

# The best back running

## Whitewater's Beaver wins Gagliardi Trophy

By JEFF POTRYKUS

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Perhaps the only task more onerous than containing Justin Beaver on the football field is goading the UW-Whitewater senior tailback into acknowledging that he plays the game exceptionally well.

Even Monday, after he learned he had won the Gagliardi Trophy, given annually to the top NCAA Division III player in the nation, Beaver gave credit to everyone who came to mind, except himself.

"It's huge for more than me," Beaver told reporters during a teleconference. "Just my teammates and the people around me, they also deserve such a prestigious award. . . .

"It's an award for everybody that has been involved in Warhawk football for the past — forever."

That has been Beaver's motto all season: Honor my teammates, not me.

"We have fine senior leadership; it probably starts with Justin Beaver," UW-Whitewater coach Lance Leipold told reporters Monday morning during an earlier teleconference. "He is everything on and off the field for us."

The award is named after Saint John's University coach John Gagliardi, who has compiled a record of 453-122-11 in 59 seasons and was the first active head coach to be inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame (Class of 2006).

Beaver, a finalist for the 2005 Gagliardi Trophy, will receive the trophy during a banquet Thursday night in Salem, Va. UW-Whitewater (13-1) will face Mount Union (14-0) at 3 p.m. (Milwaukee time) Saturday in Salem for the Division III na-

### BEAVER'S RUSHING STATISTICS

	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Lg.	TD	YPG
2004	8	50	340	6.8	55	1	42.5
2005	14	428	2,420	5.7	64	24	172.9
2006	10	266	1,369	5.1	97	4	136.9
2007	14	413	2,206	5.3	74	14	157.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1,157</b>	<b>6,335</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>137.7</b>

tional title.

The 5-foot-9, 200-pound Beaver's list of accomplishments on the field is impressive:

■ Beaver has rushed for 2,206 yards in 14 games this season, with averages of 5.3 yards per carry and 157.6 yards per game.

■ As a sophomore in 2005, he became the only back in school history to rush for 2,000 yards or more in a season, leading all NCAA divisions with a Division III record 2,420 yards in 14 games.

■ Beaver received All-American honors in 2005 and '06 and is a three-time first-team pick in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. Beaver was recently named the WIAC player of the year after leading the Warhawks to their third consecutive league title.

"It all comes down to hard work," Beaver said, "and putting the right guys around you that push you when you don't want to work hard."

Beaver's list of accomplishments off the field is also impressive:

■ A physical education major with a 3.51 grade-point average on a 4.0 scale, Beaver was a second-team Academic All-American. The team is sponsored by ESPN The Magazine and coordinated by the College Sports Information Directors of America.

To make the team, an athlete must be at least a sophomore, be a significant contributor and have a GPA of 3.20 or higher.

■ Beaver was also the WIAC's Max Sparger Scholar Athlete winner.

"I think he is one of the role-model types of student-athletes that all of us coaches in Division III admire," Mount Union coach Larry Kehres said during a teleconference. "Great athlete. Outstanding student. Outstanding young man."

Beaver, 23, has reached this point despite the fact that he has lived with his paternal grandparents since he was 3 months old. His parents battled alcohol dependency. His father, Jeff, died at age 38 after an altercation in a bar. Justin Beaver had just finished his junior year of high school at Palmyra-Eagle.

"What most would call a rough family life," Beaver said, "I (say) I'm grateful for. . . . The slight family difficulties I feel made me stronger. I had my mom and dad there at certain times.

"And when they weren't there I've had a great group of grandparents that stepped in to raise me. . . . It made me so much stronger."

Leipold, in his first season as head coach, has seen that strength since taking over the job.

"When adversity strikes," Leipold said, "that just pushes that young man even more. He handles challenges or the bumps in the road that most people sometimes don't bounce back from."

Instead, Beaver keeps pushing forward.

"I think when you are talking about the DIII student-athlete," Leipold said, "he is one of those that you're going to say that is the prototype you're looking for."

