

By Greg Lee

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BOISE – Chad Chalich will get his right foot fitted for a cast today and miss the first month of the basketball season.

This after playing one final football game Friday when the Coeur d'Alene senior quarterback led the Vikings, top-ranked all season, to a repeat 5A state championship.

Chalich, who is finally receiving some late interest from colleges, passed for 410 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 60 and two more scores as the Vikings handled the Eagle Mustangs 49-28 at Boise State University's Bronco Stadium.

A week after suffering a hairline fracture on the outside of his foot in the second quarter of a semifinal victory, Chalich made it a light week at practice so he would be ready to go in the title game. Just as important as all the yards and touchdowns were two big punts, both with his right foot, of 59 and 60 yards.

His coach, Shawn Amos, had one word to describe the 2010 5A player of the year – warrior.

“He’s going to get the cast BACK on,” said Amos, emphasizing Chalich did all he could to make sure his foot was as ready as possible. “Week 12 you’ve got a lot of kids who are banged up and gut it out. I’m sure Eagle does too. We had a number of kids who battled through stuff, but he’s one tough kid.”

Chalich completed 20 of 29 attempts with, as usual, no interceptions. He finished the season with 42 TD passes and 14 rushing TDs. He ended with 3,636 yards passing and 474 rushing.

“It was good during the game because of all the adrenalin and stuff,” said Chalich, who had his right shoe off and was hopping around BSU’s blue turf afterward.

Senior Deon Watson, a two-way starter at receiver and defensive end, gave Chalich much credit for his mental toughness.

“Chad played with a hairline fracture in his foot. I mean a lot of guys can’t come back from that,” said Watson, who had TD receptions of 31 and 77 yards. “He came back in a week and I’m proud of him and all my teammates. Those guys work their (butts) off.”

By finishing 12-0, CdA extended its winning streak to 21.

There were some tense moments, though.

CdA didn’t manage much offensively in the first quarter, and Eagle (10-2) scored the game’s first TD early in the second. But the Viks responded with three TDs before halftime.

When it appeared CdA was going to turn the game into a blowout in the third quarter, Eagle responded again, pulling within 28-21.

But the Viks had another three TD answer for the Mustangs, building a 49-21 lead before a late Eagle score.

The other QB in the game – Brigham Young University-bound Tanner Mangum – kept the Mustangs in the game. He completed 37 of 53 passes for 453 yards and two TDs – both on long plays against broken coverage.

The Viks' defense, though, picked off four passes, three by senior Joe Roletto. Safety Reece Mahaffy returned a fumble 79 yards for a TD.

“Playmaker,” Amos said describing the 5-foot-8 Roletto. “The most unimposing playmaker in the state of Idaho. He comes up with big plays.”

Roletto studied video of Mangum and took his shots.

“He was hitting them early and doing a great job but he can't make every pass,” Roletto said. “I figured that every one that wasn't perfect I was going to jump on. We were playing a little deeper and eventually it paid off.”

Chalich marveled at Roletto's effort.

“Joe's little for his size but he's a little scrapper and he makes plays for us,” Chalich said.

Watson agreed.

“Joe's a worker,” Watson said. “A lot of people might say that's luck, but that's preparation right there. He's been watching film and he knows Tanner Mangum inside out.”

Amos and his players took turns putting the repeat in perspective.

“Back to back is one of those things ... it's like your wildest dreams,” Amos said. “You don't prepare yourself mentally for stuff like that. The kids from the start have been focused and prepared the same way and played the same way every game. It's a great group of football players and a great group of coaches. It's unbelievable right now.”

Said Roletto: “At the beginning of the year people were wondering how good we were going to be with our (offensive) line and if we were going to compare to last year. Honestly we stepped up, went undefeated and are state champs again.”

While Watson said he was struggling finding the right words, in the end he had an apt summary.

“It's better the second time,” Watson said. “There's not one word to describe it – especially with these guys, my family. You can't explain it. I can't find a word for it.”