

Forged in Fire; Defined by the Flame Medfield Football 2023 Recap

By Curran Coakley

When I interviewed head coach Erik Ormberg following a Thanksgiving loss to Dover-Sherborn last year, he concluded with "We feel as though things are turning in Medfield football."

One calendar year later, as the Warriors took pictures with the Turkey Bowl trophy at midfield in Dover, enveloped by a sea of family and friends who had seen the team through thick and thin, it was clear that the tide truly had turned.

A full-on embodiment of the team's "MeWe" philosophy was evident as players adapted to step into roles that the team needed to be filled. TVL All-Star Chase Coughlin managed a position change to defensive end beautifully and provided the Warriors with a much-needed boost in the pass rush. Marco Musto also became reliable on the team's offensive and defensive line late in the season, punching well above his weight when Medfield needed the depth in the trenches.

The offensive line itself was also a huge testament to the team's adaptability. Infused with a mix of underclassmen, including Charlie Hurley and Gavin Seitz, the sophomores displayed vast amounts of growth late in the season. Guided by the leadership of seniors Tyler Rosen and Declan Frazier the Warriors' O-line provided quarterback Nick Hasapidis with valuable time to throw and roomy holes for running back Brady McCormack who shouldered most of the offensive load, rushing for 765 yards and 5 touchdowns this year, including a blistering 242-yard performance vs Dighton-Rehoboth.

The offense also saw some success through the air late in the year, as third-year starter Nick Hasapidis found his flow, and saw some of his best games come against Westwood, Dighton-Rehoboth, and Dover-Sherborn. Will Griffin, Tommy Ojuolape, and TVL All-Star Nick Gangemi spearheaded the dynamic receiving corps which proved to be a nightmare for certain defenses.

However, the strong point of this team was undoubtedly the defense. Gangemi, Coughlin, and Rosen made up the line, and Griffin, Ojulape, and Roman Schoenfeld joined forces to create a nightmare of a secondary. The three TVL All-Star honorable mentions created Medfield's very own "No fly zone" and anything past 5 yards was restricted air space for most quarterbacks. But this defense wasn't just good, they were record-setting.

The single-season tackle record was shattered by several players this year, with TVL All-Star Matthew Stevens finishing as the new team record holder for single-season tackles with 119 total and 52 solo. The senior linebacker also set the record for most career tackles in just two years. The history-making Stevens evolved from a soccer goalie to a ferocious defender ending

his career in the record books, and will forever be remembered as one of the best defensive players to line up for the Warriors.

Despite all the talent, arguably the best quality of the 2023 Warriors was their resilience. After back-to-back losses to Westwood and Whitman-Hanson, the Warriors had been eliminated from the playoffs with two games left to play, and it would have been easy to roll over and quit with the rest of the season now being solely for pride. But the Warriors never did.

Following a nail-biting win in a mist-filled 26-21 melee against Dighton-Rehoboth at home, Medfield hit the road to take on Dover in a Thanksgiving classic. The Warriors came out of the gates hot and never looked back. OPOG and DPOG performances from McCormack and Ojuolape helped secure the Warriors' first Turkey Bowl win in 3 years and their fourth of the season.

The Medfield motto this season was "Forged in Fire", meaning warriors being built in the midst of hard times. Though 2023 was a roller-coaster season, on top of a few difficult years for the upperclassmen, when they came together one last time on a Thursday in Dover, the Keepers of the Flame proved that the fire for the Warriors was burning as bright as it ever had.