One questioner finally enticed Beaver to acknowledge that he had done his share of the work to win the prestigious award.

"I guess at this point I can do that," he said. "The biggest thing I take out of this whole thing is hard work."

"I definitely had people push me to work hard, but I've had to do it, also."

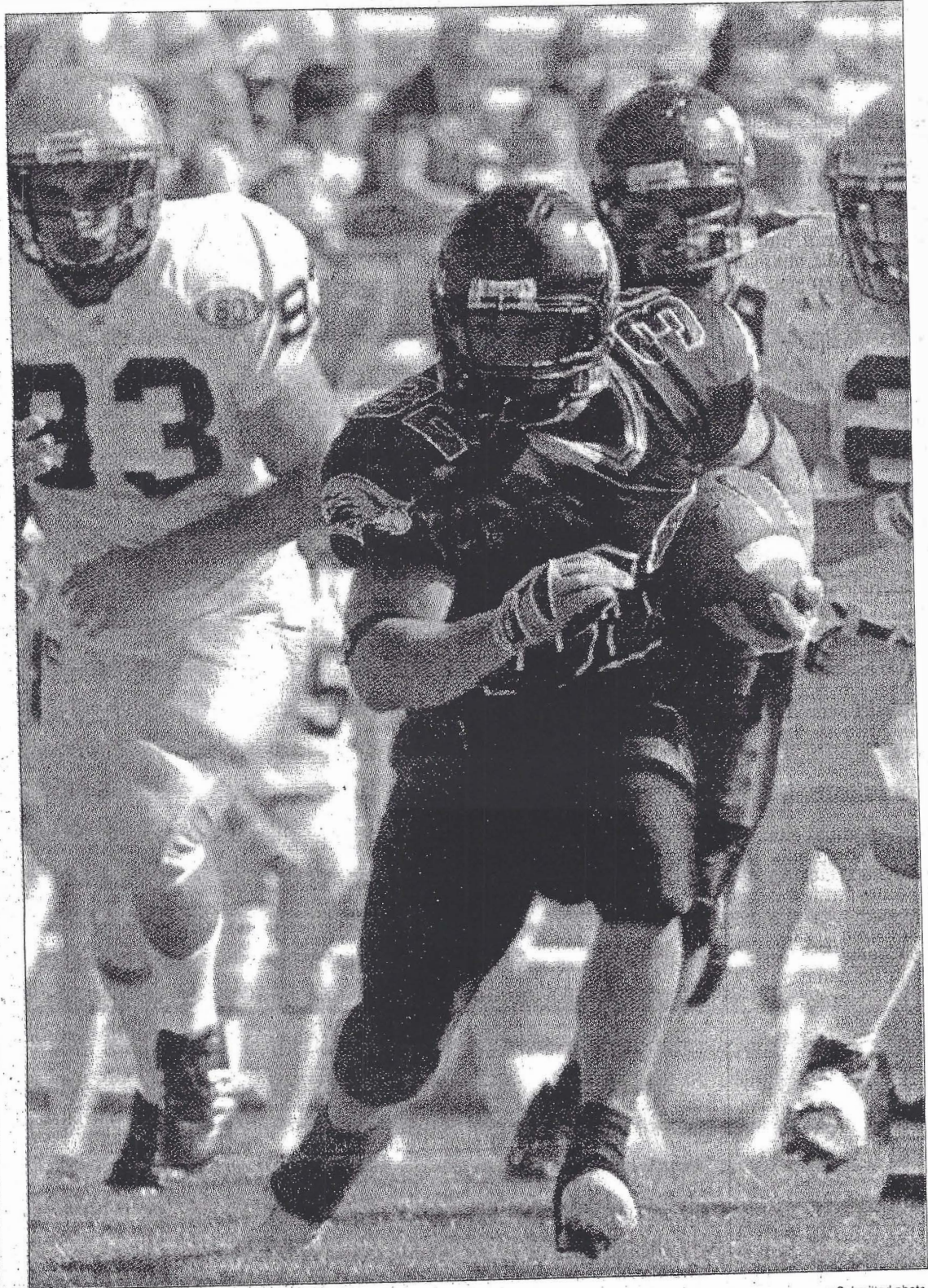


MARYJO WALICKI / MWALICKI@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

Justin Beaver has rushed for 2,206 yards in 14 games this season, helping carry UW-Whitewater to the Division III title game.

