

SPORTS

Rios leaves Falfurrias to coach alma mater

By Lee Goddard
goddardl@caller.com
361-886-3613

Home was only 35 miles away, but Joe Rios decided it was time to make the move. Rios, who has been the head football coach and athletic director at Falfurrias the past three seasons, decided last week to move to his hometown of Hebronville and take the same roles.

They've been struggling," said Rios, who played on the Longhorns' 1986 and 1987 playoff teams. "It's bitter-sweet because I loved Fal. The kids were awesome, the administrators, the teachers were great. I wouldn't have left for any other situation, but my hometown needed me."

Hebronville, which was coached by Don Davis last season, has lost 12 in a row and 18 of the past 20, and Rios has a touch when it



Rios is going home to coach his alma mater in Hebronville.

comes to turning around programs. At Falfurrias, he inherited a team that had lost 20 in a row and had won once in its past 28 games. They went 0-10 in his first season in 2010 and then 3-7

before posting a 6-4 mark this past season, just missing the playoffs. Before that, Rios worked as an assistant for three years and head coach for four seasons at Premont, twice making the postseason. His next stop was Refugio, where he was hired as an assistant by Chris Jones and later retained by Jason Herring. Rios said that four-year stop made him a better coach and administrator at his next job — Falfurrias.

"When I got (to Falfurrias), the first thing I did was implement the offseason weight program. We basically lived in the weight room," Rios said. "That's what Coach Herring taught me."

"Under Coach Herring, I learned not only football but how to run a program. There are great football minds at Refugio. But everyone thinks they win because of the good athletes. They win because they put

in the hours."

Rios will bring that attitude to Hebronville. He believes he made a difference on the athletic department as a whole at Falfurrias and hates leaving because he thinks the Jerseys will compete for a district title this upcoming football season. But he was called home. "The kids are hungry. The community is outstanding," Rios said. "It was time to go back to my hometown."

High school baseball notes

CARROLL-KING

The District 28-5A foes meet for the first time this season at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at Cabaniss Field, and the rivalry has been tilted in Carroll's favor during recent seasons. The Tigers have won the past eight meetings between the teams since the Mustangs took an 11-6 victory on March 6, 2010, in the Mira's Classic consolation final. Since the 2008 season, Carroll has won 13 of the 15 head-to-head matchups against Southside rival King.

GREGORY-PORTLAND

Friday's 3-1 victory over Tuloso-Midway capped a pretty big week for the Wildcats, who get Tuesday off from District 30-4A play before traveling to Victoria West on Thursday. Three nights after Travis Geiser, homered and scattered six hits in helping hand a 3-2 loss to third-ranked Calallen, G-P (17-5-1) didn't wilt against T-M. The Wildcats used sophomore sidarmer Triston Busse's three-hitter to move to 3-1 in district. Coach Fred Flores said he was hoping last week wouldn't end. But he is looking forward to how the balance of the season plays out for the Wildcats.

"The kids have responded well to each challenge we've given them in practice and out here. It's just a special group," Flores said. "They're just making me so proud. They don't give up. They do what we tell them to do, and it's a team effort every time we come out."

INGLESIDE

Slow starts haven't hampered the Mustangs much this season, but coach J.K. Moody would like to see his team snap out of the habit with District 30-3A play in full swing. Ingleside has yielded an average of almost three runs in the opening two innings of its past eight contests. The Mustangs (14-7, 1-1) have a 5-3 record during that span — including four come-from-behind victories — but Moody would like to see his team play from behind less often. "I think it's because we're a young team," Moody said. "That's not an excuse, but the beginning of games have been difficult for us this year. We have to settle down and get the lead."

MOODY

Hits have been difficult to come by for Moody's opponents lately. Kenny Saenz's no-hitter against Laredo Cigarroa two weeks ago started a string in which Trojans pitchers allowed six hits in four District 31-4A game, including a no-hitter last week by Johnny Gonzalez against Miller and a one-hitter by Saenz on Friday, when he faced Laredo Martin.

Five of those hits were allowed by Michael Cantu against Alice 10 days ago, but three came in the final inning of that run-rule victory when, Coyotes coach Victor Escamilla said, "He was just trying to get the game over."

SINTON

Donnie Lopez can alter opponents' plans and those of his own coaches. The Sinton junior right-hander was only going to pitch a handful of innings last Tuesday at Ingleside. But Lopez took a no-hitter into the fifth inning and had thrown only 76 pitches after six, meaning, despite a 26-pitch final inning, Lopez ended up going from a likely four- or five-inning outing to a complete game. "He threw a few more pitches in that seventh inning than we really wanted him to," Pirates coach Gene Kasprzyk said after his team's 9-3 victory. "In the middle part of the ballgame, he hadn't thrown many innings. We were thinking of tag-teaming him with Hieme (Perez), but we thought, 'Let's extend him a little bit because he's only thrown one inning in the last two weeks.'"

Lopez finished with a two-hitter and 11 strikeouts while walking one a year after one-hitting the Mustangs in their home park.

