

370 MILES AWAY, CATHOLIC IS MILES APART **Crusaders' sophomore back finding his "groove" in Lancaster**

By Joshua Funk
For PA Football News

Jordan Stewart wasn't a resident of Lancaster his entire life. The Lancaster Catholic sophomore is originally from Akron, Ohio, and went to a high school near Canton.

Stewart did not name the school, which reached the state's regional finals in 2001. But he did say that he had fun watching such powers as Massillon-Washington and Canton McKinley.

But football in the Buckeye State wasn't going so swell for Mr. Stewart.

"I couldn't get in a groove at that school," he said. "They catered to the seniors."

So knowing he was facing a losing situation, Stewart came to Lancaster Catholic, which was fresh off of a heartbreaking District 3 "AA" runner-up finish to Wyomissing.

Catholic went 9-3 in 2007, reaching the D3 "AA" semifinals before falling to Trinity. With the graduation of Catholic's top running backs from the '07 team, Stewart would get a chance to make an impact.

It turns out he made a good choice in coming to Lancaster.

"Back in Akron, I could have been a part of back-to-back losing seasons," Stewart said. "Here, I'm (with a team) winning playoff games."

Stewart is a winner himself. As Catholic's feature back, #21 is having a season to remember. In a Multiple-I offense that boasts a proficient passing attack, Stewart has carved out 902 rushing yards and 15 touchdowns on 150 carries.

He averages 6.0 yards per carry, and scores a rushing touchdown every 10th carry. For a sophomore, those numbers aren't too shabby.

Stewart's numbers against perennial District 4 power Mount Carmel weren't shabby, either: 27 rushes, 144 yards, and three touchdowns. The effort was part of a Lancaster Catholic ground game which chewed up Mount Carmel's "Red Death" defense for 282 rushing yards on 43 carries.

"They call themselves the 'Red Death,'" Stewart said, "but today, they seemed kind of dead.

"It (the win) feels great. We all just do our job."

Stewart then grabbed the shoulder of one of the Crusaders' starting offensive linemen. "These hogs," he said, "help out a lot."

Mount Carmel head coach Mike Brennan said during a pregame chat that his Red Tornadoes had an adjustment for the Catholic passing game, which had shredded MCA in a 2007 meeting during the regular season.

But what Brennan didn't expect was for Catholic to come out running – Catholic ran on eight of its first nine and nine of its first 12 plays from scrimmage.

"They established what they wanted to do," Brennan said. "We were outplayed. That's part of football."

Be sure to keep an eye out for Stewart, who really likes his situation with the purple and gold.

"Here, they give everyone (regardless of graduating class) an equal opportunity (to compete)," he said.