# JUSTIN BEAVER

*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater running back*



Submitted photo



Beaver

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater senior running back Justin Beaver has added his highest honor – the Gagliardi Trophy as the nation's best Division III student/athlete exhibiting excellence in football, academics and community service to his bulging collection of honors.

The Palmyra-Eagle High School graduate set school and Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference career rushing records (6,335 yards) and has helped the Warhawks reach the NCAA Division III national championship game for a third time.

The following is a conversation Freeman assistant sports editor Tony Mooren had with Beaver about his career:

**Q: Were you recruited heavily while in high school or other universities?**

**A:** Not at all. Just a couple of Division II schools wanted me to walk on – as a defensive back. No one else wanted me as a running back – just Whitewater where I had attended some camps.

**Q: Were you set on that position?**

**A:** I wanted to be there (as a running back) but I never really had a choice. They just kind of put me at that position.

**Q: Did you envision this kind of career?**

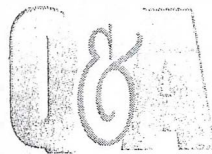
**A:** I set some pretty hefty goals, but I never even dreamed about some of them. The Gagliardi award was a huge surprise because there were so many great athletes in the final 10. I look at that as a team award so I'm real happy to get it for my teammates as well.

**Q: Is there a point in your career the dream began taking shape?**

**A:** Probably my freshman year when I kind of figured out what it would take to have a good career. The group of guys around me then, from the seniors all the way down, weren't about themselves but the team and that's a big part of the success we've had as a team.

**Q: How much time did you put into football?**

**A:** A lot – definitely most of my time. Even when I'd go sledding hills with my friends, it was for football in the long run.



**At a glance**

■ **NAME:** Justin Beaver  
■ **POSITION:** Running back for University of Wisconsin-Whitewater football team

- **CLASS/AGE:** Senior/23
- **FAMILY:** Grandparents Donald and Jeanna Beaver
- **MAJOR:** Education
- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Palmyra-Eagle
- **HONORS:** Received Gagliardi Trophy as the nation's top Division III player. ... First team All-American Football Coaches Association selection. ... Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference's Max Sparger Scholar Athlete Award for football. ... ESPN The Magazine second team Academic All-American mention from the College Sports Information Directors of America. ... Second team Little All-American.
- **STATISTICS:** Is second all-time in Division III rushing with 6,335 yards, including 2,206 this season. Holds the Division III season rushing record of 2,420, set in 2005. Has scored 44 career touchdowns.

**Q: After your huge sophomore season (2494**

yards rushing and 24 touchdowns) did you have any thoughts of perhaps transferring to another school?

**A:** No, I love being at Whitewater. It's a fun place to be. There was no talk about transferring. The only talk was how to get back to Salem, Va. (the site of Saturday's Alonzo Stagg Bowl game).

**Q: You must have spent some time on academics, however, because you have a 3.51 grade-point average, didn't you?**

**A:** Yes but I kind of got on the good side of teachers, which is a major thing because they want to help you.

**Q: What are your career highlights to this point?**

**A:** One of the biggest is beating La Crosse. I got sick about hearing about how good La Crosse was at the time. That and beating Linfield, the No. 1 team in the country,

44-41 at their place in a game that had 14 or 15 lead changes in a quarterfinal game in 2005.

**Q: Is there anything left for you to accomplish?**

**A:** Definitely winning the national championship. That's the one big thing that's missing and I wanted to at least get another shot. And we have it. (Mount Union) put up some big numbers, but they haven't played as tough a schedule as we have and we definitely have a chance.

