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July 25

[No rest for team trying to be the best](#)

Pioneers will play their starters in final, hoping to find momentum.

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There's no rest for the Pioneers this week.

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton head coach Rich Ingold said he's learned from last season, and he won't be leaving any of his starters on the bench for today's regular season finale against the Albany Conquest. The game kicks off at 7 p.m. at the Times Union Center.

"Unlike last year, we're not resting anybody," said Ingold. "We want the momentum to carry over into the playoffs."

Last season, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (13-2) rested several key players over the final few games. They gave up two losses over the final three games – one to Manchester and one to Albany – before ultimately finishing 14-2 in the regular season.

The first-seeded Pioneers gave up three interceptions and had to rely on a last-second touchdown in a first round playoff game versus Tri-Cities last season. They won the game 57-54 but Ingold said he took more away from the contest than a win.

"We're going with momentum this season," he said. "We're going to be like the New York Giants."

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton can hardly be compared to the underdog Giants, having won two consecutive Eastern Division titles, a 2007 American Conference Championship and a berth in ArenaCup VIII. With the top seed in the American Conference once again in hand in 2008, the Pioneers are once again poised to do that again.

Ingold maintains that he's only looking at today's game.

"I look at things day-to-day," said Ingold on Thursday night. "You don't get into trouble when you do that."

"Right now, I just want to get my team to the pre-game dinner, meet at noon, travel to Albany, beat them and get home," he said. "Once that happens, we can look at who we're playing next."

The Pioneers' skipper did say that Wilkes-Barre/Scranton quarterback Ryan Vena will start, but he'll get the hook once the Pioneers are comfortable in the game. That's a change likely to occur sometime around the halfway point.

The Conquest may have a tough time getting anything going when the Pioneers No. 1 ranked defense enters the Times Union

Center.

The Pioneers won't have to worry about Albany's top two offensive players – quarterback Dan Cole and wide receiver Antwun Williams. The pair combined for over 56 percent of Albany's touchdowns this season (72-of-128) but are both injured and out for the season.

In their absence, QB Joe Deluise (33-64-2, 391 YDs, 7 TDs) and a host of receivers will have to pick up the slack. One such receiver that may weigh heavily on the game will be Chris Bocage. At 5-10, 190-pounds, the cagey, fleet-of-foot receiver and return specialist matches up well with the Pioneers defensive backfield and already has a 52-yard kick return against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton this season.

But with a matching pair of 69-27 wins under their belts, the Pioneers should have no trouble getting past the Conquest and carrying all the momentum they need into a first round American Conference playoff.

"I don't care who's playing," said Ingold. "We've already beat them twice this season, 69-27. It doesn't matter. I want to match (those scores) again."

Playoff Picture

As of Tuesday, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton's first round opponent in the American Conference playoffs is, tentatively, Quad City (7-8). That could all change after this weekend, though.

If Quad City were to lose its Thursday night matchup with Lexington (9-6) and Louisville (7-8) were to win its Saturday night game with Peoria (4-11) the two teams would trade places in the playoff standings.

South Georgia (11-4) is the second seed in the American Conference standings. They're potential first round opponent is Manchester (8-7).

Third-seeded Green Bay (10-5) is slated to face Lexington in the first round, but this weekend's results could change the pairings in the middle of the American Conference standings. Tennessee Valley (10-5) is the fourth seed and slated to play Florida (9-6) in the first round.

UP NEXT

Pioneers (13-2) at Albany (5-10)

WHEN: 7 p.m. today

WHERE: Times Union Center, Albany, N.Y.

RADIO: WILK (103.1-FM, 910-AM, 980-AM, 1300-AM)

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