

Coach

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Coaching,
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**OREGON'S
LINFIELD
COLLEGE**

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The most consistent team in
America — Linfield College (Ore.)

Playing To Personnel's Strengths Proves...

SUCCESSFUL, CONSISTENT

Oregon's Linfield College has finished with a winning football season for 56 straight years, an NCAA record

By **MICHAEL AUSTIN**, Editor-in-Chief

Late in the third quarter of Linfield College's (McMinnville, Ore.) regular-season finale, which ended up being a 47-14 drubbing of then-second-place Lewis & Clark College, the Wildcats' quarterback, No. 11 Mickey Inns, threw a 29-yard touchdown strike to Evan Peterson 13 seconds after the Pioneers finally tallied their first touchdown of the game.

As Linfield's offense trotted toward the sideline, the special teams unit ran onto the field with No. 11, Eric Biege, set to hold the extra-point attempt.

When you start the season with 130 to 150 players on your roster, there always is some overlap in player uniform numbers. And, when you are one of a handful of Division III teams vying for a national title every year, egos are checked at the door. Just because Inns is a 6-foot-2, 205-pound quarterback who tossed for four touchdowns in a conference-clinching game, doesn't mean he gets a number to himself on this squad.

Linfield, which is the last team to win a Division III football title

(2004) not named the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater or Mount Union (the 2011 winner was decided after press time), has a storied gridiron history that includes three national titles at the NAIA level (1982, 1984 and 1986) and an NCAA-record 56 consecutive winning seasons dating back to 1956.

Despite being a small, private school not located in the football-rich Midwest, Linfield has found a way to develop its players into winners with a style of play fitting the personnel's strengths and leaning heavily on a smart, well-rounded coaching staff that almost all wore the Wildcats' purple and red during their playing days.

Large Numbers For Success

Led by head coach Joseph Smith, who was a four-year starter for the Wildcats and second-team NAIA All-American defensive back in 1992, Linfield is a place where football is treated like another class (albeit a rather large class with more than a hundred students) at the school in terms of learning experiences, togetherness and character building.

"Linfield football is the best class our kids are going to take while at

Linfield for success skills, so the more young men who are able to take part in that, the better we are preparing them for success," says Smith. "That's been the overriding factor.

"We think what we do is preparing our guys for their jobs after college, so the more people taking part in that, the better we are doing our jobs."

Linfield athletic director Scott Carnahan echoes the sentiments of Smith, but also sees having a larger football team as a benefit to the school as a whole, which cannot be overlooked.

"We are developing student-athletes by teaching them success-related skills in a classroom on the field," says Carnahan. "It's a double-edged sword for us. It puts a little more stress on our department and budget.

"But at the same time, we are a private institution and tuition-driven, so the more students we have to meet our budget goal institutionally is a good thing."

Carnahan adds that Linfield does have a mandated cap for men's athletics, so the football team cannot field a squad with hundreds and hundreds of players. The team usually meets its predetermined number by attrition, but sometimes there are cuts that have to be made.



Linfield College currently owns the NCAA record for consecutive winning football seasons with 56 to its credit.

Balance ... With A Passing Flavor

Smith, like most football coaches, says he wants “balance” in his offensive system, but admits his plan is to play to the strengths of his personnel. That recently that led to the development of a team scoring a lot of points through the air with a ground game complementing the passing quite well.

“The only thing we won’t change are our values, but everything else is open to adjustment — whether practice formats, schemes or techniques. We will adjust to give us the best chance for success on the field,” says Smith. “We have changed our

offense from year to year to completely fit our talent.”

For this season, the Wildcats have run (349 rushing attempts) more than they have passed (304 passing attempts), but the big plays and yardage are coming through the air.

The team has scored 29 touchdowns by passing with 15 rushing touchdowns this season while averaging an impressive 41.7 points per game (good for 14th in Division III).

“In our play selections we are pretty much balanced. You’re always going to have a higher yield per play throwing the ball — but you have higher risks too,” Smith

explains. “We’d love to be balanced in an ideal world.

“In the beginning of the year, we were rushing the ball more because teams were giving us that. Lately, teams have been trying to take away the run, so the pass becomes more conducive (to our offensive success).”