**Q: Anything after that?**

**A:** When we get back, I have one final exam left. It's online but otherwise school's pretty much done for me this semester. Next semester I'll take 10 credits and I'll graduate in December of 2008. Football is my passion and I kept my credits low to play it.

**Q: What about the NFL?**

**A:** It's definitely my dream to continue playing after college. It's been an incredible ride and if I don't make it at the next level, I'll become a teacher.

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# Beaver awarded prestigious Gagliardi Trophy

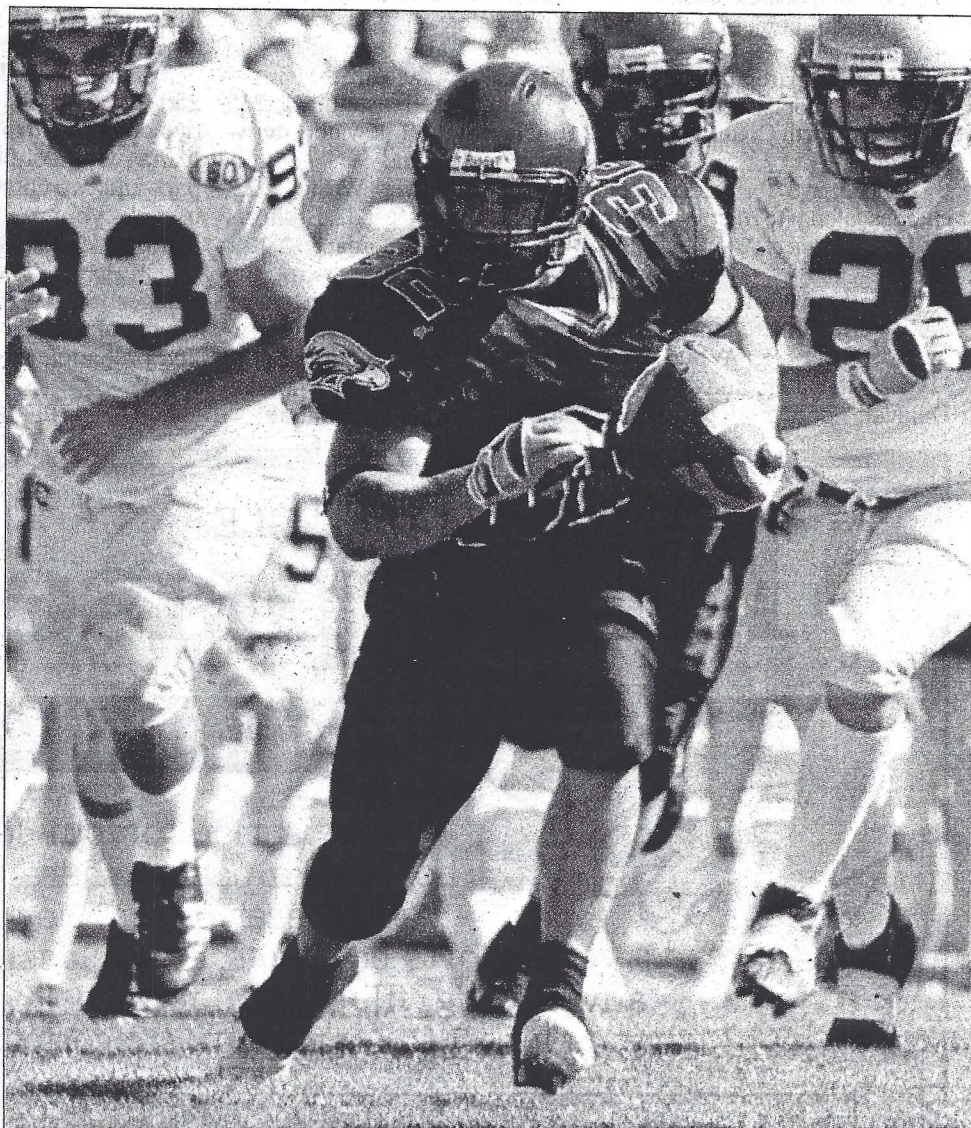
All-time leading rusher in University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) history, senior running back Justin Beaver is the 2007 winner of the Gagliardi Trophy.

