

# Langdon-E-M advances behind its defense

## Romfo pick-6 is state semi game winner

By Greg DeVillers  
Grand Forks Herald

LANGDON — The offensive numbers are gaudy for Langdon-Edmore-Munich — a 37.4 points per game average, nine games with 28 or more points.

But the Cardinals play defense, too.

Grant Romfo's interception return for a touchdown gave Langdon-E-M the lead and the defense took control in the fourth quarter. The result was a

22-19 win against Bowman County here Saturday in the semifinals of the North Dakota Class A high school football playoffs.

Langdon-E-M (11-0) meets defending champion Hillsboro-Central Valley (11-0) at 9:10 a.m. Friday in the state championship at the Fargodome in a rematch of last season's title game.

"People know us as a team that likes to throw the ball and put up points," Romfo said. "I think our defense is overlooked. We don't give up a lot of points."

Langdon-E-M turned

the ball over on downs after being stopped on fourth-and-three on its own 15 on the Cardinals' initial fourth-quarter drive. On the Bulldogs' first play from their own 15, Romfo stepped in front of a pass near the sideline and returned the interception 16 yards for a 22-19 lead with 10:44 remaining.

"I'd noticed that they'd been throwing quick screens over there," Romfo said. "I thought they might try it. I was going for the pick."

"I saw it wide open to the end zone. It was

crazy going in, seeing my teammates jumping up and down."

The Bulldogs managed only three first downs on their three remaining drives. Langdon-E-M stopped the first two drives on fourth-down incompletions, then iced the win on a Noah Anderson interception with 27 seconds remaining.

Bowman County quarterback Jacob Svihovec was 15-of-28 passing for 149 yards — numbers that may have put Romfo in position for his interception.

"Grant usually plays more on the inside," LEM

coach Josh Krivarchka said. "But we stretched our defense out because they were throwing. Big players make big plays in big games."

Svihovec's 42-yard TD run and 20-yard TD pass to Caleb Duffield gave Bowman County a 13-0 halftime lead.

Sean Gette sparked LEM's second-half comeback on offense. First receiver Jackson Delvo took a pitch and passed 29 yards to Gette, who was tackled on the 1. Two plays later Romfo scored from the 2. The Cardinals went up 16-13 when

Simon Romfo went deep to Gette for a 54-yard TD pass.

"We had to make big plays to get back in it," Krivarchka said. "Sean made two big ones."

The Bulldogs regained the lead with 1:55 left in the third on a Svihovec 1-yard sneak.

But Grant Romfo's pick-six swung the game.

"That was a game changer," BC coach Todd Frie said. "We'd just made a huge stop on fourth down. We still had chances. We never gave up."

Bowman County closed with a 10-1 record.

# Hillsboro-CV picks off Dickinson Trinity to reach title game

By Clay Cunningham  
Forum News Service

HILLSBORO, N.D. — Anyone thinking Hillsboro-Central Valley was vulnerable following a tight opening-round game in the North Dakota Class A football playoffs were firmly reminded just how dominant the Burros could be Saturday.

The Burros dominated from the start, forcing nine turnovers with seven interceptions, in a 44-8 semifinal win over Dickinson Trinity to advance to Friday's state championship game in the Fargodome.

Gavin Wright put the H-CV offense in great position on its opening series, returning a punt 23 yards to the Titan 48. The Burros took advantage of the field position, capping the drive with a 2-yard Micah Gallagher touchdown run.

Starting on the plus side of the field became a theme for Hillsboro-Central Valley, which didn't run a play in its own territory until there was 3 minutes, 34 seconds left to play in the second quarter.

The biggest reason for the great field position was an opportunistic defense that nabbed four of its seven interceptions in the first half. Carson Henningsgard had two first-half picks, with Brayden Schildberger and Gallagher picking off one each. Ezra Longthorne then did the rest, snatching three Aric Knopik passes in the second half.

