

Larry Sullivan's

SPORT SIDE

What's In A Name? Everything

Touching All The Bases: In sports, nicknames of teams mean a lot. It offers a way for reporters of the game to provide added imagination to the results. For example: Clemson played like real Tigers Saturday in a 31-17 mauling of Wake Forest. It also gives truly faithful fans something to dress their appearance at the games. Never a game goes by when you don't see at least one person dressed in an outfit corresponding to the nickname of at least one of the teams, and most times both, taking part in a given game.

We in these parts are not blessed with an abundance of unusual team titles. We seem to be overrun with Devils, with that name being used to describe our own Mooresville High School team as well as two others in our same Southern District VII Conference, namely Maiden and Newton-Conover, as well as Duke of the collegiate ACC.

Vikings are also well-known in these parts, as teams from both South Iredell and North Mecklenburg respond to that nickname.

We also have those Tigers, Deacons, Tar Heels, Wolfpack, Pirates (oops, maybe I shouldn't have put those last two so close together. It could start another riot, you know), Wildcats, Terrapins, 49'ers, Indians, Cavaliers, and Yellow Jackets. Agreed, there are few repeats, but it's also agreed that imaginations were limited when these team names were decided upon.

Just once I'd like to come across a team with a truly imaginative nickname. During my years at East Carolina, I did some research concerning team nicknames. Yes, while other students in the library were actually studying for their in-class tests, I was the one doing some real data collecting. I discovered that the high school team in nearby Washington was known as the Pam Pack.

Now, just what a Pam Pack is, I haven't the foggiest. The

scoop here, though, is that the nickname is unique not only in North Carolina but, as far as I could tell, across the U.S. as well. That would be ideal. I can almost see the lead sentence: Washington's Pam Pack played as unique as their name Friday night with a 36-6 whalloping of arch-rival Williamston in a crucial league game. It would almost write itself.

Call me old-fashioned, if you will, or call me someone lost in the past. Both titles fit. At any rate, I've been doing some additional team nickname research lately. What I've come up with is the single team nickname that I personally favor.

They're known as the CAPE Crusaders, and no, their quarterback's name is not Bat Man nor is their leading ballcarrier Robin. These campaigners against evil as it comes on the football field hail from the Cincinnati Academy of Physical Education, an innovative phys-ed alternative school whose initials spell out their nickname's promise, as they won Ohio state championships in 1985 and '86 and entered this season with only seven defeats over the past five years. They have enjoyed so much success, that other teams are resenting it. CAPE has been kicked out of the league it has dominated over the years and now serves as an independent.

OUCH!

Don't get me wrong. I like all of our area team's names. I make it a point to remember them and often play with them in the stories I write. It would be nice though, from time to time, to add a little pizzazz to the articles by throwing in a seldom-heard nickname every now and then. Think about it.

Competition Of A Higher (Scoring) Sort: Sure, a handful of American's premier college football teams, namely Oklahoma, Nebraska, Miami, Florida State, Auburn, and Notre Dame, to just tip the iceberg, play every Saturday. But order to preserve and protect their high national ranking. But even underneath that incentive, there brews another one, being the right to brag as the nation's highest-scoring team. Or so it seems.

For instance, take a gander of some of the past weekend's scores. The Sooners blast Kansas State, 71-10. Florida State tops that with a 73-14 embarrassing of Tulane. Notre Dame sinks Navy, 56-13. Miami hangs East Carolina's Pirates, 41-3. Nebraska at least keeps it respectful with a 42-7 ripping of Missouri. In most cases, when reviewing these games, the winning team was still looking for more ways to score at game's end. Where will it stop.

Take Miami's Hurricanes. Prior to resuming play this weekend following an open date, the 'Canes ripped through their previous four opponents by a combined 154-52 score. Tack on Saturday's effort, and it rises to 195 points scored to only 55 allowed. In an earlier game against Maryland, Miami which went on to win easily, 46-16, in a rare close game, scored its final touchdown with three seconds left on a pass. That same week, Florida won, 65-0, and Florida State, 61-10, both doing so by keeping starting players on the field most of the time.

As Sports Illustrated explains, though, these teams are playing an entirely different game than are the majority of the nation's teams. All of the top-ranked teams are expected to light up the scoreboards. Even when one of them doesn't hit the high numbers while running up its winning margin and still records a win, while a few or more of the others do, it could still drop a notch or two in the all-important national rankings. That, in turn, could result in the loss of some big bucks, and those, in turn, are still what makes the college game go round.

We're now at that point in the season when teams are going all out to impress bowl scouts. Don't be surprised if the high scoring not only continues, but also increases.

Devilletes Receive Additional Volleyball Satisfaction: Mooresville's head volleyball coach Nancy Dilks will be the first to tell you there's hard to find fault with an 18-1 season, one that perhaps stands alone in school history and propelled the Devilletes into the second round of the state 2A playoffs. Now, with the state titles having been decided this past weekend in Chapel Hill, comes further feelings of satisfaction for our girls.