Smith says when he’s evaluating quarterbacks in his offensive system, he has three characteristics he must see in that player before allowing him to get under center (or in the shotgun, which the team uses quite a bit) during live-game action.

Accuracy. Smith says above anything else, he needs a quarterback

Single Play Leads To \$1.4 Million Stadium Renovation

When you are a successful Division III football program, you end up hosting a lot of early-round playoff games. In 2000, Linfield College (McMinnville, Ore.) led a second-round playoff game against Central College (Iowa), 17-14, in overtime.

With the game being played in Oregon during November, rainy, wet conditions had turned parts of the field into a giant mud bath. What transpired has been called by some the “Miracle In The Mud,” but that name certainly did not come from anyone associated with Linfield.

Central’s kicker came on to attempt a 38-yard field goal in an effort to tie the game and force a second overtime. The

kicker slipped, booted the ball into the linemen and Linfield seemingly had won the game. As Wildcat players left the sideline to go onto the field to celebrate, the play hadn’t been whistled dead.

Central’s center had the ball, handed it to the fullback, who emerged from the scrum and took the ball into the end zone. The touchdown counted and Central won, 20-17.

When asked why Linfield moved to renovate its football stadium, athletic director Scott Carnahan offered a sarcastic laugh, then explained: “In the Willamette Valley, the native soil is silt-based clay soil, so if you get much rain on it, it doesn’t take long

for it to become mud.

“So, we had an unfortunate situation against Central of Iowa where we blocked a kick, they picked it up behind the line of scrimmage and ran it in for a touchdown. That was the issue that started the discussion about a turf field.”

The outrage due to the overtime loss spurred the \$1.4 million renovation to Maxwell Field in 2004 (coincidentally, Linfield went on to win the Division III football title later that year).

The project included a new FieldTurf surface to replace the grass, as well as an upgraded track, which went from latex-based to a longer-lasting polyurethane surface.

Plus, a state-of-the-art, 10-by-25-foot scoreboard with color video display replaced the 25-year-old scoreboard.

Other additions included: NFL-sized field goal posts; four

light towers; upgraded 25-second play clocks; and the reconstruction of the press box, which is now completely enclosed.

And, if \$1.4 million seems a bit light for all of those upgrades, consider the Linfield community coming together to make this dream a reality.

“We had a lot of gifts-in-kind for materials. We had one guy give us four months of his time as a project manager. We had alumni that stepped forward with machinery — one that donated a dump truck and driver for a big part of the project,” explains Carnahan.

“Because it’s a smaller community, we worked together on this project in coordination with a lot of time on my part. But, if you put a cost value on what we actually did versus the dollars we had to spend, it probably would have cost us 30 to 40 percent more if we had paid everything out.”

who is accurate — much more than one who has a cannon for an arm.

Mental Toughness. A Linfield quarterback needs to understand his read progressions, handle adversity and “steer the ship.” Smith says the player also must possess “poise in the pocket,” which showcases his mental toughness.

Arm Strength, Running Ability. Linfield does throw a lot of shorter routes, but wants the option to take a deep shot down the field. While Smith wants an accurate quarterback first, he is looking for one with a strong arm as well. Plus, Smith has no problem with his quarterback tucking the ball and running down

the field. He doesn’t want a statue in the pocket. If there is a first down to be had by the quarterback using his feet, he wants that player to have the confidence and skill to pick it up.

Sometimes forgotten in the passing game, the type of linemen Linfield fields on a year-to-year basis also determines if the quarterback has time to pass all over the field. An accurate passer who is smart with a great arm and legs cannot be successful if he’s constantly on his back.

Smith says his linemen determine what he wants to do on a yearly, and sometimes, on a weekly basis.

“The type of linemen you have

completely dictates what you can do for your whole offensive system,” Smith remarks. For a deep-passing offense, Smith wants his linemen to have size, long arms and quick feet to withstand the defensive pass rush. He admits it’s easier to find linemen for a short-passing game.

“You can get away with almost anyone on the offensive line for a three-step passing game,” Smith says. “Ideally for us, in an Ace-back system (one running back, one tight end and three receivers), you want a traditional, good-sized offensive lineman who can move — the problem is there are not a lot of those players. So, it is difficult

But, that doesn’t mean the time leading up to the completion of the project was an easy one for Carnahan. Linfield has 19 varsity sports, which all require the athletic director’s attention.

