



HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
LIONS' LEADER
Rosiak's experience key for young Lackawanna Trail team



Lackawanna Trail Junior Cooper Rosiak had two touchdowns -- one a 55-yard reception and the other a 90-yard run -- in the Lions' season-opening win over Nanticoke. At free safety, Rosiak is also a leader of the team's defense. Jason Farmer / Staff Photographer

Lackawanna Trail's Cooper Rosiak inspires the pride

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Cooper Rosiak saw the light.

As a freshman, playing with the varsity team at Lackawanna Trail, and having the benefit of a big brother to look after him, he learned what it took to be both an impact player and more importantly a leader.

Now, as a junior playing running back and starting for the third season at free safety, Rosiak is not only the leader on and off the field for the Lions, but he also serves as the inspiration for an inexperienced team aiming to reach the District 2 Class A playoffs for a third straight season.

"He just works very hard no matter what he does," said junior Vic Mallory, who is in his first season as the starting quarterback. "Whenever things don't go so well, he brings us all together and he encourages us to get things going again.

"He always brings a lot of energy to the huddle and that's what a young team like we have needs."

Two years ago, Rosiak took on a difficult assignment.

He moved up to the varsity team as a freshman, joining a talented group of returning starters who were poised to restore the pride to the most successful program in District 2 Class A history.

His pressure compounded when he was inserted into the lineup at free safety, which is essentially the quarterback of the defense in coach Steve Jervis' scheme.

"We saw Coop in Junior Lions and saw that he was a good athlete," Jervis said. "He was out there calling the defenses and the guys immediately respected him."

Helping ease the transition for Rosiak, his older brother Marvess was already an established starter and all-star for the Lions.

"It's always nice having your brother on the team as someone to look up to," Cooper Rosiak said. "I grew up knowing his friends and I knew all of those guys.

"They were looking out for me, kind of took me under their wings and taught me a lot."

His play helped boost his status and confidence. He saw playing time on offense as well in some of the Lions bigger victories and contributed 54 yards rushing and a touchdown. But he saw and experienced more as a defensive back.

And it carried over to last season.

In his second season as a defensive starter, he earned honorable mention status on the Lackawanna Football Conference Coaches' Division III all-star team. He also began emerging as a play maker on offense, gaining 152 yards with two touchdowns.

His enthusiasm for the game and intensity on the field re-enforced Jervis' initial belief that he could be a difference maker for the Lions.

"He's the kind of kid who lightens up practice a bit," Jervis said. "But he also knows not to push that part of it too much.

"He takes things very seriously and works very hard in practice, while also playing at a high level."

Two years into the Lackawanna Trail program, Jervis knew he had a winner and a role model.

A three-sport standout, Rosiak also wrestles and is an up-and-coming star as a catcher for the baseball team.

In the classroom, thanks in large part to his parents Jon and Denise, who is a middle school teacher at Abington Heights, he is as dedicated to his studies as he is his athletics.

"I have seen a lot of athletes who don't have the grades to go to college," Rosiak said. "My mom is a teacher, so she is always on me to work hard on my grades.

"That is important to me."

On the field, Rosiak put the time in this offseason to get bigger and stronger. He had to, knowing that he would be counted on to start on both sides of the ball.

In Week 1, the 6-foot-0, 165-pound, 16-year-old turned in his usual solid performance in the secondary. And on offense, he caught a 55-yard pass for a touchdown and had a 90-yard touchdown run.

After it was over, Rosiak finished with a career-high 155 yards rushing and had two receptions for 65 yards in a 39-7 win over Nanticoke.

"I have big shoes to fill," Rosiak said. "Jeremy Greenley had a great season last year. Coming back, we have a younger team, so I knew that I would have a bigger role. I knew that I would have to replace those great seniors that we had last season.

"We knew that it could be a close game against Nanticoke. We also knew that if we could do our assignments and play hard that we could win the game."

His raw numbers told the story of how much Rosiak means to the Lions if they are going to return to the District 2 Class A playoffs.

But it was also what he did for the players around him who were in their first varsity start that impacted, as well.

"It really is great to have him out there," Mallory said. "He really takes the leadership of the huddle."

And after an impressive first win, he continues to lead, reminding his teammates that was only one game in a long season.

"You can never get too high or too low," Rosiak said. "You just have to keep building each week to get better and that's what we are going to do."

It's one of the valuable lessons he learned two years ago, that he carries that makes him the player his teammates can look up to, just as he did.