"I am thankful for this honor and it means a lot to me. This is not only a personal award, but an award for those who have followed the team," Beaver, a native of Palmyra, said. "This award would not have been possible without the support from friends, family, fans and the university. A lot of credit goes to my linemen for blocking and this is a tribute to UW-Whitewater's great football program and tradition."

The Gagliardi award goes to a student athlete exhibiting excellence in football, academics and community service, and Beaver is considered the outstanding NCAA Division III football player.

"I am delighted for Justin and this is a great honor. I have watched him excel in football and other venues since high school," UW-Whitewater Chancellor Richard Telfer said. "As an All-American and a scholar athlete, this award is a testament to his caliber as an individual and a football player."

Beaver was a finalist for the Gagliardi Trophy in 2005, when he rushed for 2,420 yards, setting the Division III single season record. He is also the UW-Whitewater and WIAC



SUBMITTED PHOTO Palmyra-Eagle Enterprise

**UW-Whitewater running back and Palmyra native Justin Beaver is the recipient of this year's Gagliardi Trophy. He and the rest of the Warhawk football team will be competing in the Division III Championship Stagg Bowl tomorrow.**

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## • **Beaver** *(Continued from front page)*

career leader in rushing yards, with a total of 6,201 yards, second all-time in the NCAA Division III record book. Beaver is the only running back in UW-Whitewater and WIAC history to rush for 2,000 yards in a season, something he has done twice.

UW-Whitewater Athletic Director Paul Plinske recognizes the importance of this honor for the football program.

"Justin has just won the most prestigious award in Division III football. His legacy started four years ago and will forever impact our campus, athletic department and football program," Plinske said.

A physical education major, Beaver has a 3.51 cumulative grade point average. He was recently recognized by the WIAC and awarded the Max Sparger Scholar Athlete Award for football in 2007. He is also the 2007 WIAC Player of the Year.

"This award is a great honor, especially to Justin and his family. I couldn't be happier for him and he truly is a great asset to the university. Justin epitomizes what a true Division III athlete is all about," Warhawk Head Coach Lance Leipold said. "This is a great team award as well and it definitely puts us out there in the spotlight. For our university, this only shows what other players can achieve through our football program."

"This is clearly a proud moment for our football program and all athletic programs at the university," Telfer said. "It sets a high precedence for all athletics and gives our athletes something to strive for."

The Gagliardi Trophy is presented annually by Jostens Inc. and the J-Club of Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minn., featuring a sculpture of Saint John's University football coach John Gagliardi in consul-

tation with a player. The award has become one of the leading collegiate football awards and is widely recognized as the premier individual award in Division III football.

Beaver was to be presented with the trophy yesterday at the Salem Civic Center in Salem, Va., when the Warhawk football team travels to compete in their third NCAA Division III championship Saturday.

A 33-member national selection committee, including collegiate coaches, administrators, former athletes, business leaders and members of the media, determined the recipient of the Gagliardi award.

"As we prepare for the championship game, we hope to build off the momentum we have gained the last three years. We have a big week ahead of us in practice and look forward to a great outcome on Saturday," Beaver said.

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# JOURNAL SENTINEL

## SUNDAY



Beaver leads  
Whitewater  
to national  
championship

Sports

## Never saw it coming

UW-Whitewater pulls off  
a stunner in Stagg Bowl

By **JEFF POTRYKUS**  
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Salem, Va. — Lance Leipold strode to the awards platform at midfield, flanked by senior tailback Justin Beaver and senior defensive lineman Ryan Ogrizovich.

As they grabbed the NCAA Division III championship trophy and held it aloft Saturday evening at Salem Stadium, they were immediately joined on the platform and surrounded by every member of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater football team.

