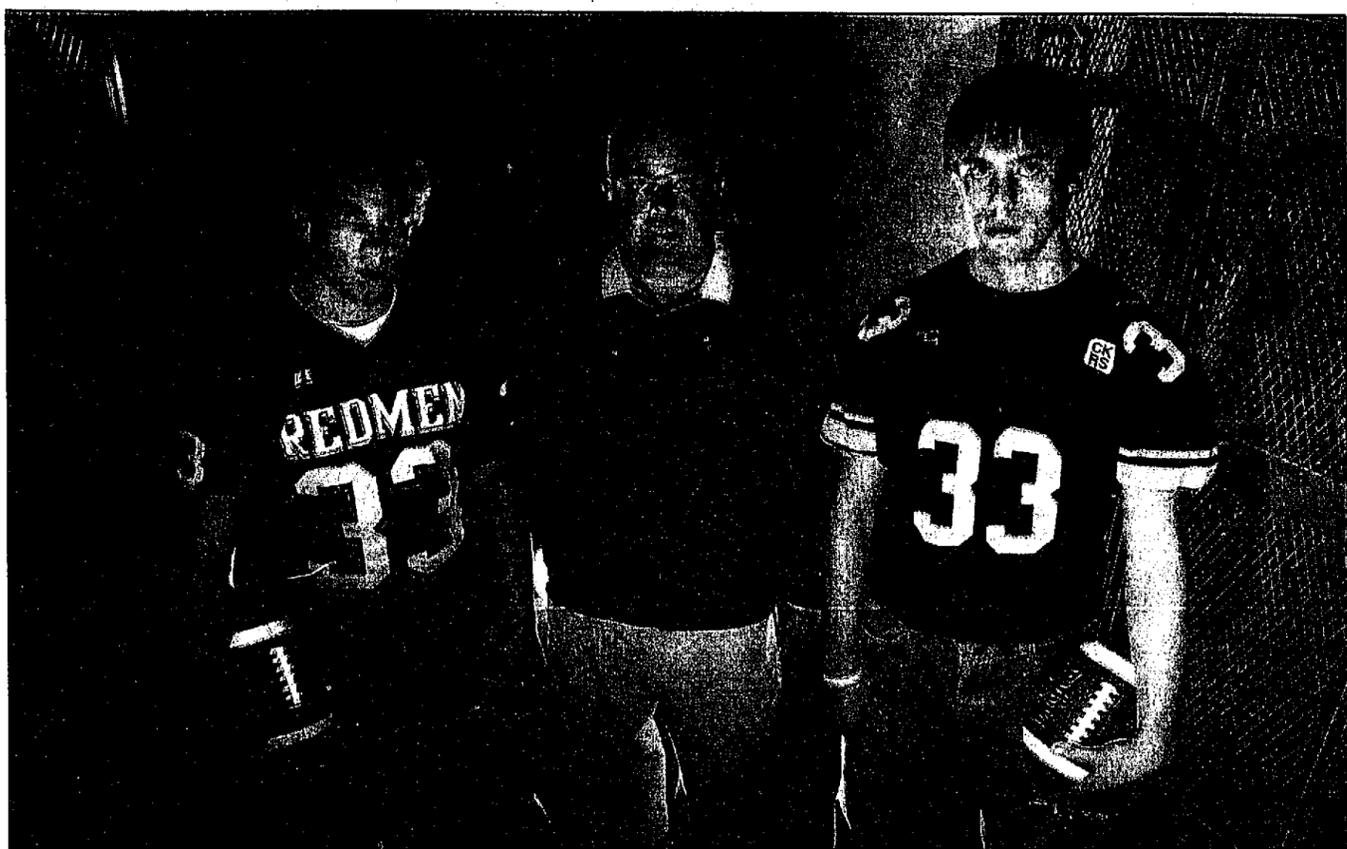


## 23rd annual HDN All-Area Super 11



FRED HUNT / Hays Daily News

Smith Center junior Kerby Rice, Smith Center coach Roger Barta and Kensington senior Grant Levin highlight the 2006 HDN All-Area Super 11 Football Team.

# The power of tradition

## Football a way of life for Smith Center, long-time coach

By NICK McQUEEN  
HAYS DAILY NEWS

straight Class 2-1A state championships.

In 29 years as head football coach at Smith Center High School, Roger Barta has learned that wins and losses don't really matter.

It's all about learning the ways of the game and becoming a better person because of it.

That low-key and humble attitude has produced one of Kansas' most dominant, but businesslike, football programs.

Yet it's hard to ignore the fact that Smith Center is all about domination. The program owns the state's longest win streak at 41 games and has won three



Barta

Because of the success of the Redmen program and everyone involved, Barta has been selected as the HDN Super 11 Coach of the Year for 2006. It's his second selection as the area's top coach, also winning the award in 1998.

"We really don't get involved in winning and losing. Each year is a new group of kids and we just try to do as well as we can that particular year," said Barta, who now has coached Smith Center to six state titles. "Of course, things just kind of accumulate when you do well."

