

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: Greencastle-Antrim hosts James Buchanan in finale

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By Ben Destefan

Which team finishes on a high note? That's one storyline ahead of Friday night's varsity football finale between Greencastle-Antrim and James Buchanan. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m. at Kaley Field.

The two teams enter a combined 1-17, with the Rockets (0-9) searching for their first win while the Blue Devils (1-8) try to snap a five-game losing streak.

As evident by the records, both programs have struggled this season, creating an underwhelming matchup to close out the year. Still, the schools always consider this a rivalry game, fueling motivation for all involved.

"It's a one-game season for both teams," G-A head coach Chuck Tinninis said. "We're both looking for a positive finish, and what better way to do it than against a rival?"

Perhaps there will be some added incentive for the Rockets following news Wednesday morning that this will be JB's last football contest as a member of the Mid-Penn Conference.

Because of the program's hardships, a request made by JB last week to be removed from the Mid-Penn in football only has been granted, meaning the Rockets will compete as an independent team beginning in 2017.

It's certainly a unique scenario that the Mercersburg community has seemed to rally around, and one that Greencastle is well aware of.

"They made a move that's best for them," Tinninis said. "Their kids play hard, they've just had a tough time in the division. Even though they're 0-9, we won't be taking anything for granted."

Despite sharing similar records, the Blue Devils have to be considered the favorites this week.

In seven of their nine losses, the Rockets have given up at least 50 points while finishing with negative-31 yards during last Friday's 38-0 loss to Waynesboro.

G-A's offense hasn't exactly been stellar either, as the Blue Devils have been shut out twice in the last three weeks. Defensively, however, Greencastle should have an advantage if the unit isn't frequently forced back onto the field as it was during a 34-0 loss to Northern York a week ago.

Presuming the Blue Devils find success on the ground and manage to sustain drives, G-A has to like its chances.

Demetrius Burton will likely be asked to shoulder much of the workload, as the junior leads the team with 712 rushing yards. Burton also caught five passes for 56 yards against Northern.

"I want us to go out and take care of business," Tinninis said. "We need to play physical on both sides of the ball and execute our game plan. It's been a good week of practice so far, now we just need to come out ready to go Friday night."