"Our coaches do a good



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Hillsboro-Central Valley's Carson Henningsgard picks off a Dickinson Trinity pass intended for Matt Stafford in the first half Saturday. Dickinson Trinity's Seth Herner (10.) HCV's Mark Hastings and Brayden Schildberger look on.

job preparing us knowing what routes they're going to run, doing what they can to put us in the spots to make those kinds of plays," Henningsgard said.

Burro Coach Scott Olsen said a big reason his defense had success Saturday was due to a two-high safety look which his team rarely used in the second half of the season and likely didn't show up much on pregame film.

And while the scheme played a big part, Olsen said the main reason for Saturday's success was the simple fact that he has good players on the back end.

"Our DBs are underrated," he said. "They don't

get talked about much with our running game and our line, but those guys are good football players."

Often set up on short fields, the run game pounced. Oscar Benson ran for 130 of his 180 yards in the first half, while he, Gallagher and Jake Daniel all found the end zone twice.

Benson says playing on a muddy grass field gave the Burros a decided advantage, as the Titans were unable to make plays on a tough surface.

"Trinity's used to playing on turf," he said. "The last three games it's been (muddy on our field). I think we definitely had the advantage there. We're

used to it. We've had a lot of experience on conditions like this."

Winners of 23 games in a row, the Burros are back at the Dakota Bowl next week, where a familiar foe awaits. Following a 22-19 win over Bowman County Saturday, Langdon-Edmore-Munich will look to avenge a 16-14 loss to the Burros in last season's championship game.

Olsen believes his club will be ready.

"It's exciting," he said of a return trip to the title game. "It's where we wanted to be, it's where we thought we'd be. It's Burro football right now. We're going to do everything it takes to keep winning."

## MINNESOTA CROSS COUNTRY

# Senior High boys sixth at state

## Nowacki, Mahar earn all-state honors

### Herald Staff Report

NORTHFIELD, Minn. — Cole Nowacki and Tyson Mahar each earned all-state honors here Saturday, leading East Grand Forks Senior High to a sixth-place finish at the Minnesota Class A boys high school state cross country meet.

The Green Wave finished with 201 points. Fellow Section 8A member Perham won the title with 64 points.

All-state recognition goes to the top 25 finishers. Nowacki, a junior, placed 10th with a 16:17.1 time. Mahar, a sophomore, ran a 16:33.2 to finish 21st.

"We were hoping for a top-10 finish in team," Senior High coach Kirk Misialek said. "That (sixth) was better than we expected. It was a good day. The boys ran

really well. The times were really good for all of them.

"Our original goal at the start of the season was the top 30 for Cole and Tyson. To be in the top 25 at state, that was awesome. Tyson was leading the pack for awhile. It was fun to watch them near the front, running aggressively like they usually do."

Perham also won the girls' Class A team title with a 94. Senior High finished 14th with a 290. Leading the Wave was Lydia Floden, who ran a 20:13.5 to finish 71st.

Crookston junior Katherine Geist, who trains with Senior High, finished ninth with a time of 18:58.4.

"Katherine ran well," Misialek said. "The girls ahead of her are just really good. After finishing 51st last year, she made some big strides this season."

## SPORTS BRIEFS

### Bogey-free Lee up three at Japan Classic

SHIGA, Japan — Minjee Lee fired a bogey-free round of 64 and claimed a three-shot lead at the Toto Japan Classic in at Seta Golf Club in Shiga.

The Australian is 13-under for the tournament and after opening with a birdie, carded seven more Saturday, Nov. 3, to miss the course record by one shot. Lee's

131 through two rounds is the second-lowest two-round total in her career.

Lee holds a three-stroke lead over second-year JPGA player Sakura Koiwai of Japan, who birdied her final two holes to pull into solo second at 10-under 134.

Koiwai is making her LPGA Tour debut and hit all 14 fairways in regulation in the second round.

— Field Level Media

# Linebacker Kendrick has been tackling machine for Vikings

By Chris Tomasson  
St. Paul Pioneer Press

More than a dozen years ago, Eric Kendrick learned what tackling was all about by bringing down Mookie.

Kendricks was a seventh-grade defensive back for Wowana Middle School in Fresno, Calif., in 2004 when his team faced Cooper Middle School and its big running back.

