



Time Out



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Absent Minded

This year's varsity football team finished with eight wins (8-4 overall with last Friday's 31-7 loss to Cienega in the first round of the 4A-I playoffs) and it is not the most wins by an AJHS team since that 1984-85 squad went 8-2 (or possibly 8-3). Just two years ago, while playing in their final season of 4A-II ball, the Prospectors went 9-5 overall, losing to Higley in the semifinals of the State Tournament. Thanks, Max, for the corrective email.

As for the seniors who played their last game for AJHS on Friday, how about a 23-15 overall record for the past three seasons? Not bad.

Rusty Nailed It

He's not the biggest AJHS football player (listed at 6-3 and 200 pounds) but with his heart and determination, he has a chance to be something special at the next level. Senior Rusty Fernando had 13 sacks and 105 tackles this season (including a sack and six tackles in last Friday's playoff game) and was recently named the Desert Sky Region's top defensive player (see article in lower right box).

Rumor has it that San Diego State is looking at the defensive end, who holds the AJHS record for sacks in a single season (13) and also sacks in a career (21). You add 25 to 30 pounds to his frame, which college coaches will easily do, and Rusty becomes a solid outside linebacker at the college level. It wouldn't surprise me to see some more offers come his way, especially if college coaches get a hold of that Shadow Mountain game tape.

Prospectors Fall to Cienega 31-7 In First Round Of State Playoffs

By Chuck Baker
The News

For the second time in their two years of 4A-I level play, Apache Junction's varsity football season came to a close with a first round loss in the State Tournament. Seeded 10th in the sixteen-team tournament, the Prospectors fell to the 7th-seeded Cienega Bobcats 31-7 this past Friday night in Vail, ending their season with a 8-4 overall record.

A year ago, Apache Junction was ousted 41-7 by Goodyear Millennium in the first round and in both State Tournament losses, Apache Junction's offense, particularly it's vaunted rushing attack, struggled.

Apache Junction, a team that led the entire nation in rushing offense after the first four games of this

The Perfect Season (13-0)

Pee Wee Muddogs capture PCYFF championship game in overtime

By Chuck Baker
The News

The Pee Wee Muddogs of the Black and Gold Youth Football League closed out a perfect 13-0 season by defeating the Casa Grande Storm 12-6 in overtime to capture the Pinal County Youth Football Federation championships played November 8 in Maricopa.

The Muddogs, forced to play three tournament games in a seven-day period due to a protest, had enough left to hold off the Casa Grande Storm in overtime in a great defensive battle.

Behind some good runs from Cisco Valenzuela and Danny Frederick and key pass plays from Brett Darling to Christian Harris, the Muddogs moved down the field in the second quarter of the championship game and got a one-yard touchdown dive from Valenzuela to grab a

6-0 halftime lead.

The Storm was able to tie the game at the end of the third quarter by scoring a touchdown on a fourth-and-goal play from the five-yard line. The Storm later scored what would have been a game-winning TD on a fourth-quarter interception return that was called back because of a block in the back and then the Muddogs defense held tight to send the game to an extra period.

In the overtime, the Storm had first possession but terrific defensive plays by Richelle Harlan, Gary Nielsen and Christian Pallozzi-Crespin of the Muddogs kept the Storm from scoring.

On the Muddogs second play in their overtime possession, quarterback Darling tossed a game-winning TD pass to Nielsen, giving the Muddogs the ending they needed to cap off the perfect season.



The Pee Wee Muddogs of the Black and Gold Youth Football League capped off the perfect season when they defeated the Casa Grande Storm 12-6 in overtime on November 8 to win the PCYFF championships and finish 13-0. Team members included players Danny Frederick, Connor Brennan, Colton Edwards, Aaron Nutt, Tyler Edwards, Nycholas McCune, Brett Darling, Anthony Pallozzi-Crespin, Trenton Gonwa, Christian Harris, Tyler Brown, Richelle Harlan, Kyle Gilbert, Cisco Valenzuela, Beau Bullard, Colton Koesser, Christian Pallozzi-Crespin, Nicholas Valenzuela, Gary Nielsen, Joey Masella, Mike Uehling and William Frank, and coaches Lance Uehling, Jose Valenzuela, Dan Frederick and Steve Darling. The team's sponsors this season included the Brown Family, Kim and Tom Walker, V.T. Brown, Sunbelt Drilling LLC, Wing Orthodontics, R.T. O'Sullivan Sports Bar, Lifegate Church, the McCracken Family and Howe Precast Concrete Barrier. The team's players, cheerleaders and coaches are pictured above with the championship trophy and t-shirts just after winning the November 8 game against the Casa Grande Storm. (submitted photo)

"It was a total team effort and none of these kids gave up," said Muddogs head coach Lance Uehling. "I'm so proud of these kids."

The Muddogs opened PCYFF tournament play with a 42-0 victory over the Casa Grande Scorcherers on Saturday, October 25 and then defeated the Casa Grande Navy 38-6 in the second round on Saturday, November 1. But

the Navy coaches protested the game because the officials working the game were not A.I.A. certified, so four days later, on Wednesday, November 4, the two teams met again and this time the Muddogs prevailed, 32-6.

