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Sports

Vikings Make Playoffs With Win

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Emerald High School football coach Mike Clowney's biggest dilemma entering the Vikings' regular-season finale against Walhalla might be wondering which Razorbacks' team they'll be facing. Over the past two weeks Walhalla has lost to Crescent, which Emerald beat 36-0, while last week upsetting Pendleton, 30-16.

Regardless of who will line up against the Vikings, a lot will be on the line for Emerald when it travels to face Walhalla at 7:30 p.m. Friday. Based on how the Vikings do Friday they could finish as high as No. 2 in Region 1-AA or as low as No. 5 and consequently miss the postseason.

If Emerald wins and Pendleton defeats Crescent, the Vikings will lock up the third seed in the region. If they lose and Pendleton still wins, they earn the No. 4 seed. If Emerald and Pendleton lose, then the Vikings will be eliminated. If Emerald and Crescent both win, the Vikings will earn the No. 2 seed out of 1-AA. "Walhalla's done everything to keep us out of it," Clowney said. "We haven't clinched it, but most scenarios we'll be OK. "The biggest thing we've had to do is go out and work this week."

Though the Razorbacks lost two weeks ago against Crescent, Clowney said based on the game film, Walhalla was effective offensively against Crescent and Pendleton. "It is (tough to gauge), but both weeks they've played well," Clowney said. Even though they lost to Crescent, Crescent was able to make some big plays on them. "They made plays last week against Pendleton. Everybody they've played, they've been able to put points up. The key is going to be whether we can slow them down and put points on the board ourselves."

Walhalla has scored 22 and 28 points over the past two weeks despite losing standout senior quarterback Rob Middleton to injury against Abbeville in Week 7. Middleton's absence has forced the Razorbacks to take more of a run-based approach and has set up some big runs for tailback John Sharpe, who had 139 rushing yards last week.

Clowney's primary concern in facing Walhalla is his defense transitioning from facing so many Wing-T offenses to lining up against a spread approach. "This will be a test for us to make sure we do a good job of tackling in space," Clowney said. "We've done a good job of keeping guys held up in the Wing-T, but probably the biggest challenge will be going from facing the Wing-T to the spread. "Even though we see it every day in practice, to go out and see it on Friday will be a little bit different."

Even in defeating Pendleton last week, Walhalla gave up 181 rushing yards and three touchdowns to the Bulldogs' Reggie Earle, so the Razorbacks can be vulnerable to effective runners like Emerald's Dee Parks, who has 824 yards on 129 carries. Even with that possible advantage, Clowney wants to utilize a variety of weapons on offense. "We've got to make sure we spread the ball out to as many guys as possible," Clowney said. "Dee's still pretty much been our workhorse, but Jared Norman, what type of production we get out of him, is going to be big."