

Weekend Warriors: Undefeated battle in Week 5

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Mill River's Adam Shum attempts to break a tackle against an Otter Valley player during Saturday's football game in Brandon.
Photo by Brenna Jepson

The Otter Valley football team had a dominant first half of the season. The numbers make that extremely clear.

A 4-0 record. Check. An offense that puts up points in bunches. Check. A smothering defense. Check.

The Otters have a point differential of plus-125. You couldn't ask for a better start if you are Otter Valley coach Kipp Denis.

Now the real test begins and the test just went up a few levels in difficulty. The Otters (4-0) welcome fellow undefeated Windsor (4-0) to Markowski Field on Saturday in Division III showdown.

Like Otter Valley, dominance has been the Yellow Jackets' middle name in 2021. Windsor has put up 50 points twice and the closet margin of victory it's had, outside of last week's forfeit win over Missisquoi, was 27 points.

"We're focused on getting ready for a great football team," Denis said. "They're a senior-heavy team and seniors win football games."

Windsor quarterback Maison Fortin is one of the best in the state and can beat opponents with his arm or his legs. Logan Worrell and Ben Gilbert are game-changing weapons for Fortin as well. The Yellow Jackets have a big and strong line that be tough to move.

"Their guys don't come off the field. They play both ways," Denis said.

Otter Valley is allowing just three points per game, but that will be a tough mark to maintain against the high-powered Yellow Jackets.

The Otters' offense has been strong in their own right. Luca Polli has been impressive as a sophomore quarterback and guys like Brady Diaz, Caleb Whitney and Keevon Parks are among the many weapons he can call upon to help move the ball.

"We have a good stable of running backs and once we get Luca rolling, we can be tough to stop," Denis said.

Denis knows the challenge in front of his guys and stressed the importance of playing disciplined and limiting penalties, something that has bit them on many an occasion this season.

Saturday's game will be a good barometer for where the two teams stand heading into the homestretch.

"This will be a good measuring stick game," Denis said. "Two 4-0 teams going at it, you don't see that often. We want our guys to have fun and seize the moment."

Kickoff is at 3 p.m. in Brandon on Saturday.

Rutland and Middlebury played a game that went to overtime during last year's 7-on-7 season. Friday, they'll meet for the first time since the pads and the tackling came back into play, with the Tigers hosting.

Both defenses have been elite throughout the first four games. Middlebury is allowing just six points per game and Rutland has earned a reputation for causing turnovers.

The Ravens' offense has been the more powerful of the two sides led by dual-threat senior quarterback Trey Davine, who tossed a pair of touchdown passes and ran for one in last week's win against St. Johnsbury.

Middlebury's offense is only averaging 16 points per game, but the Tigers move the ball well. In last week's win over Hartford, Middlebury rushed for 250 yards. Nick Austin-Neil accounted for 121 of those rushing yards.

Middlebury knocked off an unbeaten team in Week 4. Will Week 5 be an encore?

On Friday, CVU heads up I-89 to play BFA-St. Albans in a game where both come in at 3-1.

Essex has won three in a row and hopes to keep that roll going against a 2-2 St. Johnsbury team Friday night. The Hilltoppers host and look to bounce back from last Friday's loss to undefeated Rutland.

The other Friday D-I contest sees Burlington/South Burlington play at Colchester.

In a cross-division matchup, Division I Hartford hosts Division II Brattleboro. The Hurricanes fell from the ranks of the unbeaten last weekend at the hands of Middlebury.

The lone Division I matchup on Saturday sees Burr and Burton travel to Mount Mansfield. The Bulldogs are riding a three-game losing skid and the Cougars are winless.

The best Division II matchup of the weekend could be in Bennington on Friday, when undefeated U-32 heads to Spinelli Field to play Mount Anthony.

The Raiders' offense exploded in Week 4 for 40 points against Milton, fueled by five rushing touchdowns for Henry Beling. One of those scores went for 84 yards.

MAU's 2-2 record is deceiving, given that its two losses came to undefeated Rutland and Bellows Falls. In the Patriots' two wins, they have put up 37 and 36 points and their offense is very balanced.

In last week's 36-12 win against Brattleboro, Tanner Bushee threw for a pair of scores and three guys rushed for scores.

Bellows Falls looks to remain undefeated, hosting Milton on Friday. Every Terrier win has come by four touchdowns or more.

Winless North Country and Mount Abraham square off Saturday with the Eagles hosting.

Rice, winners of two straight and a contender in D-II, is at Lyndon on Saturday.

Fair Haven plays out of division with its rivalry game at Division III Poultney on Saturday. Both teams struggled mightily in Week 4 against powerful opponents. The Blue Devils hung with Woodstock for part of their game last Saturday, but the Wasps pulled away to win handily.

Woodstock hosts Missisquoi on Saturday. The Thunderbirds are still in search of their first win, while the Wasps have won two in a row.

Mill River has its Homecoming game on Saturday, hosting Oxbow. Both teams come in winless.

BFA-Fairfax/Lamoille has rolled through competition early in the season, but a matchup with a veteran Springfield club on Friday, with the Cosmos hosting, could be a test.

Springfield is feeling good after a shutout win in Week 4. Can they keep it rolling?

That's one of the many questions we'll be asking in a fun Week 5 slate.