So, adding in being the primary fundraiser on a \$1.4 million project, as well as being the head baseball coach at the time, made life chaotic for Carnahan. But he took it all in stride with the long-term goal always in the back of his mind.

“The coaching and working philosophy within our athletic department is that it is job-oriented and not time-oriented,” Carnahan explains. “So, if something takes longer to do to make it right and to be successful, then we are going to do that.

“Sure, at that time I was burning at both ends a little bit, but when you catch the



Linfield’s \$1.4 million stadium renovation, including the installation of a FieldTurf surface, became a necessity after the “Miracle In The Mud” game in 2000.

momentum and get excited about something, it makes it a little easier to spend that extra time on it.”

Now, with the stadium renovation seven years old, Carnahan says having upgraded facilities is the key for attracting players into the Linfield program.

He sees four ways that Division III schools, which cannot offer athletic aid, can sell themselves as attractive to students:

1. Academic. Carnahan says all schools in

the Northwest Conference possess high-level academics.

2. Athletic. This is about success but also about opportunity. The “opportunity” side is a bit more difficult of a sell at Linfield due to the tremendous success of the program. Not every player comes into this program and is going to play immediately, no matter the talent level.

3. Social. This involves the town and community.

4. Cost. “You put those four elements together (as a student)

and you say, ‘Is this a good place for me to come?’ during recruiting,” Carnahan says.

“Since we enhanced the facilities in 2004, we became a leader in what a football facility could be like. So, when a kid visited member institutions in our conference, then came here, they could say that we have a great program and facilities, nice field, nice scoreboard, a lot of community support and bigger crowds,” which makes Linfield an attractive option, he adds.

to play on the offensive line in an Ace system.”

Defense Allows 11.7 Points Per Game

Offense is only part of the equation at Linfield. In addition to an offense that races up and down the field while scoring 41.7 points per game, the Wildcats’ stingy defense only allows 11.7 points per game (9th best in the country) while sacking the quarterback 40 times during the regular season, which was the most by any team in Division III (the second-best sacking team trailed Linfield by five).

Once again, Smith says the secret

to success is adjusting your philosophy to your personnel and not being stuck in one way of thinking.

“Last year, we had some kids up front get sacks with just a three- or four-man rush,” explains Smith. “This year, we don’t have the same type of 1-on-1 success rushing the pass. So, we have been more scheme-based, we have pressured more with our linebackers and we have run more stunts. We are a very fast defensive line this year, so we’re putting our players on the move and making use of their talent. You need to adjust your schemes to the talent you have.”

In a defense that does use more

schemes and rushes the linebackers more often, defensive backs are left vulnerable in 1-on-1 situations.

As a former defensive back himself, Smith knows how difficult a position this leaves his secondary players and how mentally tough they must be to earn playing time.

“If you are going to pressure, then your secondary pays the price for that. They are put in a bad situation if you don’t get there (to the quarterback). Having a strong secondary allows you to pressure more. If you have a weak secondary, you can’t,” Smith explains. “Secondary-wise, you have to be strong mentally to play man-to-man without a lot of



Linfield’s defensive players routinely run 180 plays in a typical practice, so they are well conditioned to deal with being on the field a great deal due to Linfield’s high-powered offense that scores quickly.

help because you will get beat. It's just a matter of how you respond when you do. These players can't panic when the ball is in the air."

When the Linfield opposition does manage to find its way into the red zone, which isn't often as through the regular season the Wildcats defended just 14 red-zone trips, the defense tightens further as the squad only has allowed five touchdowns in those situations.

Smith says there is a focus on red-zone play in practice, but most of that comes from the study and research his coaches accomplish during the week.

Smith credits his coaching staff by putting in the time to understand the tendencies of what the opposition likes to run inside the 20-yard line, and the coaches make it a priority to limit teams to three points rather than touchdowns in the red zone.

"Offenses change in the red zone, so you need to take away what they do best and make them beat you with their No. 2 and 3 options. If they can do that, then hats off to them," Smith says.

