

Randolph, Middleboro ready for EFL battle

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MIDDLEBORO — There will probably not be many surprises in Saturday's Eastern Football League semifinal playoff game.

When the Randolph Oilers travel to Battis Field (7:30 p.m.) for their meeting with the Middleboro Cobras, it will be the third time the teams have met this season.

Although Randolph was beaten in the previous two games, coach Tom Pileski does not plan any major changes for the third encounter.

"We're going to do the same thing that we've been doing all year," said Pileski.

What he means is that quarterback Bob Witt will be doing a lot of handing off to Mike Waithe and Jay McGee. The two talented Oiler backs have combined for nearly 1,000 yards rushing with an average of more than five yards a carry.

"They have a few good backs, and we have to shut them down to take away the running game," said Middleboro coach Dave Harrison. "Hopefully, we can contain them like we have."

Randolph (5-5) will keep the ball on the ground for three reasons. With backs like Waithe and McGee, it's a good way to score points. It will also kill time off the clock, and by killing time, the Oilers will be able to keep the ball away from Bob Barrett and the Cobra offense, which has averaged more than 25 points a game.

"With a team like Middleboro, you have to stop the *big* play,"

said Pileski. "They have so many dangerous people. Barrett has really come around, especially as a throwing quarterback. (Kelly) Brooks and (John) Montalbano are really talented players."

Pileski is certainly not forgetting the league's leading rusher. The Oiler defense will have to contain Craig Ross, who has picked up over 600 yards rushing and scored seven touchdowns.

Carl Fisher is another one of the talented Middleboro players who can run and score. He has scored four times and gained 300 yards this season, and has recovered from his injury.

"We're going to mix it (offense) up like we have all year," said Harrison. "The major thing will be executing and not making mistakes, either mental or physical."

Middleboro, which finished the season in second place with a 9-1 record, also has the league's second-best defense.

Mike Draper and George Feroli are the big men up front who will be chasing Witt around the Oiler backfield, while Bill Jones will be roaming the Cobras secondary looking for interception number eight.

Dave Arruda has a knack for finding the ball for the Cobras. The Middleboro defender has three fumble recoveries to his credit this year.

"If the defense plays well and turns the ball over like it has, then we'll be in good shape," said Harrison.

Not only are the Cobras loaded on both offense and defense, but they rank up there in special teams performance.

Dave Hickey is a talented kicker who has 29 points and a 36-yard punting average. Mike Gonsalves and Bill Royal are first and third in the league, respectively, in punt returns.

"I think that we're as prepared as we're going to be," claims Pileski. "We're healthy, so we'll have no excuses in that respect. I think that if we don't make the mental mistakes, like we did in the last two meetings, then it will be competitive."

"I feel as though we have the potential to be as good as anybody if we play our game."

If the running game doesn't work for Randolph, then count on Witt to look for Ron Cassford and Mike Harding. Cassford has 21 receptions this year while Harding averages 38.5 yards on six grabs.

Witt is the second ranked passer in the EFL behind Hyde Park's Mike Fallon. He has 10 passing TDs and has thrown for

nearly 1,000 yards with a .455 percentage.

In the other EFL playoff game, Charlestown (6-5) will play Hyde Park (9-1) on Sunday (2 p.m.) at Daley Field in Brighton. The two winners meet next weekend for the EFL title.