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HANDELLEWIS HARRIS

VALLEY'S ANDY AMBERS

Pinkett, Harris, Ambers:
Three Different Routes

BY KEN MORRISON

Dear Sports Editor,

It's decision time for the top high school football players in the state. The recruiting is almost over and each of the three running backs in the Northwestern District who rushed for 1,000 yards this season has had a different experience.

For Handley's Lewis Harris who made a comeback this year after missing his junior year because of academic problems there was no recruiting despite the second 1,000 yard season of his career. He'll try to go the prep school route. Allen Pinkett didn't get to the state playoffs this year but his stock climbed nevertheless.

Loudoun Valley's Andy Ambers didn't quite have the year expected of him and all of the Division I teams in the state and Atlantic Coast Conference which are recruiting him are looking at Ambers as a defensive back.

Pinkett remains one of the hottest prospects in the state, along with GW Danville quarterback Jamie Harris who recently said he'd narrowed his list of schools to four. North Carolina, Louisiana State and Georgia are at the top of his list.

Pinkett, who rushed for 1,900 yards last year when Park View lost in the state AA finals and had 1,400 yard his season, plans to visit four schools. The ones he is most interested in are North Carolina, Penn State, Notre Dame and Richmond.

North Carolina and Penn State are considered his most likely choices although Notre Dame which got into the Pinkett sweepstakes late has received quite a bit of interest according to Park View coach Ed Scott. North Carolina has been recruiting Pinkett since his sophomore year. Former Park View assistant coach Max Lowe is a part-time assistant at Carolina.

Virginia Tech and Virginia both made early contact and are still heavily recruiting him but are considered dark horses at this time. All of the teams being mentioned are tailback-oriented teams.

At Penn State Pinkett figures to be no higher than number three as a freshman behind Curt Warner and Jonathan Williams and Penn State coach Joe Paterno doesn't like the freshman rule. Freshman seldom play there unless they're very exceptional.

Notre Dame has stockpiled a lot of running backs, including Jack Brooks who played hardly at all this year although he was one of the top high school prospects in the country last year.

Despite the presence of Kevin Bryant, North Carolina coaches have told Pinkett they're only one deep at tailback. Richmond loses all-time rushing leader Barry Reddin. The coaching staff at Richmond made a big impression on Pinkett and that's why they're still at the top of the list.

"Most of the coaches who have recruited Allen think he'll be a better back in college than he was in high school because he'll have those big lines to run behind," said Scott. "He's too quick. He's not very big but he's so strong."

Pinkett can bench 335 pounds and powerlifts 395.

A final decision is expected to come sometime in late January.

The first two weeks in January, Handley's Harris plans to visit a couple of prep schools like Fork Union Military Academy and Massanutten Military Academy.

"I think it would be a good situation for Lewis," said Handley coach Ron Lindon.

If used to be that schools would sign athletes then send them to a prep school for a year to get their grades up, Harris will try to do it in reverse, play well enough at a prep school to get some interest.

"It used to be that a lot of schools would take chances on a lot of kids but not anymore and this is really the only route Lewis has to go," said Lindon. "The limits on scholarships are making it very tight."

Jimmy Radie, wide receiver/defensive back, is in the only other Handley player who's been approached by the Division I schools.

There are a couple of other Handley players who aren't sure at this time whether they want to play football in college.

"I think the small schools are what most of our kids are interested in now," said Lindon. "It's a physical game and to go to a big school and try to play anymore. We don't have that many real physical kids."

Valley's Ambers was looked at as a running back last summer by almost all the Division I schools who recruited the area.

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