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Lassiter, Pope face each other in must-win game

By Jack Martin MDJ Sports Correspondent
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Quarterback Hudson Marinko and Pope will welcome in Lassiter on Friday.
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Lassiter will travel to Pope on Friday, as each team looks for its first region win in this local rivalry.

The Trojans (3-2) are looking to end their two-game losing streak, and the Greyhounds (0-5) aim to turn around their season in what could be a playoff elimination game.

Lassiter plans to avenge its 27-3 loss to Pope last year. The Trojans have the edge in this crosstown rivalry, winning 19 of 33 matchups.











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Lassiter dropped its second straight region game Friday, falling 31-21 to Woodstock. Quarterback Mitch Seaman and wide receiver Collins Price combined for 10 receptions and 130 yards.

Despite early region struggles, the Trojans' offense has averaged over 30 points a game. Coach Sean Thom said Lassiter has left a lot on the table and isn't satisfied, but the offense has been big for the team.

"We feel like we really have left some stuff out there over the first two region games," he said. "We put up 21 versus Woodstock and 30 against Creekview. We have some guys who are angry about the way we lacked execution in certain areas. The offense has been big, but our biggest thing is we have to be able to play complementary football."

Pope also dropped its second straight region game Friday, falling 44-13 to River Ridge. Despite averaging just under 12 points per game to this point, the Greyhounds still have bright spots on offense. Pope rushed for 167 yards, averaging 6.7 yards per carry, in last week's loss.

Another region loss this early would damage playoff hopes and mark the Greyhounds' second 0-6 start in three years. O'Sullivan said this is a huge game for the team.

"For us the biggest thing is playing complementary football and limiting possessions," he said. "We have to improve on what we are doing in all three phases of the game so it will be a big night on Friday."



Friday's game will also be the Greyhounds annual Matt Hobby Classic. Proceeds for the annual fundraiser go to help research potential cures for childhood cancer. Over two decades, the foundation has raised more than \$400,000.

"I think the rival game in itself is intense," O'Sullivan said. "It's Matt Hobby night for us, and there's a lot of things that go into that game just in our community. Obviously everybody wants to have a win in region play, but with this game in itself, it wouldn't matter if one team was undefeated and the other wasn't."

Thom said the rivalry and an 0-2 region start have his players hungry.

"We have to realize it's not about Pope, it's about us," he said. "We let one slip away last week with some of the mental mistakes. We thought we played well enough in certain areas."

O'Sullivan said the connection of Seaman and Price, who have combined for seven scores, is one the Greyhounds will have to come up with an answer for.

"Their senior quarterback (Mitch Seaman) makes things go, No. 7 (Collins Price) makes things go offensively," he said. "Their offense has definitely scored more points than they have in the past."

Thom said Lassiter will not take Pope lightly. He said quarterback Hudson Marinko (460 yards and four touchdowns) and the Greyhounds rushing attack, which has averaged 105 yards per game, will be a focus.

"Offensively their quarterback -- Marinko throws a very good ball," he said. "They present a lot of issues in the run game that can stress your box and fits. We're going to have to be extremely disciplined in so many different areas."