The tenacity of the defense is even more impressive when you

consider how efficient and effective the offense is. Due to the high-scoring nature of the Wildcats when they have the ball, the defense finds itself on the field more than most (through nine games Linfield's time of possession averages 27:38 per game). Smith says he doesn't go out of his way to do straight conditioning with the defensive unit.

"We don't believe you need to do conditioning if you run practices the right way," Smith explains. "Our practices are highly organized and take a tremendous amount of time to prepare for as a coach. Everything is scripted. The amount of plays we get off is staggering.

"Our defense will practice for 180 plays (some days). That's a lot of plays. Our offense gets between 150 and 160 plays. It's all about repetition, preparation and maximizing the time. So, if you are running at that kind of pace, you don't need to

Linfield's starting quarterback, Mickey Inns, is a vital component in Linfield's Alley Passing Scheme (see sidebar on page 33).

condition. Our goal is to make the games seem easy.

"From a mental, physical and conditioning standpoint, we want the game to seem slower. This makes it easier to make the mental reads, mental adjustments and the physical conditioning is easier in the game than when we are practicing. If the game seems faster on Saturday, then that's when you fail."

Continued on page 34...



Linfield Football's Alley Passing Scheme

By **BRETT ELLIOTT**, Quarterbacks Coach,
Linfield College, McMinnville, Ore.

Four verticals is a route that is run from pee-pee football all the way up to the professional ranks. It is a base pass route that has a place in every system.

In our system we have the ability to adapt the four-vertical route, which we call "Alley," to be effective against all coverages.

We run Alley out of almost every spread formation that we have. It is an effective route out of our 2-by-2 and 3-by-1 sets, and we even run Alley out of our empty sets. The set that is going to be focused on here is our 3-by-1 set and can include a tight end, dependent upon your personnel.

The following three diagrams illustrate how we run Alley against Cover 3, Cover 2 and man-based coverages.

Vs. Cover 3

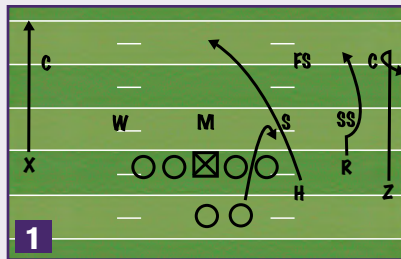
One of the issues with Alley is the propensity for linebackers to drop underneath the seam routes, making them difficult throws for the quarterback.

We have two solutions to this problem:

- * Add run action to keep the backers at a manageable depth.
- * Release the tailback to either influence the backers to step up or give the QB an outlet in case the backers drop under the seam routes.

The coverage that Alley is best against is Cover 3. Because Cover 3 is very susceptible to being beaten by Alley, most teams employ a "squeeze" technique by the corners. This is when the corner tries to hug the seam to help out his middle safety while trying to stay on top of the outside go route.

DIAGRAM 1: Trio Right Red Alley.



Combat this "squeezing" technique in 3-by-1 sets by altering the outside go route to what is called a "squirrel" route. This is similar to a designed fade stop at about 18 to 22 yards. Teach your QB to throw a seam route off the free safety and to take him where he wants to go with his eyes on the first step of the dropback. Then cross-over plant and throw to the seam in which the free safety is in a worse position to defend.

If the backers take away your seam throw, the QB checks the ball down to the back. If the corner takes away the seam throw, the QB throws the squirrel route to the Z.

Coaching point against Cover 3:

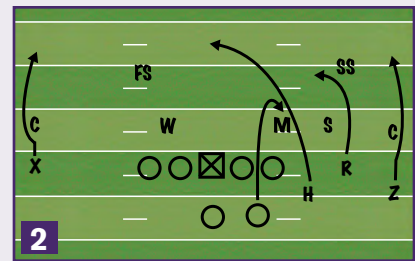
The spacing on the middle seam routes is vital to the success of Alley. You can use the hash marks as landmarks for your seam routes. Keep your "H" receiver on the boundary hash mark and the "R" on the field hash mark.

Vs. Cover 2

Against Cover 2, we alter the R's seam route to a bend, which is a 14- to 18-yard route that bends in front of the safety and behind the backers. The Z's route changes as well — instead of a squirrel route he now keeps his go route. This places the field safety in a bind, much like the bind for the field corner in Cover 3. All other routes stay the same.

