



GAMEFACE: Lackawanna Trail's Bergey has grown into solid weapon

BY JOBY FAWCETT / STAFF WRITER / Published: September 16, 2016

Sometimes, you just see the potential of an athlete when they arrive in your football program.

Two years ago, Matt Bergey began his varsity career at Lackawanna Trail. At 5-feet-10 inches tall and weighing less than 150 pounds, he really didn't stand out in a crowd.

He saw little playing time, made the most of his opportunities and vowed to make an impact when he returned for his junior season.

Training as a member of the track and field team and aided by a slight growth spurt, Bergey emerged as a receiver who could make plays and give the Lions an added dimension to their Wing-T, run-oriented, offense.

Now, he is a weapon in the passing game and the favorite target for blossoming quarterback Nathan Rolka

. He's one of the senior leaders for a team aiming to reach the District 2 Class 1A

playoffs for a sixth straight season.

"For Matt, he was undersized, very thin, but he had athletic ability and we saw that," Lackawanna Trail coach Steve Jarvis said. "We just didn't know what we were going to get from him. Fast forward to where he is now, it's incredible. He's a tough kid, a fast kid and has great hands. His work ethic is unreal and he has a great leadership quality and his teammates notice it too, and voted him a team captain.

"I'm very happy for him, because of how hard he has worked."

As a junior football player, Bergey found himself anchored in on the offensive line.

He played center and guard through his earliest playing days on the D-Team and C-Team. His time spent in the trenches hardened his grit. His athleticism and slight build, however, eventually turned him into a receiver.

By the time he reached the freshman team, he had developed his hands and started making outstanding plays in the passing game.

For the most part, though, Lackawanna Trail relies heavily on the running game. In his sophomore season, Bergey caught only one pass, but it covered 37 yards.

As a junior, he became a reliable part of the offensive attack. With Rolka maturing with every snap in his rookie season, Bergey hauled in 11 passes for 196 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

Knowing the two would be returning this season, and fueled by his height increasing to 6-1, Bergey put in even more work to improve his skill set during the offseason.

Enter Brian Kearney, one of the most respected track and field coaches in the Lackawanna Track Conference.

Before taking over as an administrator at Lackawanna Trail, Kearney built Valley View into a track and field juggernaut.

When Bergey began enduring the exhausting workouts, his speed, stamina and confidence swelled.

He finished seventh in the District 2 Class AA 400-meter dash with a season-best time of 53.81 seconds and seventh in the high jump. Bergey also helped the 400 relay team that included football teammates Anthony Berrios and Cody Moyle finish sixth.

"Matt emerged last year as one of our surprises on the Lackawanna Trail Track and Field team," Kearney said. "His work ethic was second to none. Each meet he continued to improve and helped lead our team to a record of 4-2 in our division.

"In addition to running the 200 and 400 meters, Matt also helped our 400 relay team win a medal at the PIAA District 2 Track and Field Championships. Due to his hard work, he was able to increase his speed, which I believe has helped him in emerging as gifted receiver for our football team."

That set the stage for the football season.

In the summer, the workouts became more intense and his efforts shifted to his football abilities.

"I really focused on my routes, wanting to be really good at that," Bergey said. "I would go out with my dad and the quarterbacks, just throw the ball around, and work on my hands."

Right out of the gates, Bergey, 17, proved to be a matchup problem.

He snapped up four passes for 123 yards and a pair of touchdowns against a Mid Valley defense that has given up 14 points in the last two games against Riverside and Carbondale Area.

That effort fueled a 26-14 victory for the Lions.

In Week 2, while facing one of the top Class 2A teams in the state in Dunmore, Bergey again led the charge. He had four more catches for 101 yards and a touchdown.

"It's been great," Bergey said. "Nate's been doing fantastic. During the offseason, we have developed a good connection. He has learned the strength of the receivers and the line has done a good job in giving him time to throw."

While having individual success, Bergey's main focus is on the team.

He will do whatever it takes — on the field and in the locker room — to help the Lions continue on their path to the postseason.

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