SEE COACH, PAGE B4

## Rice a go-to player for 2-1A state champs

By MIKE KESSINGER  
HAYS DAILY NEWS

The Smith Center prep football team was on its way to winning a third straight Class 2-1A state championship. Like the last three years, the Redmen were simply the best team on the field.

Anyone who donned the



Rice

Smith Center red and white should have been able to enjoy the moment.

But, Kerby Rice just couldn't enjoy it to the full effect everyone else was.

Smith Center's fullback and weak side linebacker, Rice, a junior, had to watch most all of the game from the sideline. In the first quarter, he sus-

tained a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his knee, and after playing in 12 games, Rice wouldn't be able to finish No. 13.

"It was real hard," Rice said of watching the Redmen claim their 56-26 championship win against St. Marys.

"I wanted to be out there. It was difficult to watch."

SEE RICE, PAGE B5

## 2006 HDN Super 11 Team

PLAYER	Ht.	Wt.	CLASS	POS.	SCHOOL
Jarret Abell	5-9	180	Sr.	RB/DB/KR	Phillipsburg
Taylor Elder	5-10	171	Jr.	RB/LB/KR	Sharon Springs
Joey Garcia	6-1	175	Sr.	QB/DB	La Crosse
Brayton Gillen	5-11	205	Jr.	OL/LB	Smith Center
Marty Lager	5-7	165	Sr.	QB/S	Grinnell
Grant Levin	6-2	185	Sr.	RB/DB	Kensington
Joel McAtee	6-1	180	Sr.	RB/LB	St. Francis
Aaron Racette	6-2	220	Jr.	RB/DE	Oakley
Kerby Rice	5-11	200	Jr.	FB/LB	Smith Center
Michael Selby	6-1	175	Sr.	WR/KR	Hays High
Cody VonLintel	5-8	165	Sr.	QB/DB	Victoria

COACH OF THE YEAR — Roger Barta, Smith Center

## High hopes

Kensington senior Grant Levin has dreams of following friend to "The Big House."

See story on Page B5



# Picking up the slack

Freshmen step up in win for Tiger women

By NICK McQUEEN  
HAYS DAILY NEWS

Hours before the Fort Hays State University women's basketball team took the floor for non-conference home action Friday night, Tiger junior forward Brianna Willhite was undergoing surgery to repair a season-ending knee injury.

That worry factor, coupled with the overwhelming nature of finals week, might have had the Tigers a little distracted — but not for long.

"These kids have been put through a lot today. It's been a busy week for them and I just got here 15 minutes before our team meeting," Tiger coach Annette Wiles said.

Fort Hays overcame the odds, coming away with a 71-50 win over Oklahoma-Panhandle State

University in Gross Memorial Coliseum. The Tigers are now 8-1 heading into the holiday break.

"They are concerned about their teammate. We had a player having surgery today and we knew that Panhandle was going to come in here and be a good team," Wiles said. "Their record is not a reflection of how talented of a team they really are."

Again in the absence of Willhite and junior guard Katie Deighton, the Tigers relied on their young players in Friday's game, the freshmen started to show a glimpse of what they are capable of doing.

"It was great to see how well our five freshmen played," Wiles said. "Isn't it fun to see them start to come into their own? We work on so many things in practice every day, and it's great to see it pay off in games."

The freshmen logged the important minutes, but it was still the senior class that got the job done. Senior forward Ashlee Gustin scored 17 points to lead the way in a second-half Tiger burst. Senior guard Katie Rausch chipped in 13 with four three-pointers.

Fort Hays (8-1) had to rely on defense in the first half, adapting to a few post players with the capability of hitting the long ball for Panhandle State (2-8).

"Anytime we're holding people under 30 in the first half, we're happy," Wiles said. "We held them under 50 and that's exciting. We're 8-1 going into a break. The players will get some time off to spend with their families. We're really happy with where we are right now."

SEE FHSU, PAGE B4

# Tigers play roadrunner role, avoid slipup against KCAC's Coyotes

Fort Hays will play ranked opponent in tourney

By NICK McQUEEN  
HAYS DAILY NEWS

Normally, a victory over NAIA member Kansas Wesleyan University wouldn't go into the books as a "big" win.

Factor in all the Fort Hays State University men's basketball team had at stake in Friday night's non-conference game at Gross Memorial Coliseum, and book-writers might just rethink that position.

A 75-52 victory over the visiting Coyotes, the No. 18 ranked team in NAIA Division II, got a number of things accomplished for the Tigers. Perhaps the most important goal was keeping the Tigers from dropping their third straight game heading into a mid-week tournament in San Antonio.

And, of course, no one wants to be the NCAA Division II team that suffers a home loss to a smaller school.

"We came out with a sense of urgency from the start," Tiger senior center Jeff Pruitt said. "We played hard and played really good defense."

