

Indiana High School Athletic Association

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Blake Ress, Commissioner

November 26, 2005

LOWELL ♦S FOURTH QUARTER RALLY EARNS SCHOOL ♦S FIRST STATE CROWN

A blocked extra point by Lowell provided the winning margin as the Red Devils defeated three-time defending state champion Roncalli 28-27 Saturday afternoon at the RCA Dome. ♦ Lowell, which started 1-4 this season, won its last 10 games en route to the Class 4A state championship.

At the 1:25 mark in the third quarter, Roncalli senior Brandon Axum scored on a 24-yard touchdown run to give the Rebels a 27-14 lead. ♦ Lowell senior Jimmy Ritter got a hand on the extra point try to keep Lowell ♦s deficit at 13.

Ritter would then answer Roncalli ♦s touchdown with a 20-yard touchdown pass to senior Jeff Clemens, capping a 10-play, 65-yard drive that cut the Rebels ♦ lead to 27-21 with 9:12 left to play in the game.

Three plays from scrimmage later, Lowell junior Josh Kuiper intercepted a Roncalli pass and returned it to the Roncalli 28-yard line. ♦ Lowell would take its first and only lead of the game four plays later on a four-yard touchdown run by senior running back Scott Gray.

Axum took the ensuing kickoff 87 yards for what appeared to be a touchdown that would have put Roncalli back on top. ♦ However, a Roncalli clipping penalty at the Roncalli 37-yard line negated the touchdown and moved the Rebels back to their own 22-yard line. ♦ Roncalli would go on to sustain an 11-play drive, however, Lowell senior Chris Lampa sacked Roncalli junior quarterback Paul Corsaro on fourth down and three to force a Roncalli turnover on downs with 1:15 left in the game. ♦ Ritter took a knee three times to kill the fourth quarter clock.

Roncalli, looking to become the first school in IHSAA history to win four consecutive football state championships, took command of the game early when Axum returned the game ♦s opening kickoff 44 yards to the Lowell 42-yard line. ♦ The Rebels then marched the remaining 42 yards on nine plays with senior running back Chris Merkel scoring from four yards out to take a 7-0 first quarter lead.

Gray, who rushed for a game-high 153 yards and three touchdowns on 19 carries, scored Lowell ♦s first touchdown with 6:11 left in the second quarter. ♦ Roncalli would score twice more before halftime to take a 21-7 lead into the locker room, with Corsaro tossing two touchdown passes, one to senior wide receiver Andy Barkocy that covered 64 yards and another to senior running back Bill Perry from seven yards out. ♦ Corsaro finished 7-of-10 passing for 120 yards, two touchdowns and an interception. ♦ Merkel led Roncalli with 109 yards on the ground on 22 carries.

Lowell finishes its state championship season with an 11-4 record. ♦ Roncalli, which had won a state-record 23 consecutive IHSAA tournament series games coming into Saturday ♦s game, ends the season at 12-3.

Class 4A State Championship Game Records

Longest Touchdown Pass: 64 by Paul Corsaro, Roncalli vs. Lowell, 2005.

Longest Touchdown Reception; 64 by Andy Barkocy, Roncalli vs. Lowell, 2005.

RONCALLI ♦S NICK BANICH HONORED WITH MENTAL ATTITUDE AWARD

Members of the IHSAA Executive Committee selected Roncalli linebacker Nick Banich as the winner of the Phil N. Eskew Mental Attitude Award for Class 4A Football.

At the conclusion of each state championship game, the IHSAA Executive Committee presents the award to an outstanding senior participant in the football state tournament. ♦ The recipient of the award, who was nominated by his principal and coach, must excel in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability. The award is named in honor of the third commissioner of the IHSAA who served from 1962 to 1976 and oversaw the beginning of the state football tournament.

He is a co-captain of the football team and a two-year starter. Aside from the sport, he also has participated in basketball and been a three-year member of the track team having qualified for the state meet last spring.

Academically, he maintains a 4.1 GPA while enrolled in Honors and Advanced Placement courses at the school. He has been heavily involved in many school activities including serving as a German Club Officer, Student Council Representative and the National Honor Society. He was a part of the IHSAA Student Leadership Conference and won the Kiwanis Club Service Leadership Award. He is undecided on his college plans at this juncture.

He is the son of Joseph and Jeannie Banich of New Palestine.

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, the IHSAA's corporate partner, presented a scholarship check for \$1,000.00 to Roncalli High School in the name of Nick Banich.

VSN MEANS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY

Visit our friends at [Visual Sports Network](#), the IHSAA's official photographer for all state championship events and one of the leading action photographers in the Midwest. VSN, which was on site on Saturday, has captured hundreds of images from this year's State Finals and will have them ready for viewing and purchase beginning Tuesday.

STATE FINALS PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Couldn't be in there for the state finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official souvenir program while supplies last! Programs are \$3.00 if you purchase in person at the IHSAA Office (9150 N. Meridian Street in Indianapolis) or \$5.00 by mail (postage included). To order, have your Visa or MasterCard ready and call us at 317-846-6601 during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EST).

Quotes from the Class 4A Game

Lowell Head Coach Kirk Kennedy

Let me tell you something about adjustments. They are highly overrated. Our adjustments (in the second half) were in our hearts and in our brains. We weren't playing Red Devil football in the first half. We were making silly mistakes that we knew would get us beat in this game. We told them at halftime they had 24 minutes for the rest of their life.

We knew we had to stop making mistakes and make them beat us on the field. We practically gave them their 21 first half points.

A lot of plays were made in the second half and every one contributed to our win. Everybody will talk about the interception, the blocked extra point or the fourth down stop. But it was the other plays that had just as much impact. We just hung in their and found a way to get it done.

This is a great victory for our community and school and everyone who has ever won a Lowell football uniform.

We had to make sure to take care of their cut-back runs because we over-pursued a lot. We found a way to win down the stretch.

Roncalli Head Coach Bruce Scifres

We just kind of shot ourselves in the foot in the second half. It's not like Roncalli football to give up leads. A couple of mistakes and the long touchdown return called back, those mistakes cost you against a good team and they cost us here tonight.

Their (Lowell) kids played very hard. In the second half we shot ourselves in the foot a little bit. They (Lowell) blocked a PAT, we throw an interception and we have a long touchdown return called back. Some of that is self-imposed and obviously a lot of that has to do with their kids playing their hearts out and making plays. Lowell has a great team and they did a great job.

All five of our games leading up to this were right down to the wire, just like this one. I just can't express how proud I am of our kids for the way they have played this year.

◆ We talk all time about limiting mistakes and making plays when opportunities present themselves. ◆ Unfortunately, in the second half we did not do that. ◆ When we made mistakes, (Lowell) capitalized on them. ◆

Senior linebacker Nick Banich

◆ It's so hard out here looking at my (teammates) and seeing the looks in their eyes. ◆ We knew what they wanted to do and we talked about it all week. ◆ And that is what makes it so hard. ◆ We knew what they wanted to do and we didn't execute and let one another down. ◆ We knew they were tough ◆ we said in the locker room at halftime there are 20-some seniors on that team and they are not going to give up in the second half ◆ we needed to step up and play them big in the second half and just didn't do it. ◆ When it came down to it, they made more big plays than we did. ◆