

SPORTS

PREP FOOTBALL

Four teams vie for southern zone title

By Lee Brown
Sentinel-Voice

The local prep football season will draw closer to an end Friday as the final four teams vie for the chance to play for the Southern Nevada Class AAAA Zone title next week. Winners in last week's first round of play, Sunrise Division champs Valley will face rival Green Valley, while Bonanza takes on Western. Both games will take place at the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl, with the Valley-Green Valley contest being played at 4 p.m. and Western-Bonanza at 7 p.m.

While all eyes seemed to be on Valley's perfect 9-0 season, the Sunset Division champion Western Warriors were making some noise of their own. Western, finishing with an impressive 8-1 overall record, made it to the semi-final round after a 28-0 win at home over the Eldorado Sundevils (3-6).

Led by senior running back Anthony Jones, the Warriors gained nearly 300 yards on the ground in the contest to Eldorado's 126. Jones, scoring on one- and three-yard runs, led Western with 119 yards on 24 carries. De'Angelo Floyd and Rosco Denson rushed for 104 and 62 yards, respectively.

"Our offense did what it's designed to do, spread the ball around to all our ballcarriers,"

said Western head coach Rich Stevens, in his first year at the helm of the Warrior's squad.

"This game coming up (against Bonanza), what we're going to have to do is cut down on our mistakes," Stevens said. Last time we played Bonanza, we fumbled six times. That gave us our only loss. We have a pretty good chance if we can hold on to the ball."

As far as a possible showdown against Valley in the zone finals, Stevens said he isn't looking that far ahead.

"I'm just worried about Bonanza right now," Stevens said. "We've got to get by them first."

The Bonanza Bengels (5-5), led by another star running back, Robert Thomas, trounced the host Las Vegas Wildcats 23-0 in their opening round playoff game, setting up the matchup against Western.

"They'll continue to do what they've done all season and try to contain (Bonanza's) Robert Thomas," Stevens added of the Warrior defense.

The Bengels, perhaps the second most surprising team of the season next to Valley, qualified for the playoffs for only the fourth time in its 20-year history.

Against the Wildcats, Bonanza's offensive line, which

averages over 225 pounds, controlled the line of scrimmage, allowing Thomas to single-handedly take control the game — rushing for 259 yards and three touchdowns on 41 carries.

After averaging just over 26 points per game during the regular season, the Wildcats never found themselves in scoring position.

If Bonanza's defense can step up the way they did last week, Jones and his Western teammates will have their hand full getting to the zone finals.

In Sunrise Division play, the defending-champion Gators of Green Valley High School, barely sneaking in as the division's No. 3 playoff seed, ran all over early-season favorite Cimarron-Memorial 28-7 last week to advance to the second round of play. The Gators (6-3), making their fifth consecutive playoff appearance, knocked off the Chaparral Cowboys in the last game of the regular season 17-8 to secure their position in post season play. The loss eliminated the Cowboys, a perennial playoff entrant. In the semi-final round, the Gators will face rival Valley, undoubtedly the biggest surprise of the season.

The Vikings, undefeated this year after going 0-8 a year ago, have relied all season long on senior tailback LaRontae

Johnson, rated the state's top rusher along with Western's Jones and Bonanza's Thomas.

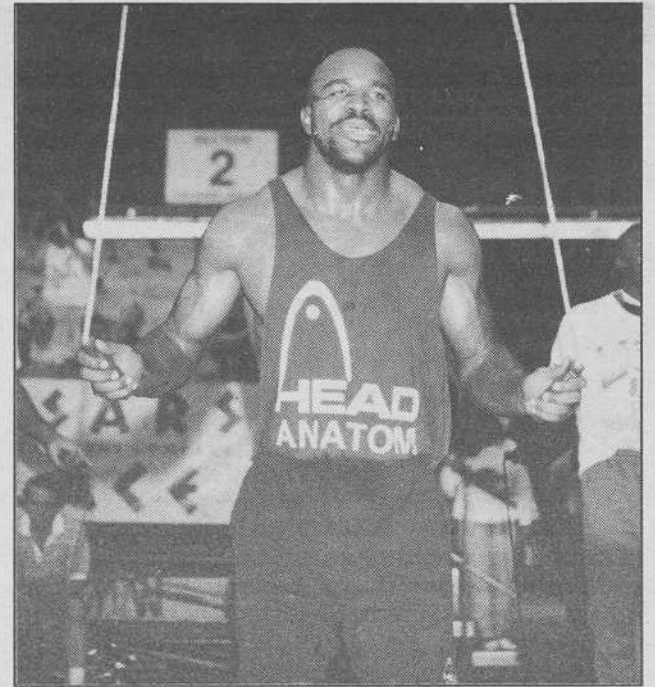
Johnson, at 5-foot-7 and 145 pounds, hasn't let his size stand in his way as he carried the Vikings to a 27-20 win over Durango High School in quarterfinal play last week. Johnson ran for a season-high 274 yards and three touchdowns on 33 carries in the contest.