Against a unique Coyote team, the Tigers were forced to play good defense or suffer the wrath of a potent offensive attack built on screens and quick-footed guard play.

"Coming off two losses, this was a scary game for us, and I really felt like the difference in the game was the final 16 minutes in the first half," Tiger coach Mark Johnson said.

For the first few minutes, it was Kansas Wesleyan's game and the Tigers fell victim to big outside shots as the Coyotes (9-3) jumped out to an early 9-5 lead. Once Fort Hays (6-2) got the defense going, the momentum started to swing.

"We played good defense. That's a hard team to guard," Johnson said. "Our guys really got focused and that led to some offensive opportunities."

An 8-0 run turned into a 17-11 Tiger lead eight minutes into the game and it snowballed from there. In the first half, it was a combination of Pruitt and junior forward John Rogers getting it done in the paint. The Tigers outscored Wesleyan 19-5 over an eight-minute span in the first half. Rogers and Pruitt combined for 12 of those points, working against a trap defense.

"That's really the first time we've seen a trap this year and we handled it pretty well," Pruitt said.

"It's a little nerve-racking, but we handled it well."

Senior guard Kevin Wagstaff drained two 3-pointers in transition early in the second half to build the Tiger lead to 25 points. Wagstaff (15), Rogers (12) and Pruitt (18) combined for 45 points.

## Fort Hays 75, Kansas Wesleyan 52

Kansas Wesleyan (9-3)  
Jeff Baron 5-9 1-2 14, Marcus Faubion 3-9 4-9 10, Slims 3-12 3-4-9, Boone 2-4 0-0 4, Smith 1-5 4-4 6, Lane 0-1 0-0 0, Gold 0-0 0-0 0, Chaves 0-1 0-0 0, Jackson 0-1 2-2 2, Laboy 0-0 0-0 0, Berry 1-3 2-4 4, Brown 0-0 0-0 0, Rogers 1-1 0-0 3, Moore 0-0 0-0 0, Richardson 0-1 0-0 0. Totals — 16-47 16-25 52.

Fort Hays (6-2)  
Jeff Pruitt 6-14 6-6 18, Kevin Wagstaff 5-11 1-2 15, John Rogers 4-5 4-5 12, Owens 2-4 2-2 6, Davenport 2-6 4-7 8, Grafel 0-0 1-2 1, Olberding 1-2 0-0 3, Pickett 0-1 0-0 0, Albers 0-0 0-0 0, Herrman 1-3 2-3 4, Peintner 1-2 0-0 2, Stramel 3-5 0-0 6. Totals — 25-54 20-27 72.

Kansas Wesleyan 36 39 — 52  
Fort Hays 36 39 — 75

3-point goals — Wesleyan 4-18 (Faubion 0-3, Baron 3-6, Sims 0-3, Smith 0-3, Chaves 0-1, Berry 0-1, Rogers 1-1); Fort Hays — 5-13 (Wagstaff 4-8, Davenport 0-2, Olberding 1-2, Pickett 0-1). Total fouls — Wesleyan 24, Fort Hays 23.

Fouled out — Owens, Fort Hays.  
Rebounds — Wesleyan 26 (Faubion 8); Fort Hays 43 (Davenport 9, Rogers 6, Pruitt 7). Blocked shots — Wesleyan 0; Fort Hays 1 (Pruitt). Assists — Wesleyan 9 (Baron 3); Fort Hays 11 (Wagstaff 2, Owens 2, Davenport 2). Steals — Wesleyan 7 (Baron 4); Fort Hays 8 (Rogers 2). Turnovers — Wesleyan 16, Fort Hays 14. Attendance — 1,259.

"(Rogers and Pruitt) were key, and Kevin in the second half hit some big shots to give us that lift," Johnson said. "Jeff's size advantage really was a big factor."

Kansas Wesleyan was led by forward Jeff Baron, who hit two 3-pointers early in the first half. He ended the night with 14 points, backed up by 10 for senior forward Marcus Faubion.

"They were hot early. They came out and scored 11 points in three minutes and it wasn't looking very good," Pruitt said. "We finally shut them down."

Fort Hays had a good shooting night



GEN YAMAGUCHI / Hays Daily News

Tiger senior center Jeff Pruitt, left, battles Kansas Wesleyan forward Jeff Baron in Friday's game at Gross Memorial Coliseum. Pruitt led Fort Hays with 18 points.

from the floor, hitting 46 percent of its shots (48 percent in the second half). They were 5-of-13 from three-point range.

"We hung our heads on last two losses and no team wants to lose three in a row," Pruitt said. "We're good shooters, so we just let it fly. We knew we were going to make them one of these days."

The win leads the Tigers into tournament action Tuesday and Wednesday in San Antonio.

The Tigers will take on 19th-ranked Southeastern Oklahoma State University on Tuesday and St. Mary's (Texas) University on Wednesday.

Sports reporter Nick McQueen can be reached at (785) 628-1081, Ext. 128 or by e-mail at nmcqueen@dailynews.net.