'Cats Clobber No-Luck Pats, 52-0

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Lastinger's Out, Benedictine Next

By MIKE CHASON

Coley Cassedy said his Westside High School football team had lucked through an undefeated regular season.

Friday night at Cleveland Field here, the Patriots' luck ran out. So did their season.

Shaking off the loss of their first team quarterback, Valdosta's Wildcats scored

YARDSTICK

	Valdosta	Westside
First Downs	17	9
Yards Rushing	199	113
Yards Passing	165	53
Passes	7 10	5 17
Passes Inct. By	1	0
Fumbles Lost	1	1
Punting	1 24	4 41
Penalties	5 35	7 52

the first six times they had the ball and raced to a 52-0 win, their most lopsided victory in a 13-0 season.

Valdosta now hosts Benedictine (Savannah) in the Class AAAA South Georgia Championship game here Friday night. Benedictine whipped Northside of Warner Robins 14-7 in another Class AAAA quarterfinal game Friday.

Griffin meets Lakeside for the North Georgia title Friday night. To earn those berths, Griffin beat Douglass 26-0, and Lakeside trimmed Sprayberry 21-7.

The winners meet for the state title Dec. 9.

The Wildcats' triumph was tainted only by the loss of senior quarterback John Lastinger, who went down with a dislocated shoulder with 4:32 to play in the first quarter.

Named Friday as the number one quarterback in Region 1-AAAA as well as Offensive Player of the Year by the sportswriters who cover the 12 league schools, Lastinger has been ruled out for the Benedictine contest and the state title game if Valdosta makes it that far.

"He's had a bruised shoulder for part of the season," Valdosta Coach Nick Hyder said. "It finally went on him. He's certainly a winner and a fine athlete."

Lastinger had directed Valdosta's first offensive drive down to the Westside 5-yard line when he had to leave the field. Junior John Bond came in to replace him, and junior halfback Irvin Roe put the first six of the night on the board two plays later.

Stopped well short, Roe just kept driving for the goal line and finally reached his destination with 3:43 left in the first period.

Hyder nor Cassedy figured Lastinger's absence to be a decisive psychological boost for the Valdostans.

"Well, the offensive line just hung right in there, and the backs still ran hard," Hyder said. "John had taken us down there. I think it's really a tribute to John Bond. He came in and carried the load for us."

Cassedy had hoped the loss of Lastinger might send the Wildcats into at least a temporary lull.

"We thought it might give us a shot," he said. "But they were doing the same kind of stuff offensively and defensively. Normally, when your second team quarterback comes in, you expect a little bit of difference."

As it turned out, Bond had quite a night.

Operating behind an offensive line which left no doubt who was dominating the line of scrimmage, Bond had second quarter touchdown runs of 11 and 27 yards. He also sneaked in behind junior center Tony Blasetti for a 1-yard touchdown in the third period.

Bond was Valdosta's leading rusher with 53 yards in seven carries. The "double dynamite" package of Roe and Ernest King was slowed a bit because of a bruised tendon on King's right foot but the 'Cats still had 199 yards rushing.

But Hyder pointed to Troy Thomas as making the play which really turned the game in Valdosta's direction for good.

Thomas, named the Defensive Player of the Year in the region Friday, watched a Mark Hopkins punt bounce one time and then tucked it under his arm for a 72-yard touchdown run with 1:33 left in the first quarter.

"I had good blocking by my defensive men," Thomas said, including the names of Carl Roe, Jimbo Hancock and Lynn Roberts in that number. "I was trying to get to it in the air but it dropped. You always got to get it on that first hop."

Roberts topped the VHS defense with seven tackles. Thomas, Clifford Johnson and John Branan had five apiece.

Even down two touchdowns and aware no team has scored more than once against Valdosta this season, Cassedy still thought his team could stage a comeback.

"We had them backed up but they got that long pass," he said. "When they scored that third one, I knew it would be tough then. Their defense was just too good.

"They just outfinessed us. They did a real good job of executing. It was just one of those nights for us. I think if we played them again, we might play them a little closer."

Westside, the 4-AAAA champion from Augusta, came into the game rated as the fourth best team in the state and one of only three unbeaten AAAA squads.

Since Northside also lost, number one-rated Valdosta remains the only undefeated member of the four semifinalists.