Boasting 4.45 speed in the 40, Johnson was academically ineligible for the winless Vikings last season. Valley was picked to finish near the bottom of the Sunrise Division this year.

"We're going to have to step up the intensity level because we know it's going to be a challenge every week," Valley Head Coach Greg Murphy said of the playoffs. "We're playing one game at a time and need to step up our intensity level."

"Our defense has come through for us all year and we know they'll step up each week, so we're definitely counting on our defense," Murphy added.

The Bonanza-Western winner will face the Valley-Green Valley winner Friday, Nov. 15 at 7 p.m. for the Southern Zone title. Wins by Valley and Western would solidify a long awaited runningback showdown between Valley's Johnson and Western's Jones in the zone finals.



Holyfield opened his Las Vegas training camp this week and did rope work and sparring for the crowds.

Photo by Jonathan Olsen/Front Row Photos

Tyson

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friends, John Horne, Rory Holloway and Don King. After four straight wins following his stunning loss to Douglas, "Iron Mike" was back in position to challenge for the title. As talks heated up with then champion Evander Holyfield, Tyson got into trouble outside the ring.

With an impending trail looming, Tyson was signed to fight Holyfield, Tyson was convicted of rape by an Indianapolis jury and sentenced to six years in prison.

Serving his term at the Indiana Youth Center, Tyson's sentence was reduced because of good behavior and he was released on March 25, 1995, after serving three years. While in prison Mike found the Islamic religion.

Holyfield (32-3, 23 KO's), from Atlanta, Georgia, captured the undisputed heavyweight crown when he stopped Douglas in the third round on Oct. 25, 1990.

He defended the title three times before dropping a tough decision to Riddick Bowe. Known for his tenacious never-give-up attitude, 6'2" 211 pound Holyfield reacquired the WBA/IBF titles by out-pointing Bowe 51 weeks later. Having only fought three times since losing the titles to Michael Moorer in April of 1994, Holyfield kicked off the 1996 Summer Olympics in his hometown by carrying the Olympic Torch into Olympic Stadium at the Opening Ceremonies.

A three-time world champion at 190 pounds, Holyfield was clearly the cruiserweight of the 80's. With his stunning third-round knockout of James "Buster" Douglas in October 1990, to win the undisputed title coupled with his thrilling win over George Foreman, Holyfield made it perfectly clear that from now on he intends to be known

as the "Heavyweight of the 90s."

Considered by many experts to be too small to defeat the gargantuan Douglas and Foreman prior to their bouts, Holyfield proved that, "it's not the size of the man but the size of his heart that matters."

On Nov. 13, 1992, Holyfield faced his toughest opponent to date, risking his titles against the highly acclaimed Riddick Bowe. In a very tough and punishing fight for both men, Holyfield suffered his first professional defeat, dropping a 12-round decision. In the 12-round grueling rematch, Holyfield edged Bowe on points and regained two-thirds of the heavyweight titles.

His first defense was lost to Michael Moorer on April 22, 1994 and it was there that he learned of a heart defect that prompted Holyfield's retirement. In addition to seeking help from a faith healer, Holyfield wanted to fight again and received full clearance from doctors at the famous Mayo Clinic.

In his comeback bid, he lost a rematch with Bowe on November 4, 1995. Now he moves on to Tyson.

Also on the pay-per-view card are IBF champ Michael Moorer (37-1, 30 KO's) against No. 1 contender Francois Botha (36-1, 21 KO's), WBO champ Henry Akinwande (30-0-1 18 KO's) against Alexander Zolkin (24-2 15 KO's). It will be the first time in the history of the sport that three heavyweight championship fights will be shown live on television: in the same night.

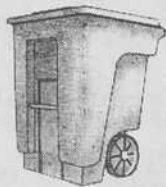
Tickets are priced at \$200, \$400, \$600, \$800, \$1,000 and \$1,500 and can be purchased through the MGM Grand box office, Ticketmaster outlets or charge by telephone at 702 474-4000.

Some 25 million homes are expected to watch the fight on pay-per-view.

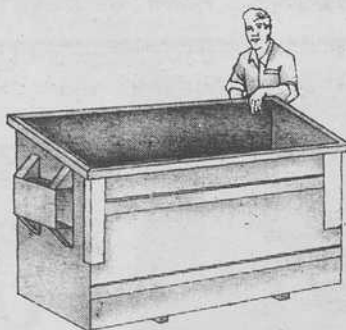
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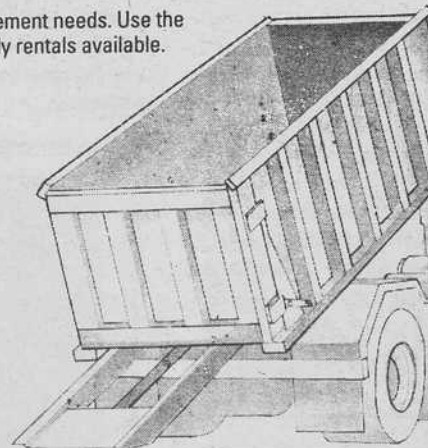
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