Just three days later, the Muddogs advanced to the championship game and beat the Storm to win the Pee Wee title for players ages 11 and 12 years.

Muddogs players included Danny Frederick, Connor Brennan, Colton Edwards, Aaron Nutt, Tyler Edwards, Nycholas McCune, Brett Darling, Anthony Pallozzi-Crespin, Trenton Gonwa, Christian Harris, Tyler Brown, Richelle Harlan, Kyle Gilbert, Cisco Valenzuela, Beau Bullard, Colton Koesser, Christian Pal-

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NJROTC Rifle Team Back In First Place



The 3-0 NJROTC Marksmanship Team from Apache Junction High School includes varsity members Austin Kennedy, C.J. Zanella, Jordan Carter and David Terock, junior varsity members Abraham Martinez and Kris Smith, and are coached by Senior Chief Instructor Dave Patti. They compete in the 12-team North-South Pellet League.

By Chuck Baker
The News

The NJROTC Marksmanship Team from Apache Junction High School that qualified for the State Championships the past two years is well on their way to making a third consecutive trip to State after starting out the 2008-09 Pellet League with a 3-0 record.

The Marksmanship Team, with varsity team members Austin Kennedy, C.J. Zanella, Jordan Carter and David Terock, and junior varsity members Abraham Martinez and Kris Smith, are coached by Senior Chief Instructor Dave Patti and are one of three undefeated teams in the Pellet League standings after the first three weeks of the season. The other team 3-0 teams in the 12-team league are Phoenix Sunny-

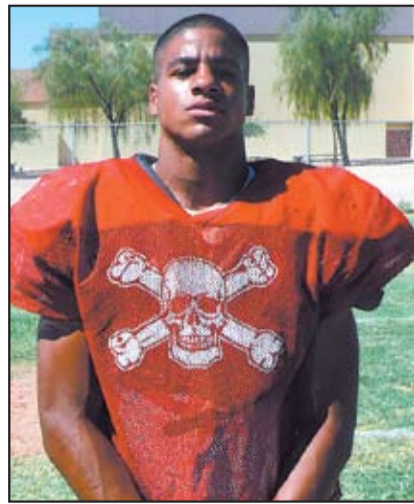
slope and Moon Valley.

In week three action, the AJHS squad defeated Tolleson Westview 926 to 828 in varsity action and 409 to 376 in junior varsity action. Scores for the Apache Junction shooters included a 235 for Zanella, a 233 for Carter, 232 for Terock, 226 for Kennedy, 218 for Smith and 191 for Martinez.

Zanella, Terock and Kennedy are all members of the 2007-08 AJHS Marksmanship team coached by Patti that finished first in the Pellet League standings, then took first at the All-Navy Arizona Qualifier thereby earning a bid to compete in the Southwest Regional Championships in California where they placed fourth overall, and also competed at the 2007-08 AIA Arizona State Championships.

Fernando Named Region's Top Defensive Player

Apache Junction senior defensive end Rusty Fernando (pictured) was chosen the Desert Sky Region's top defensive player at the November 10 coach's meeting, a huge honor



for the Prospector player considering the competition he was up against such as Scottsdale Saguro defensive tackle Corey Adams, a ☆☆☆☆ Scout.com prospect who is being recruited by Ohio State and USC, Scottsdale Chaparral ☆☆☆☆ prospect Craig Roh, who has already committed to the University of Michigan, and Paradise Valley defensive back Ebo Makinde, who has already committed to Boise State.

For the season, Fernando led the Prospectors with his 105 tackles and 12 sacks, which is a school record for sacks in a single season. Fernando had 90 tackles and eight sacks in 2007 and his 20 career sacks is also an AJHS school record.

season, managed just 139 yards on 35 carries against Cienega and 63 of those yards came on the Prospectors final two drives in the fourth quarter on scrambles by junior quarterback Nate Scola, who completed just 2-of-14 passes for 24 additional yards.

In last year's first-round loss to Millennium, the Prospectors were held to only 105 yards of total offense.

Cienega took the opening kickoff and marched 64 yards on seven plays and took a quick 7-0 lead following a 32-yard touchdown pass. It didn't take long for AJHS to answer.

On the ensuing kickoff, senior Shane McCullen fielded the ball at his own one-yard line and raced 99 yards down the left sidelines for a touchdown to tie the score, 7-7.

The rest of the first half was dominated by the Bobcats, who piled up 308 yards of offense to just 27 for Apache Junction, yet only had a 17-7 lead at intermission to show for it.

In the second half, Apache

Junction couldn't sustain a consistent offense until their final two drives while the Prospector defense was kept guessing about how to defend the Bobcats bal-

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Apache Junction's Shane McCullen (#44) goes up high to defend this pass attempt to Cienega's Trent Simon in last Friday's 4A-I State Tournament game