STATE RANKINGS

Four area teams found themselves ranked in the top 10 in the latest Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association poll. Carroll moved up from 10th to eighth in Class 5A, with Calallen dropping from second to third in 4A. Robstown went from third to 10th in 3A, while Refugio maintained its No. 8 ranking in 2A.

Staff reports

T-M from 1C

win," as Davila calls it. The Warriors (14-7) pushed perennial power Calallen to extra innings before losing in the bottom of the ninth 5-4 on March 15 in District 30-4A play. They rebounded from a district-opening loss to Victoria East by beating Port Lavaca Calhoun 4-3.

Despite a .335 team batting average entering Tuesday's district game against Victoria West, the Warriors' offense has betrayed them at times. They opened district with a 2-0 loss to Victoria East. On Friday, T-M had but three hits in a 3-1 loss to Gregory-Portland, dropping to 1-3 in district.

But in years past, T-M had lost games but double-digit runs in similar situations. Thus, the doormat tag attached to the Warriors slowly is becoming an antiquated notion.

"I know that. Like I said before, I think people have to really prepare for everything we do because we're not going to lay down for anybody. We've found a little respect," Davila said.

"You know, Friday, I told the kids at the end of the (Calallen) game, 'It was a great game, but we still lost.' Did we gain a little bit of respect? Yes, we did. Are people going to talk about that game? Yes, they are. But it doesn't make a bit of sense if we hang our hat on that game or if we say, 'Well, we had a great season this year. We hung with Calallen for nine innings, and we didn't win. But we blew away the rest of district, and we didn't make the playoffs.'"

The big thing for the Warriors, especially Brittain, is making the playoffs. He watched his sister Emily, who now is playing at St. Mary's, pitch the Cherokees to four consecutive softball playoff appearances in her time at T-M. A first-team All-South Texas basketball pick this season, Jeremy Brittain has had his postseason time in that sport — but not baseball.

HORNETS from 1C

Flour Bluff offense. The attack finally paid off when Katelyn Lombardo scored on a rebound off a shot by Katrina Maldonado that hit the right post.

The Warriors (9-11-2) nearly tied the score midway through the first half after the ball went sailing toward the Hornets' net out of a scrum in front of the goal. However, Flour Bluff goalkeeper Arielle Williams timed her jump perfectly and managed to swat the ball away.

Not having let up on offense, Tucker notched her first goal of the night with 12 minutes and 43 seconds left before halftime. Still holding the momentum, Tucker put the score out of reach with her second goal early in the second half.

A goal by Avery Dunn then gave the Hornets a 4-0 lead 5:14 left in the game. West's Anhila Rocha ended the shutout two minutes later, but by then, it was too late.

"We've just been trying to play good soccer," Lopez said. "I think we've had a good season. The idea now is to try and keep it going."



MICHAEL ZAMORA/CALLER-TIMES

Tuloso-Midway senior Jeremy Brittain has had postseason success in basketball but is yearning for a chance to play a baseball playoff game with the Warriors.

"They ask me about basketball. I think one time they asked me what was the most I'd scored, and I said it was 40. They were like, 'Who was that against?' I said it was the first round of the playoffs," Brittain said of conversations with his baseball teammates.

"They were all kind of like, 'Dang, first round of the playoffs.' Once you get to the playoffs, you've just got to look at it as if it's your last game. That's

how you've got to play." And that is what Davila is preaching.

"Our thing is, it's a marathon, and we've got to make sure we get one of those four spots. How we're going to do that is we're going to come to practice every day and we're going to work," Davila said. "We're not going to be the doormat. People are not just going to come in and put on a uniform and beat us like it's been before."

SOCCER PLAYOFFS

BOYS

CLASS 5A BI-DISTRICT Saturday
S.A. Jay at King (Cabaniss), 2 p.m.

CLASS 4A BI-DISTRICT Monday
Laredo Martin 1, Moody 0 (Martin wins 4-2 on penalty kicks)
Victoria West 3, Flour Bluff 1

Tuesday
Rockport-Fulton vs. Laredo Cigarroa at Alice, 6 p.m.
Gregory-Portland vs. Laredo Nixon at Alice, 8 p.m.

GIRLS

CLASS 5A BI-DISTRICT Thursday
S.A. Brandeis at King (Buc), 6 p.m.
Carroll at S.A. Taft (Gustafson), 7 p.m.

CLASS 4A BI-DISTRICT Monday
Flour Bluff 4, Victoria West 1

Tuesday
Kingsville at Ray (Buc), 7
Gregory-Portland at Calallen, 7

AREA
Flour Bluff vs. S.A. Harlandale, TBA

FLOUR BLUFF 4, VICTORIA WEST 1

Victoria West	0	1-1
Flour Bluff	2	2-4

Goals — West, Anhila Rocha; FB, Haleigh Lombardo, Caleigh Tucker, Avery Dunn. **Assists** — FB, Lombardo. **Shots on goal** — West 6, FB 10. **Saves** — West, Elizabeth DiSanto 6; FB, Arielle Williams 5. **Records** — West 9-11-2, FB 17-6-3.

