy Jacobs

The way Pleasantville football head coach Tony Becerra figured it back then, anyone bold enough just eight months ago to predict his team had big things in store for the upcoming 2021 season probably should have had his sanity questioned.

"I'd have had to refer them to a doctor," he was saying late Saturday afternoon, thinking about the Panthers' .500 finish to the abbreviated spring schedule. "Not just 3 and 3, but 3 and 6 the year prior. I mean, we were anemic the last two years, at best. So it was a total question mark going into this season."

Becerra had just witnessed what seemed unimaginable to him in late March as his still-unbeaten Panthers took another huge step in a quest for the school's second state championship. With super sophomore Daniel Picart scoring a pair of touchdowns and the bend-but-don't-break defense rising to the occasion again, Pleasantville defeated Section 2 champion Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk 15-7 in the Class B state semifinals.

Playing at Middletown's impressive Faller Field for the second straight week, the Panthers built a 9-0 halftime lead and then held off a fourth-quarter comeback bid by the Indians, whose drive down the field late in the game put the outcome seriously in doubt.

"Obviously I'm happy, but I'm also exhausted," said Becerra shortly after the Panthers had booked their berth in next Saturday's state championship game against the Maine-Endwell Spartans at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse. "Yes, R-C-S is a great team, but I thought we should've had a lot more points on the board. We left so many



Pleasantville quarterback Michael LaCapria stands in the pocket waiting to find an open receiver during Saturday's 15-7 victory in the state semifinals.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



The Panthers' Daniel Picart hits the brakes as he tries to run past a pair of Ravena players in the first half of Saturday's state semifinal game. He scored both of Pleasantville's touchdowns in the 15-7 win.

out there with the penalties stalling drives and putting us in bad situations. And, again, our defense bailed us out like they've done all year."

On a frigid and windy late autumn day in which 11 penalties were called against Pleasantville, most of them in the third quarter, the Panthers still found a way to come out on top for the 12th consecutive time this season. Picart's 46-yard punt return for a touchdown on the first play of the second quarter and his one-yard touchdown run just over four minutes into the final quarter proved to be enough to send the Panthers back to the dome for the second time in four years.



Erik Coleman runs with the football on a reverse during the opening kickoff of the Class B state semifinal against Section 2 champion Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk.



Pleasantville senior running back Kieran Cotter slips past the Indians' JT Lyle as he carries the football in the first quarter of the Class B state semifinal.

On second down from the 7-yard line, a lateral from Missetich to running back Franky Broadhurst wound up bouncing on the turf into the end zone. The Indians won the race for the ball, so the Panthers had to settle for a safety instead of six points. But with 3:48 to go before halftime, the Pleasantville lead was suddenly 9-0.

"Yeah, that was huge," said Becerra about just missing out on the opportunity for a second touchdown. "Like I said, we left points off the board up and down all day."

In the final minute of the second quarter, Picart snared a pass from Michael LaCapria along the left sideline and, coupled with a roughing-the-passer call, the Panthers advanced to the R-C-S 16-yard line with 15.5 seconds remaining. But then LaCapria's pass under pressure in the direction of Picart was picked off by Landen Cardone and Pleasantville had to settle for a 9-0 advantage at halftime.

Penalties stymied the Panthers on their first two possessions of the second half and Ravena, unable to generate much offense up until then, was about to give its fans something to cheer about. On first down from the Indians' 47-yard line, Missetich fired a pass over the middle to Ryan Southworth, who caught the ball in stride and galloped down the field untouched for a 53-yard touchdown.

"Yeah, Murphy's Law right there, said Becerra, asked what he was thinking as the Panther lead was trimmed to just two points. "Going in, I never thought it would be a cakewalk, by any means. I just knew we had to do what we've done all year — not panic and stick to what we do best."

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Pleasantville's Aidan Picart turns upfield after catching a pass in the first half of the Panthers' state semifinal win over Ravena.



Pleasantville senior captains, left to right, Michael Gordon, Michael LaCapria, Kieran Cotter and Ryan Miller flank head coach Tony Becerra after the Panthers defeated Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk Saturday afternoon to reach the Class B state final.

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Daniel Picart of Pleasantville is met by Ravena's Ryan Schermerhorn as he picks up some of the 111 yards he gained in Saturday's state semifinal win.

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As one team after another is sadly learning, what the Panthers do best is run their Wildcat offense when the chips are down. They took possession of the ball at their own 35-yard line with just over four minutes left in the third quarter and proceeded to keep it for over eight minutes as Picart and Cotter, who combined to finish with 202 yards rushing, took turns picking up chunks of yardage on the ground.