"We just kind of lucked through our region," Cassedy said. "I'm sure some of the people in our region could have played them a lot better game tonight. The only thing we did right was return kickoffs. We got a lot of practice at that."

Halfback passes from Roe to Fredrick Blair sparked the Wildcats' third touchdown. Rolling right and taking plenty of time, Roe found Blair twice for 94 yards. The 80-yard drive was lengthened by a clipping penalty against VHS.

Bond galloped around the left side of his line for the 11-yard score. Minutes later in the second period, he shook loose on a 27-yard TD run after Thomas had picked off a Mark Hopkins' pass to initiate the effort.

Roberts' block of a Hopkins' punt gave Valdosta the ball 18 yards from paydirt on its fifth score. Senior fullback William Gaskin ran into the end zone untouched from one yard away.

The second half was more of the same as the crowd of 9,800 began to filter away into the 65 degree night.

Bond scored on his 1-yard run with 5:07 left in the third quarter and then was replaced by Mike Ruff with 2:53 showing in the same period.

Ruff threw 19 yards to Eugene Patterson for Valdosta's final touchdown with 10:53 left in the game.

David Reaves kicked his first field goal of the season from 35 yards out with only 34 seconds left to crown the scoring. Reaves also kicked four extra points.

Freshman Keith Sampson, who incurred a neck injury which brought on partial paralysis of his arm in preseason camp, kicked the other three extra points.

Of their 10 offensive possessions, the Wildcats got a score out of eight. The only time Valdosta punted, the ball hit a Westside player, and the Wildcats recovered.

It was that kind of night for the Patriots.

Score By Quarters:

Valdosta	14	21	7	10	—52
Westside	0	0	0	0	—0

Scoring:

Val. — I. Roe 6 run (Reaves kick)
Va. — Thomas 72 punt return (Reaves kick)
Val. — Bond 11 run (Reaves kick)
Val. — Bond 27 run (Reaves kick)
Val. — Gaskin 1 run (Sampson kick)
Val. — Bond 1 run (Sampson kick)
Val. — Patterson 19 pass from Ruff (Sampson kick)
Val. — Reaves 35 field goal

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing: Valdosta — I. Roe 9-47, Lastinger 4-41, Bond 7-53, Gaskin 5-21, King 5-14, Frazier 4-13, Wilcox 3-23, Ruff 6 minus 13; Westside — Elam 18-77, Best 13-37, Chomskis 2 minus 1.

Passing: Valdosta — I. Roe 2-2-0-94, Ruff 3-3-0-40, Bond 2-5-0-31; Westside — Hopkins 3-10-1-34, Chomskis 2-6-0-19, Harrison 0-1-0-0.

Pass Receiving: Valdosta — Blair 3-112, Hankins 3-34, Patterson 1-19; Westside — Best 3-34, Elam 1-15, Harrison 1-4.

Punt Returns: Valdosta — Thomas 1-72, Horton, 1-41; Westside — no returns.

Kickoff Returns: Valdosta — no returns. Westside — Swan 2-39, Best 3-64, Elam 1-29, Kufkle 1-11, Kelley 1-20.

Defense (Number of Tackles): Valdosta — Thomas 5, Roberts 7, Clifford Johnson 5, Branan 5, Gordon 3, Evans 3, Hancock 3, Clifton 3, Stokes 3, Richardson 2, Dixon 2, Conaway 2, Carter 2, Horton 2, Battles 2; Westside — Wilson 7, Connell 7, Willaford 6, Brady 4, Waters 5, Richards 4, Swan 4, Roberson 4, Johnson 2, Kufkle 3, Harrison 2.

Interception Returns: Valdosta — Thomas 1-0; Westside — no interceptions.

—Times Staff Photo By Robert Winter III

On Top Of The World: Westside Tailback Craig Best (22) Gets A Boost From VHS Defense

By Lastinger Injury

Hyder's 100th Win Soured

By Times Staff Writer

Nick Hyder's 100th career coaching victory was soured only by the sight of his team's number one quarterback walking off the field with his right arm hanging almost limp at his side.

But Hyder's Valdosta Wildcats survived the loss of senior signal-caller John Lastinger and rolled to a 52-0 trouncing of Westside in the quarterfinal round of the Class AAAA football playoffs here Friday night.

Hyder said Lastinger was out with a shoulder separation for Friday's South Georgia Championship game against Benedictine here as well as the state title game on Dec. 9 if Valdosta makes it that far.

