

ANOTHER UPDATE -- Blane Gold was named Class 1A co-Coach of the Year Dec. 28 by the Pennsylvania Football Writers and three of his Redbank Valley players were picked to the all-state team. And then, on Dec. 29, he received the same honor of the PAFootballNews.com 1A Select team.

Gold shared both honors with Bishop Guilfoyle's Justin Wheeler, whose Marauders defeated Redbank, 21-14, in the 1A state championship game earlier this month.

Gold guided the Bulldogs to their second second straight District 9 title and eventually upset WPIAL champion Bishop Canevin to reach the state title game. Redbank was only the third team from D-9 to play for the state championship.

Redbank finished with a 13-2 record, reeling off 13 straight victories after losing to Keystone in the season opener.

Redbank players named to the writers' all-state team were QB Bryson Bain, DE Joe Mansfield and DB Chris Marshall.

Named to the coaches' squad were slot/HB Tate Minich, returner Ashton Kahle , CB Marquese Gardlock and Mansfield at DE on the first team along with second teamers Marshall at WR, long snapper Gunner Mangiantini and Kolby Barrett at NG.

UPDATE -- Redbank Valley lost to Bishop Guilfoyle, 21-14, in the state title game Dec. 9.

What an incredible story Redbank Valley is.

In case you don't know (and you possibly don't), Redbank is located in southern

Clarion County in New Bethlehem. Its football team beat WPIAL champion Bishop Canevin Dec. 3 to advance to the PIAA Class 1A state championship game.

The Bulldogs are coached by Blane Gold, a Franklin graduate, and they apparently have overcome all kinds of obstacles to get this far in the playoffs.

"This far" -- ha! They are the first District 9 team to play for a state title since 1992, and only the third in the history of the state playoffs. The first two -- Keystone (Clairton) in 1989 and Smethport (Rochester) in 1992 were upset winners in the western Pa. semifinals before losing in the state title game -- Keystone (Jeremy McCool, Jason Nellis) to Dunmore (57-18) and Smethport to Scotland (24-7).

But for Redbank, it's more than just getting there.

"We've gone through some stuff emotionally in the last month," Gold told Ryan Kunselman of The Derrick after the win over Canevin. "It's been self-inflicted with guys getting ejected and losing them for the playoffs games and losing them from the team. For these guys to weather that emotion and do this?"

"After the season-opening loss to Keystone, I was worried I would lose the guys, and here we are going to Hershey..."

Now I'm not sure what all that means, but I do know the obstacles are hinted at in excerpts from the following reports:

- The turning point in the Canevin game came in the third quarter when Chris Marshall returned an intercepted pass 98 yards for a touchdown to tie the game at 14 all. 1. The Bulldogs had been outgained 172-29 in the first half and trailed 14-7 at intermission. 2. And as for the 6-3 Marshall. "We just put him at safety three weeks ago," Gold told Mike White of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.
- To overcome the first-half deficit in yardage, Redbank switched to a medium range passing game. Quarterback Bryson Bain missed on his first five passes, but finished 15 of 29 for 149 yards. This included a 21-yard completion to Aiden Ortiz on third-and-16 before the diminutive Brenden Schreckengost ended the go-ahead drive with a 3-yard run. Joe Mansfield, who leads RV with 10.5 sacks, gave his team some insurance with a safety later on in the fourth quarter. Now back to Bain, an erstwhile pitcher who is headed to IUP to play baseball: he never played football before this year. But his stats for the season read 149-253 for 2,115 yards and 29 touchdowns.
- And as for the 5-3, 135-pound Schreckengost. He was making his first start in a 21-14 victory over Northern Bedford in the western Pa. finals Nov. 26. Gold said he learned at 2 p.m. the day of the game that his leading rusher, senior Ray Schreckengost (161-878), would be unavailable. So, B. Schreckengost was thrust into action despite his pre-game stats of 22-for-55 yards rushing with zero TDs. But all he did was carry 20 times in the snow for 137 yards, including a 47-yard run in the fourth quarter to give the Bulldogs the lead for good. Earlier, his 80-yard kickoff return tied the game at 7-7.

Not only is Redbank's story unusual, but so is its coach, Gold, the subject of a story Dec. 3 written by Mike Kilroy of exploreVenango.com. (Go to exploreVenango.com) to read this excellent piece) Gold has made missionary trips year after year since 2010 to Haiti, Costa Rica and Compton, Calif. In Haiti he dug foundations and helped to lay waterlines for communities that were devastated by an earthquake. This in sweltering heat. In Compton he was part of an outreach program to help run a football camp in an area that has the highest per capita murder rate in the nation.

So, not your average football coach is Gold, a Grove City College graduate who teaches government, economics, sociology and psychology at Redbank Valley High School. Gold said in high school he realized he wanted to teach and coach and his first mentor was Tiger LaVerde, the Oil City High graduate who got his coaching start at Franklin and now owns the nation's longest winning streak (55 games) at Kirtland, Ohio. Later, Tiger's younger brother Matt, gave Gold his first coaching job as an assistant for two years at Oil City. Gold told Kilroy he learned a lot from the two brothers.

When the head job at Franklin opened up, he applied, but the school board felt he was too young. He was offered a job as an assistant at Franklin, instead, but before the year was over, an opening at Redbank occurred, so he took a job as a teacher there. The next season, he became an understudy for veteran coach Ed Wasilowski.

Gold became head coach three years ago after Wasilowski retired. To say he has been successful is an understatement. With a three-year record of 29-5, the Bulldogs were District 9 runners-up his first year, D-9 champs his second year (when he was Coach of the Year) and D-9 champs again this season and in the state championship game.

How Redbank will do Thursday (kickoff is 1 p.m. at Hershey Park) obviously remains to be seen -- District 6 champ Altoona Bishop Guilfoyle *has* been around the state playoffs in both football and basketball, so there is that.

But Redbank has defied the odds before.