"I remember my first stop on a big running back," the 26-year-old Vikings middle linebacker said. "His name was Mookie. I don't remember his whole name. I got completely run over. I got folded up, but I made the stop. Everyone on my team was kind of like, 'Good job.'"

"He got about six or seven yards, but I realized then that it wasn't always going to be pretty but it's about stopping the ball carrier."

Kendricks has been doing a lot of that ever since. The 6-foot-, 230-pounder leads the Vikings with 59 tackles, 14 more than safety Harrison Smith.

If Kendrick maintains his lead, he would become the second player in Vikings history to lead

the team in tackles in each of his first four seasons; linebacker Ross "Rip" Hawkins did it from 1961-64. And Kendrick would become just the fourth player overall to lead Minnesota in that category for four or more consecutive seasons. Linebacker Scott Studwell led from 1980-85 and linebacker Chad Greenway from 2008-13.

"That's what I bring to the table," said Kendrick, whose Vikings (4-3-1) face Detroit (3-4) at noon Sunday at U.S. Bank Stadium.

So what makes Kendrick such a good tackler?

"I can find the ball really well and when I get to the point of attack, I go make the sound tackle," he said. "I don't necessarily go for the big hits. I always try to just wrap up and get the guy down."

To illustrate Kendrick's knack to get to the ball, Vikings defensive end Stephen Weatherly pointed to a play in the third quarter of last week's 30-20 loss to New Orleans. The versatile Taysom Hill lined up at receiver on the left side and took the ball on a reverse from Drew Brees.

As Hill went to the right, Weatherly chased him toward the sideline.



James Lang / USA Today Sports

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz (11) is tackled by Minnesota Vikings linebacker Eric Kendrick (54) in the second quarter at Lincoln Financial Field.

Then Kendrick swooped in from far away to make the tackle and limit the play to a 2-yard gain.

"I did slow (Hill) down, but he ended up bouncing out to the side. But when Eric came in, he shot it," Weatherly said. "When he sees the ball, he has tremendous confidence in going and pursuing the guy. He's decisive."

Kendricks didn't waste any time in becoming a top NFL tackler. After being taken in the second round of the 2015 draft out of UCLA, he missed two games entirely, didn't make his first start until

Week 4 and still finished the season with a team-high 105 tackles.

That was just the second time a rookie led the Vikings in tackling. Hawkins was the first to do it, in 1961, Minnesota's first season as a franchise. Hawkins, who died in 2015, played with the Vikings from 1961-65. He had a lot more leeway back then to bring down ball carriers than Kendrick has now.

"Rip used to do that arm tackle, which you can't do anymore," said hall of fame defensive end Carl Eller, Hawkins' teammate in 1964 and 1965. "He

liked to rip guys around the neck. Maybe that's where he got his name from. He'd do the old clothesline deal. That was his best."

Kendricks followed his rookie season with 126 tackles in 2016, then had a career-high 136 in 2017.

"Eric is super talented," said Greenway, Kendrick's teammate during his first two seasons. "He overcomes some deficiencies in maybe not having the prototypical linebacker size with just some crazy good instincts and with his speed. ... And while he's very talented, his

want-to is so much better than everybody else's."

When Greenway played with Kendrick, he quickly was impressed with his work ethic.

"The thing that kind of separates him from a lot of NFL players is he's not too cool to work hard," Greenway said. "He'll go out and grind. When he gets to practice, he's just super excited to go to work. He's not out there going through the motions. He really wants to improve."

Kendricks' work paid off when he signed a five-year, \$50 million contract extension in April that keeps him with the Vikings through 2023. He is making a base salary of \$1.138 million this season in the final year of his rookie deal.

He has had 13 tackles in a game five times, his career high. Against the Saints, he had 10 tackles, including two for loss.

"Eric really pays attention to the details," Vikings defensive coordinator George Edwards said. "He understands angles, staying inside out on the tackling. He's got the speed to get to the perimeter, and still maintain leverage on backs and receivers when we pass off in coverage."