"I don't see how he could come back," Hyder said.

That means the Valdosta coach is to give only his third-starting quarterback in five years here the keys to the Wildcat offensive machine Friday night when John Bond takes over the controls.

All-state performer Buck Belue quarterbacked 47 straight games in Hyder's first four years in Valdosta, and Lastinger was at the throttle for all 13 games this season.

Hyder now has an 11-year head coaching record of 100-25-3. At Valdosta, his teams have won 47 games and lost 13. He previously coached at West Rome.

But now he's facing a once-beaten Savannah team that Valdosta had to struggle to defeat 13-0 in last year's quarterfinal playoff. And Hyder is without a key figure.

Nobody feels worse about it than Lastinger.

"I tried to jump over one of their guys, and then when I was going down, another one of them hit me," Lastinger said. "I knew something was wrong. It hurt real bad."

Lastinger said he was taken to South Georgia Medical Center where he was put to sleep, and the shoulder put back into place. He returned to the sidelines in the third quarter.

By that time, Bond had already scored three touchdowns, and VHS had the game in cold storage.

"I've got confidence in John," Lastinger said.

Bond has seen some action this season but never in the early stages of a game when the issue was still very much in doubt. He entered the contest with 4:32 left in the first quarter before either team had scored.

"I was nervous and everything," Bond said. "I'm just glad the coaches had worked with me. I still couldn't have done it without the offensive line.

"I feel for John. It's his senior season, and all the scouts are looking at him and everything. There's just nothing anybody can do for him.

"I knew I had to go out there and do it. I'm sure it's going to get tougher as it goes on."

—Times Staff Photo.

Valdosta's John Bond Looks For Running Room In The Westside Defense

Claxton, Buford Win In Overtime

By The Associated Press

Valdosta defeated Westside 52-0 in a class AAAA playoff Friday while AA Claxton and class A Buford settled for overtime victories on penetrations in a night of routs and cliffhangers for prep football quarterfinals in Georgia.

Valdosta, now 13-0 for the year, rolled up its biggest victory of the season despite the loss of quarterback John Lastinger in the first quarter.

In tonight's lone playoff gane, Fulton plays East Rome in class AA.

It was the 100th career win for Wildcat coach Nick Hyder.

But two other battles went into overtime, as Claxton and Mary Persons in class AA and Buford and Hogansville in class A fought to tense 14-14 ties at the end of regulation play.

Mary Persons led 14-0 at halftime in regulation play, but missed a fourth-quarter opportunity to widen the score after recovering a fumble at the Claxton 25.

On the next play, Persons fumbled it back to the Tigers, and a 29-yard run by Tony McNeal set up a 38-yard scoring pass from quarterback Harold Mercer to Stanley Bacon.

Down 14-6, the Tigers tried for a two-point conversion and failed. But after scoring again on a 10-play drive that covered 86 yards, the Tigers sent McNeal on a sweep that added the two points and tied the game as regulation time ended.

Both teams scored once in the first five-minute overtime period, tying the game at 21-21. Neither scored in the second overtime period, but Claxton clinched the victory, 22-21 by penetrating to the Persons 28.

In the Buford-Hogansville match, neither team scored during the first half but each scored in the third and fourth quarters to end regulation play at 14-14, and each scored again in the first overtime period. Buford was awarded the 22-21 victory by penetrating to the Green Wave 5-yard line.

In other AAAA playoffs Friday, Griffin defeat Douglas 26-0; Lakeside defeated Sprayberry 21-7 and Benedictine, capitalizing on a fourth-quarter fumble, pulled off a 14-7 victory over Northside-Warner Robins.

In region AAA, Dalton defeated Cedartown 20-0; Gainesville defeated Lithonia 10-0; Swainsboro defeated Americus 21-7 and Westminster defeated Ware County 42-28.

The other AA playoffs Friday produced these results: Commerce 44, North Springs 19, and Mitchell Co. 16, Lincoln Co. 6.

In other region A playoffs, Feldwood defeated Gordon Lee 41-17; Miller Co. defeated Warren Co. 14-6 and Charlton Co. defeated Johnson Co. 35-18.

Penn State Eases Past Pitt, 17-10

By The Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) — The skies were cloudy, the wind gusted up to 25 miles an hour and played havoc with kicks, the temperature was 39 degrees at kickoff and dropped steadily.