On the 15th play of the drive, facing a fourth-and-two for the second time along the way, Picart burst up the middle for a six-yard gain to the Ravena 1-yard line. He then scored his second touchdown of the game on the next play. McCarthy lined up for the extra point, but holder LaCapria instead rolled to his left before throwing an incomplete pass on the try for two points.

"I think it served two purposes," Becerra said of the lengthy drive by his team that

spanned the third and fourth quarters. "It was getting the second score and also eating a lot of the clock by going into that offensive set."

Trailing now by eight points with 7:33 remaining in the game, the Indians were hardly finished. A 32-yard pass play from Missetich to Xavier Bermudez set them up at the Panthers' 18-yard line. Dominik Paljusaj then ran six yards on first down. But two plays later, Cotter jolted Broadhurst with a big hit in the backfield for a six-yard loss.

On fourth-and-nine, Missetich completed a pass to his right to Southworth. But a half yard shy of the first down, the Panther defense made the key tackle that turned the ball over on downs with just 3:22 left on the clock. Soon the Panthers' two reliable backs were making sure Ravena wouldn't get the ball again. Picart blasted through the line on third-and-one for a 19-yard gain, nearly turning it into a long touchdown.

A nine-yard run by Cotter past midfield secured another first down and enabled the Panthers to then take a knee twice to run out the clock. For the second successive week, this Pleasantville team that even confounded its own head coach had put an end to the season for a section champion in the state tournament at Middletown.

"You know, we realized well into August practices that we had a good group of kids who bought in," said Becerra. "It was just a matter of if it all came together we could do things, and that seems to



The Panthers' Kieran Cotter tries to break a tackle in the playoff victory over Ravena.

be the case."

So now Becerra will be taking his second Panther team up to Syracuse to face the top-ranked Class B team in the state and hoping to repeat what happened in 2017 when Pleasantville defeated Chenango Forks in the championship game at the Carrier Dome.

"Yeah, it's gonna be very exciting," he said. "Some logistical headaches that go along with it, but we'll handle it."



Defensive back Owen Mooney tackles Ravena's Xavier Bermudez during the Panthers' win in the Class B state semifinal.



Pleasantville junior lineman Joseph Alesawy and his Panther teammates are headed to the Carrier Dome after winning their 12th straight game on Saturday.



Pleasantville quarterback Michael LaCapria runs with the football during the third quarter of the 15-7 win over R-C-S in the state semifinals on Saturday.



Pleasantville players celebrate at midfield after time had expired in their 15-7 victory over Section 2's Ravena on Saturday at Middletown's Faller Field.

Fitz-to-Mancuso TD Strike Sends Somers to NYS Class A Finals

State-Ranked (No.9) Tuskers Topple Rye, 14-7, Seek 2nd NYS Title vs. CBA

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays

MIDDLETOWN -- When a Somers High football player conjures up a likeness akin to former All-NYS star WR Matt Pires (circa 2016), that particular Tusker is on to something special. It was the game-breaking Pires, along with fellow dynamo RB Messiah Horne, who's breath-breaking plays led Somers to its only NYSPHSAA Class A title back in 2016.

But it was the in-stride grab and subsequent run-after-catch last Friday by Somers senior WR Trey Mancuso that drew comparisons to Pires after his 57-yard TD grab from QB Matt Fitzsimons sealed the deal in the state-ranked (No.7) Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye at Middletown High School's Faller Field.

Somers knocked off state-ranked (No.9) Rye, 26-23, two weeks ago in the Section 1 championship and knew a rematch would occur if both teams won their NYS regional games last week, with Rye (10-2) still

competing on account of Section 1's turn in the NYSPHSAA's at-large bid rotation. With both team's defenses dictating the rematch, the eastern state semis weren't quite as riveting as the original (there were a slew three-and-outs), but Somers advanced to its second NYS Class A final after winning it all in 2016 after Mancuso snared the TD pass at the Rye 30 and zig-zagged his way to paydirt like a runaway wagon with 4:08 remaining.

"I knew this could be a touchdown right off the bat," said Mancuso, who had three catches for 79 yards. "Me and Fitz, he was like, 'Dude, I'm telling you, I just missed you on a couple but this next one I got you'. Fitz throws perfect passes. He threw a perfect ball and he hit me in stride. At that point, I couldn't quit. I had to score for my teammates, my family, my coaches. Our defense was locked up all night, so we just had to get another stop to win the game. This is the greatest feeling in my life."