As you may recall, Southwest Randolph ended the season for our Lady Devils with a comeback three-games-to-one win here just over a week ago. Southwest was then eliminated by Mt. Airy in the following semi-final round, and it was Mt. Airy that then went on to sweep Pender County in three straight games Saturday in UNC's Smith Center.

As it turned out, it took the best to beat our best. Mooresville would have eventually had to face Mt. Airy, which won its second straight state 2A title and finished 27-0 overall. The Lady Bears lose only two starters off this year's team, and it's conceivable that our Devilletes, who will also be boosted by the return of several players, could square off with Mt. Airy at some point next season.

Elsewhere in the state, Waynesville Tuscola won the 4A title. Trinity captured the 3A gold, and Edinville claimed the 1A crown. All four finals were decided in three games.

The Playoff Picture Brightens: All but one of the combined six postseason positions available within the Foothills Athletic and Southern District VII conferences have been decided, some as a result of what took place this past weekend.

In the SD-7, it is assumed that Newton-Conover, Maiden, and Bunker Hill will prolong their seasons at least one more game. Newton-Conover will earn the first seed regardless of what happens this week, as the Red Devils have already beaten both Maiden and Bunker Hill. As for those latter two, they will decide the second and third-place spots when they meet each other Friday night.

Over in the FAC, North Iredell is in as the league champion, and Statesville is situated as the number two club. The third and final postseason berth will be locked up by the winner of Friday's crucial South Iredell-Wilkes Central contest in Viking Valley.

As for Mooresville, well, to put it politely, the Devils are eagerly awaiting the basketball season.

Newton-Conover, Maiden, Bunker Hill All In As SD-7 Postseason Reps

Which teams will advance into 2A football postseason play is no longer an issue within the Southern District VII Conference.

All that remains to be settled, primarily due to the results of last week's game, is the final positioning of the three teams already assured of making a first-round playoff appearance.

And as for one of them, even that has previously been decided, as unbeaten and undefeated Newton-Conover will receive the SD-7's top postseason bid regardless of what happens on this final Friday night of regular-season play.

That is the case after the Red Devils assured themselves of no worse than a share of the league title by becoming once again one of the four league winners from last week's action.

Joining Newton-Conover in the league's winner's circle following Friday's games are both Maiden and Bunker Hill, who with their respective victories both also guaranteed themselves a playoff spot, as well as Cherryville, which will celebrate nothing this week but the end of its season.

Last week's decisions found Newton-Conover doubling Bessemer City, 28-14, Maiden whipping West Lincoln, 38-0, Cherryville surprising Bandys, 21-6, and Bunker Hill clashing Mooresville, 38-8.

This week, which will close out the season for the other five circuit teams, scheduled games find Bessemer City visiting Mooresville, Bunker Hill invading Maiden, West Lincoln calling on Cherryville, and

Bandys traveling to Newton-Conover.

Of these bouts, the Bunker Hill at Maiden one will carry the most clout. Even though both of those teams enter the affair assured of a postseason visit, their clash will decide which will receive the second and third-place berths.

While the first-place team will host its way through the playoffs, the second-place team will begin on the road but could return home if successful. As for the third-place team, it will take care of all its postseason play away from home.

At Bessemer City Friday night, Newton-Conover locked up a least a share of the league crown for a fourth straight year, and secured that first-place playoff bid, with the 28-14 topping of the host Yellow Jackets.

The win shoots N-C, ranked third in the state's Associated Press 2A poll, to 9-0 overall and 6-0 in the league, while Bessemer City slipped to 3-6 and 2-4, respectively.

Maiden also locked up a playoff spot, as the Blue Devils turned up the heat in the second half to blitz host West Lincoln, 38-0. It was the most lopsided of games played within the SD-7 last week.

Maiden, ranked eighth in that same AP 2A poll, improves to 8-1 overall, and 5-1 in league play with the victory, while West Lincoln dropped alone in last place at 2-7 and 0-4, respectively.

Bunker Hill also locked up its second playoff spot in three seasons, and set the stage for this week's

drama, with a 38-8 swagging past visiting Mooresville.

The Bears, who held the Blue Devils without a first down until the fourth quarter, hiked their record to 8-1 overall and 5-1 in the league, tying it with Maiden in second, while the Devils slipped to 4-5 overall and 2-4 in the league, tying them with Bessemer City for fifth place.

In the one game last week that had no bearing on postseason play, the visiting Ironmen from Cherryville dashed the already slim playoff hopes of Bandys with a 21-6 decision.

It was Cherryville's first league win in six tries, and only the Ironmen's second victory in nine outings overall, while the favored Trojans suffered the defeat, their third in three league attempts and also third in nine games overall, including a tie.

The opponents of the three SD-7 teams having already earned postseason invitations won't be known until the completion of this week's games, which also wrap up regular-season play for all teams across the state.

The first-round of the playoffs will then begin the following week, with only Newton-Conover assured of beginning its quest for the state 2A title at home.

As for this week's, all of Friday's final regular-season games offer 8 p.m. starting times.

THIS WEEK'S SD-7 GAMES
Bunker Hill at Maiden
Bessemer City at Mooresville
West Lincoln at Cherryville
Bandys at Newton-Conover

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