

Speedster Babbaro on mend

Date

September 20, 2007

VILLANOVA, Pa. -- Speed is Angelo Babbaro's chief asset.

Being able to run like a deer in the open field, thanks in part to his long track training, is what has helped the Canfield High graduate to win a starting job as Villanova University's kick-return specialist this season.

But now the red-shirt freshman is trying to bounce back from a shoulder injury suffered in the first half of his collegiate debut against Maryland on Sept. 1, and then pick up where he left off during his first game.

Babbaro (5-10, 195) had three kick returns for 79 yards for a 26.3-yard average in the Maryland game, including a long return of 35 yards, before being injured, after which the Wildcats went on to a 31-14 loss to the Terps.

However, Villanova bounced back with wins over Lehigh (30-20) and Maine (24-17) in overtime last week, and hopes to continue the streak Saturday at home at 6 p.m. against Penn.

Babbaro, who also is the team's No. 2 running back, missed the next two games and then returned to practice this week, but it is uncertain if he will play Saturday against Penn.

But he is expected to return to full-time duty the following Saturday in a game at James Madison.

The son of Lisa and Angelo Babbaro, the fleet ball carrier also excels in the classroom with a 3.63 grade-point average after achieving a 3.89 GPA at Canfield.

Babbaro left a rich football legacy at Canfield, his speed sharpened by four years of running track. In three years of football, the swift-moving running back compiled 2,135 yards of offense and scored 36 touchdowns and 218 points.

He led the Cardinals to state Div. II runner-up honors in 2005 as a senior, and also was named Mahoning County Player of the Year.

Many believe that if Babbaro hadn't suffered a knee injury midway through the second quarter of the 2005 state Div. II championship game against Toledo Central Catholic, that Canfield might not have lost, 31-29.

He had scored two TDs before being injured, including a 92-yard kickoff return that set a state Div. II record for distance.

Also on the Villanova roster is Dominic Scarnecchia (5-10, 190), a freshman defensive back from Cardinal Mooney. Scarnecchia was part of historic achievements at Mooney. A three-year letterman in football, he was a member of the Cardinals' state championship teams in 2004 and 2006.

Scarnecchia also was a two-year letterman in track in the long and high jump and as a relay runner, and was named MVP at the Steel Valley Conference meet.