That feeling permeated throughout the squad, a seemingly invincible unit that improved to 12-0.

"Trey is just a dude, a total dude," said OL/DL Jake Polito, who opened holes on offense and shut them on defense with five tackles and a sack. "That kid is just such a special athlete. He comes up big in every big spot, no matter what sport we're playing. They couldn't stop him. This is the best feeling in the world but we're not done yet."

In knocking off Rye for the second time in three weeks, the Tuskers will travel to Syracuse to take on state-ranked (No.12) Syracuse-based Christian Brothers Academy (9-3) Friday (3 p.m.) in the Carrier Dome. CBA upset No.2-ranked Section 6 champion Jamestown in the west semifinal.

It was Somers RB Ravi Dass Jr. (7 rushes, 104 yards) who conjured up images of Horne when he took a first-quarter counter 85 yards to the house for a 7-0 lead.

"Once they called my number on that play I was ready," Dass Jr. said. "I just wanted to do as much as I can with the call to get the excitement of the game going. Once



Somers LB Luke Kennedy puts it on a Rye player in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.

I got the corner I was just aiming for a touchdown. Everything is coming together right now, and we're going to the dome now.

Our defense played their hearts out. It's a big part of who we are, and that last stop they came up clutch."

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Somers DL Christian McGrane (L) and Jake Polito celebrate last defensive stand in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers DL Johnny Crecco (77) goes all out for tackle in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers LB Ethan Krauss was all over Rye's playmakers in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.

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Class A Grid Notebook



Somers RB Derek Marcus chugs from yards in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.

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Tied at 7-all going into the half, the Tuskers got several pep talks at the break and came out inspired for the second half. The defense -- led by senior LB Ethan Krauss (10 tackles), senior DE Francesco Gioffre (7 tackles), DL Johnny Crecco (6 tackles, 3 for loss, 1 sack), Polito and Luke Kennedy (5 tackles) -- was especially stingy.

"There's a lot coming into this game (history-wise)," said Krauss, who seemed to be in Rye's huddle. "They knocked us out of sections my sophomore year, and I've been waiting to play Rye again ever since, pretty much my whole high school career. To finally be able to beat them, not once but twice, feels amazing. I'm very grateful for this opportunity. Our coaches put in a defensive game plan that was on the money. They put me in the right place to make plays. I've been waiting for this moment since the third grade. This has been our goal since the start of the season, and to finally accomplish it feels amazing... a dream come true."

The O-line -- featuring Nicky Crecco, Ryan Cole, Johnny Crecco, George Forbes, Anthony Carino, Timmy Azimi,

Gioffre and Polito, plus tight ends Dylan Faller and Krauss --

carved out just enough holes to move the chains and provide the Tuskers with strong field possession for much of the second half. Somers senior RB Derek Marcus plowed for 64 hard-earned yards on nine totes while RB Luke Savino had four carries for 35 yards, and managed to get off a pivotal punt after a bad snap to keep the field flipped on Rye. Tusker RB Matt Kapica added six carries for 34 yards while Fitzsimmons hit on 4 of 8 passes for 81 yards.



Somers WR Trey Mancuso gets his run-after-catch on en route to game-winning TD in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers RB Luke Savino turns corner in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers OL-DL Timmy Azimi deals with the emotions of Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers RB Matt Kapica picks hole in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers Assistant Coach Mike Cleary hugs it out with captain Ethan Krauss after Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers RB Ravi Dass Jr. (4) celebrates his TD with Francesco Gioffre and Michael Bookall in NYS Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.



Somers captains and Coach Anthony DeMatteo accept game ball after Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown.

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Big Play Trey!



**Somers Senior WR
Mancuso Dials up
Game-Winning TD Grab;
Tuskers Edge Rye, 14-7,
in NYS Class A Semis
#NoPlaceLikeDome**

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Somers WR Trey Mancuso hauls in this breathtaking, fourth-quarter, game-sealing, 57-yard TD grab from QB Matt Fitzsimons in Tuskers' 14-7 NYSPHSAA Class A semifinal win over Rye Friday at Middletown High School where Johnny Crecco (77) and the boys in the trenches celebrated Somers' second trip to the state finals (2016) in Syracuse this Friday (3 pm.) against Section 3 champion CBA-Syracuse... see Class A Grid Notebook