BOYS: VIC. WEST 3, FLOUR BLUFF 1

Flour Bluff swarmed the Victoria West goal until

the final seconds of their Class 4A bi-district playoff, but the Warriors held on for a 3-1 victory. West (19-3-2) will meet Floresville in the area round, while Flour Bluff finished 13-12-1.

West took a 2-0 lead late in the first half on goals from Edward Rodriguez and Rodolfo Rocha, but Flour Bluff freshman Marcos Narvaez scored with 2 minutes, 27 seconds left before halftime to cut the deficit in half.

The Warriors all but sealed the victory when Ernesto Perez made it a 3-1 advantage midway through the second half.

"We were trying to get the momentum on our side. We thought we had it for a little bit, but when they got that third goal, it was a nice one," Flour Bluff coach Bob Chapman said. "It was good to see our guys attack until the very end. That's something we tried to develop all year. We just fell short at the end."

VICTORIA WEST 3, FLOUR BLUFF 1

Victoria West	2	1-3
Flour Bluff	1	0-1

Goals — West, Edward Rodriguez, Rodolfo Rocha, Ernesto Perez; FB, Marcos Narvaez. **Assists** — VW, Perez, Jose Olude. **Shots on goal** — West 6, FB 3. **Saves** — West, Juanito Gonzalez 2; FB, Michael Hammer 3. **Records** — West 19-3-2, FB 13-12-1.

Girls sports notebook

BISHOP

Badgers junior guard Sabrina Rivera was named to the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches' all Region IV-2A basketball team. Rivera, the District 32-2A Offensive Player of the Year, averaged 22 points per game in leading the Badgers to the 32-2A title and 2A area playoffs this season.

IWA

IWA junior guard Maggie Pesek and sophomore post Bianca Valderrama received TAPPS 4A all state basketball honors after leading the Angels to their second consecutive District 3-4A title and the regional final round this season. Pesek made first-team all state after scoring 10.6 points per game and making 15 3-pointers this season. Valderrama made TAPPS 4A second-team all state after averaging 8.8 points, 7.5 rebounds and 2.9 blocks.

KING

King's softball team was short-handed when it played

rival Carroll last week. Mustangs freshman first baseman/pitcher Destiny Vega missed that 28-5A game — won by the Tigers 4-3 at Cabaniss Field — because of an injury.

According to coach Laura Morales, Vega was hit in the mouth by a line drive after it first glanced off her glove at the San Marcos tournament the previous weekend. That caused her to miss the team's showdown with Carroll. Morales didn't expect Vega to miss any additional games because of the injury.

RAY

Fifth-year softball coach Jennifer Garcia has never coached the Texans in a Class 4A playoff game. Ray (15-8 overall) is on pace to change that after winning five of its first seven District 31-4A games this season. "I want to get there," Garcia said of the playoffs. "We were close last year and the year before — we just haven't gotten over the hump." The Texans don't want a repeat of last season, when

they finished one game behind Flour Bluff for the fourth and final playoff spot from 31-4A.

Ray's recent 9-2 district road victory over last year's Region IV-4A semifinalist Alice puts it in a favorable position to make the postseason this season. What makes that win even more impressive was that the Texans returned just three starters — junior outfielder Mari Casas, senior third baseman Kat Morin (an outfielder last season) and senior first baseman/pitcher Kristina Banda — from last year's team.

"They want to win so bad," Garcia said of her players. "We're having a great year so far. We've just got to keep it going."

The Texans, who beat Laredo Cigarroa 8-2 on Friday, begin the second round of district play at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday against Flour Bluff at Cabaniss Field. Ray will look to avenge a 5-4 extra-inning road loss to the Hornets earlier this season.

Stuart Duncan

MOODY from 1C

arm, particularly in the postseason, if they have to play a best-of-3 playoff series. Senior Kayla Serrato — who closed out Moody's 10-0, six-inning road victory over Alice on Friday — is another option on the mound this season.

"What I like about this year, is that we can put in some different pitchers," Salinas said. "If (Martinez) does have a tough game, we've got somebody to come in and help her out. And if we struggle on defense, we can move some girls around. So I like the depth this year."

Getting third baseman Serrato and senior catcher Renae Palacios back certainly solidifies a strong Moody infield that already featured returning first-team all 31-4A shortstop Jessica Mendez and second



Moody's Jessica Mendez, an all-district shortstop last season, is part of a talented infield for the No. 9 Trojans.

MICHAEL ZAMORA/CALLER-TIMES

baseman Pacheco. Serrato missed all of last season with a knee injury, while Palacios missed all of district play and one playoff game last season because of an arm injury.

Sophomore Anessa Sanchez started at catcher when Palacios was injured last season, but she has been playing first base this year because sophomore first baseman/designated hitter Stephanie Negron was out with a broken ankle. Negron returned against

Alice, as did Palacios, who previously needed some time off to rest her knees, according to Salinas.

Pacheco started at catcher in Palacios' place while she was out, which just shows how versatile Salinas' team is this season.

"Every game is challenging, to see who's going to be playing that day because there is so much depth with these girls," Salinas said. "It makes it fun, but it's a little hard (to pick the lineup) at the same time."