Meanwhile across the field, the stunned players and coaches from Mount Union, thought to be unbeatable and looking for their third consecutive national title, trudged toward their locker room. The Purple Raiders were enveloped by the sick feeling of defeat, a feeling they hadn't experienced at all this year and not since Week 7 of the 2005 season.

"Somewhere along the line this will sink in," Leipold, in his first season as Whitewater's head coach, said after the Warhawks'

### WARHAWKS

## Team pulls off title stunner

stunning 31-21 victory over top-ranked Mount Union in the Stagg Bowl. "But as I've said... It's not about me. It's been about a program and these (players). I'm just the one that was given a great privilege to be in charge of it at this particular time."

At this time the Warhawks (14-1) are the best team in the nation.

"I think they played a great game tonight and they deserved to beat us," said Mount Union coach Larry Kehres, who had guided the Purple Raiders (14-1) to nine of the last 14 national titles before Saturday, including victories in 2005 and '06 against Whitewater. "We played very well in spots, but a few too many mistakes cost us the victory."

"But Whitewater played a great game and deserved to win."

Whitewater beat a team that hadn't won by fewer than 24 points this season and had allowed only 73 total points before Saturday because Beaver, running behind a veteran offensive line, found holes all day against the best defense in the nation and because the Warhawks' underrated defense came up with several critical stops and forced four turnovers.

Beaver, who has played with a fractured rib for more than a month, rushed 31 times for 249 yards and a touchdown, an average of 8.0 yards per carry, and was named the game's most valuable player.

"That just shows you once again the kind of competitor, and the heart and everything he gave this football team," Leipold said.

Mount Union entered the day No. 1 nationally against the run, allowing 24.2 yards per game. Beaver had a 26-yard run on his first carry and showed his mettle by producing two critical runs after losing a fumble that led to a Mount Union touchdown



Leipold

Please see **WARHAWKS, 11C**



UW-Whitewater running back Justin Beaver, who has played with a fractured rib for more than a month, rushed 31 times for 249 yards and a touchdown and was named the game's most valuable player.

field goal on the next-to-last play of the first half for a 10-0 lead. He carried six times for 43 yards, the last a 13-yard touchdown run, on a seven-play, 50-yard drive to help the Warhawks take a 24-14 lead with 6 minutes, 11 seconds left in the game. He ripped off a 66-yard run to the Mount Union 4 to set up Jones' 1-yard sneak with 1:33 left, a touchdown that secured the victory.

"I've been saying that the O-line is the heart of our offense," Beaver said. "Today they stepped up and played an unreal game."

Whitewater's defense, choreographed beautifully by coordinator Brian Borland and led by junior linebacker Jace Rindahl (16 tackles), frustrated a unit that led the nation in points per game (54.1) and hadn't scored fewer than 35 points this season.

Borland's defense sent a resounding message when Ogrizovich stuffed tailback Nate Kmic (30 carries, 121 yards and three touchdowns) for no gain on fourth and goal from inside the 1 on Mount Union's third possession of the game.

"We knew that at the end of the day if we played the best ball we could we'd come out winners," said Ogrizovich, who had nine tackles.

As the disconsolate Mount Union players sought refuge in their locker room, refuge from the Whitewater celebration at midfield, there was no doubt which team had persevered.

"I've said all along we have an outstanding group of 23 seniors and you saw many of them today play their hearts out," Leipold said. "Our staff did an outstanding job making sure we believed."

"And while many didn't think we had a chance to be here at this point in the day, here we are. I can't say how proud I am of our program."

late in the third quarter to bring the Purple Raiders within 17-14.

His 26-yard run to the Mount Union 2 on Whitewater's first possession set up a 1-yard sneak by quarterback Danny Jones, his first of two 1-yard scores, and helped the Warhawks take a 7-0 lead. He ripped off a 45-yard run to set up Jeff Schebler's 32-yard