

Weekend Warriors: Marquee matchups shape Week 6

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Otter Valley's Brady Diaz (29) stiff arms Mill River's Toby Pytlik (52) during a football game in Brandon.
Photo by Brenna Jepson

That chilly Saturday at Rutland High School's Alumni Field isn't far away.

In a little over a month, on Nov. 13 to be exact, the best of the best high school football teams in the state will be preparing to battle for the top prize and call themselves champions.

The work to set your team up strong to make the journey a little bit easier is done in weeks like this. Week 6 provides plenty of marquee matchups that will help shape what we potentially see on the turf in Rutland not long from now.

The Division I slate for this weekend was dealt a blow with the news of the Rutland against BFA-St. Albans game being canceled due to COVID contact tracing for BFA, but there are other matchups this weekend both contenders will have a keen eye on.

The biggest one of them all is taking place in Hinesburg Saturday afternoon, where CVU hosts Middlebury.

The Tigers battled with Rutland last week in an instant classic. They controlled the game early on, but a potent Raven attack broke through in the moments they needed to maintain a perfect record.

Middlebury is a resilient bunch and that showed in its effort against Hartford Week 4, where it bounced back from its first loss to BFA-St. Albans.

The Tigers are known for their ground-and-pound offense. Will that work against a CVU team that is coming into its own defensively?

CVU made a big statement last weekend, blowing out BFA-St. Albans. No team had really figured out the Bobwhites' strong defense, but the Redhawks did so in a big way, putting up 35 points.

The winner in that game looks to have an inside track at a home game in the opening round of the Division I playoffs, so the stakes are high.

The other big Division I game of the week sees Essex host Hartford Friday night.

The Hurricanes have looked dominant outside of their loss to Middlebury earlier in the season and they found their groove again offensively last week against Division II Brattleboro.

The Hornets are a team that has had to sweat out a couple close ones the last two weeks. In Week 4, they blocked a kick to escape with a two-point win against Burr and Burton, and last week, they fell by a touchdown to St. Johnsbury.

Similar to the CVU-Middlebury game, this matchup has massive playoff implications.

A cross-division matchup that really catches my eye is Division I BBA hosting D-II Mount Anthony on Saturday.

The last time these two rivals met in 11-on-11 play, then Bulldog senior Joey McCoy was having a historic performance on MAU's Spinelli Field.

The Patriots beat BBA in a 7-on-7 game last year, but if there was any year in recent memory where these rivals were on equal footing for a 11-on-11 game, this would be the year.

The hits are always a little harder and the emotion is much higher when these rivals meet. Both teams fresh off a Week 5 win, this should be a fun one.

Colchester and Mount Mansfield have struggled during the 2021 season with just one win between them. They meet with the Cougar hosting on Saturday.

In Division II action, U-32 looks to bounce back from its first loss, a 41-0 shutout, against MAU. Not much went right for the Raiders in Week 5 and they hope that a matchup with one-win Brattleboro will go better. U-32 plays host on Friday.

Fair Haven was dominant last week against rival Poultney, but the Slaters will have a tougher challenge this week against Lyndon. Both clubs reside in the middle of the Division II standings.

Rice also calls that middle ground home and it plays host to one-win Milton Saturday afternoon in South Burlington. The Green Knights had been riding a two-game win streak before last week's loss to the Vikings.

Undefeated Bellows Falls hosts Spaulding Friday night. The Crimson Tide will have had plenty of time to think about their game plan to slow down the Terriers, given that they were off last weekend.

In Division III, a pair of titans hope they continue their roll entering the latter stages of the season.

Windsor handily beat previously-undefeated Otter Valley last weekend and this week a young Poultney squad is on the schedule. BFA-Fairfax pulled away from a tough Springfield team last weekend and looks to stay undefeated against Mill River, who grabbed its first win in Week 5.

Woodstock has been dominant since its Week 2 loss to U-32 and it hosts Oxbow on Friday.

Springfield hopes to bounce back with a win over winless Missisquoi and Otter Valley looks to do the same against one-win Mount Abraham.

The Eagles gave Fair Haven all it could handle a few weeks ago, so no win is guaranteed

That's why you play the game. Many of these teams hope to be playing a game on Nov. 13.