A portent of approaching winter in the wind-swept Nittany Valley, but all in all a beautiful Friday on the campus of the Pennsylvania State University.

"A very delightful day for late November up here," Coach Joe Paterno noted.

For the fourth time in Paterno's 13 seasons, Penn State completed a perfect regular-season, coming from behind to defeat arch-rival Pitt 17-10 by scoring 10 points in the final 5:02 on Mike Guman's 4-yard run and Matt Bahr's record-setting 38-yard field goal.

But for the first time, the Nittany Lions are ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press poll and will face either Alabama or Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 1 for the elusive national college football national championship which they have never won.

Paterno, of course, is hoping to meet second-ranked Alabama in one of those dream post-season pairings which the bowl tie-ups make so difficult to come by. Alabama will be Penn State's opponent if it defeats Auburn next Saturday, but a loss or a tie puts No. 12 Georgia in the Sugar Bowl as the host team.

"I don't know who we'll play," Paterno said in response to a question about the bowl game. "Hopefully..." he began, and then he stopped. "Well, not hopefully ... it's been a crazy year."

But it was a year which saw Penn State extend the nation's longest winning streak to 18 games and close out an 11-0 regular season as the nation's only unbeaten team.

It wasn't easy. These Penn State-Pitt neighborhood brawls rarely are. The Lions ran into all sorts of problems from an aroused Pitt defense but took advantage of the stiff breeze in the final period to turn back the 15th-ranked Panthers, who finished 8-3 and will meet North Carolina State in the Tangerine Bowl.

A chilled crowd of 77,465 saw a fierce struggle which was in doubt until the end. And after the final gun, the bitter rivalry was livened by angry remarks from Pitt Coach Jackie Sherrill charging Paterno with "very unethical" conduct by insisting that the officials inspect Pitt's cleats prior to the game.

The dispute had no effect on the final outcome — Sherrill conceded as much — but served to heighten the bitterness between the two back-yard rivals. This was a hard-hitting affair between two rugged defensive units.

After a early exchange of fumbles — only the sixth fumble lost by the Lions all season — Penn State got a gift touchdown when Pitt quarterback Rick Trocano coughed up the football and Rick Donaldson recovered at the Panthers' 14. A penalty put the ball at the 7 and four plays later Guman scored from 3 yards out.

Pitt marched 51 yards in nine plays in the second quarter, tying the score on Trocano's 16-yard pass to Steve Gaustad. And the Panthers moved in front 10-7 on Mark Schubert's 17-yard field goal in the third period, seven plays after Dave DeCiccio's diving interception of a Chuck Fusina pass at the Penn State 29.

All that scoring was done by the team with the wind at its back, a pattern that continued to the end. And Penn State had the wind in the final period.

First, the Lions drove from the Pitt 41 after a short punt to the 13, but a field goal try never came off when the center snap was low.

But another short punt into the wind gave Penn State the ball at the Panthers' 42, and this time the Lions scored in seven plays for a 14-10 lead. Guman took a pitchout to the left side on fourth-and-2, cut back into a gaping hole and scored easily.

Rich Milot's 18-yard interception return, one of six Pitt turnovers, set up Bahr's 22nd field goal of the season, an NCAA record, with 2:23 remaining.

Just before Guman's touchdown, Penn State called a confused time out to check the fourth-down yardage after Bahr came onto the field with the kicking team.

"I wanted to go for the touchdown, but I didn't know how far it was," Paterno explained. "At first I was told it was 4 yards. Then somebody said it was 1, then 2. I couldn't see, so I told Fusina to call time out. I said, 'Chuck, go down and find out exactly how far we have to go.' He signaled this far," Paterno said with a grin, holding his hands a foot or so apart.

In response to a direct question after the game, Sherrill ripped Paterno about the cleat inspection, charging the Penn State coach intimidated Emil Narick, supervisor of the independent officials' organization used by Penn State, Pitt and five other schools.

"Two things have me very upset," Sherrill said. "First, that the supervisor of officials could be intimidated and, second, that no professional courtesy was used. It was very unethical.

"There was nothing illegal about our cleats, but the officials were intimidated so much that they took some of our shoes over to show him. They could have just said, 'The shoes are okay, Joe.'"

Paterno said he requested the inspection after a Penn State equipment man discovered illegal-length cleats on some Pitt practice shoes Thursday night. The game shoes had the proper length cleats.