DIAGRAM 2: Changing Routes

Vs. Cover 2. Teach your QBs to read Alley against Cover 2 just like Cover 3, but now instead of



throwing off the middle FS, they are throwing off the field safety. If he squeezes on the bend, throw the outside go. (Another way to read it is to throw off the boundary safety, which is the H and X combination.) If the backers get depth and take away the bend, then the ball needs to be thrown to the tail back in the hole route.

Coaching point against Cover 2:

If R bends too soon, it enables the backers to take away both the bend and the back, and the play is dead. Make sure R starts vertical for at least 12 yards (it may be deeper depending on the depth of the field safety) to threaten the field safety, then bends in front of him and behind the backers.

Vs. Cover 10 (Man-Based Coverages)

Alley, in its basic form, is not a great route against man coverage. It is more of a route designed to find holes in zone coverages, rather than beating man defenders in 1-on-1 coverage. That is why we alter the R's route to a 12-yard out against man coverage.

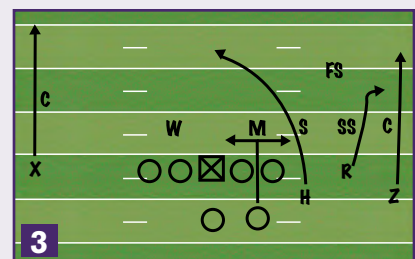


DIAGRAM 3: Beating Man Coverages. Teach your QBs that if they sense man coverage, then either take a shot outside with one of the go routes (especially if it is a press man with a single safety high look) or look to the 12-yard out by R.

Breaking Down The Linfield Football Culture

Year-in and year-out, the Linfield College (McMinnville, Ore.) football team piles up winning seasons. With an NCAA-record 56 consecutive seasons with a winning record, the culture of football at the small, private school located 40 miles southwest of Portland is the driving force behind the success.

The coaches can expound about Xs and Os with the best in the business, but when you ask about the reason why the Wildcats are successful, people associated with the program always point to the “culture,” as evidenced by the highlighted characteristics on the pictured card that can be found throughout the football area of the athletic department.



The characteristics surrounding the “L” include: Caring-Service; Strength-Fitness; Academic Career; Family Values; Faith-Ethics-Character; and Football Family.

Head coach Joseph Smith says beyond what is accomplished on the field, the true spirit of a Linfield football player resides in these values.

The back of the card lists the “Linfield Football Culture” broken down by four main categories: Team, Attitude, Excellence and Class.

TEAM

Trust. Trust in each other’s integrity and abilities. The team trusts you to do your job. The team trusts your word and consistency.

Unity. Come together as one. Show solidarity. Keep an open, honest, direct and respectful line of community with everyone on the team.

Enthusiasm. This fuels the team. It is contagious and infectious.

ATTITUDE

Mental Toughness. Everyone involved in the program must embrace change, prepare for chaos and adjust to it. Look at adversity as something that provides danger, but also opportunity.

Input = Output. You control what you put into your mind (turn off the television and read).

Believe. Know that the day will go in your favor until the final horn sounds.

EXCELLENCE

Work Ethic. Have a blue-collar attitude. Do not take short cuts and do it right the first time.

Accountability. You control your choices. Be on time. Simplify your life. Don’t make excuses or offer explanations.

Developmental Focus. Constantly seek to learn.

Self-Referent & Process Focus. Success is measured relative to our potential. Focus on preparation and efforts — not the outcome.

Football Intelligence. Be an expert on our system.

CLASS

Integrity. Your reputation is based on what others think of you. Do the right thing in public and in private. Be honest and humble. Offer forgiveness.

Respect. Play the game the way it was meant to be played.

Special Teams Deliver

Simply having a top-15 offense and a top-10 defense would carry Linfield to winning seasons, conference championships and possibly undefeated seasons. The Wildcats, however, also dedicate a great deal of time, effort and study to special teams as well. It’s a phase of the game Smith says his squad doesn’t take for granted.

That preparation came in handy during the team’s second-to-last regular-season game at Whitworth College (Spokane, Wash.). Linfield won the game, 42-38, with the final margin coming courtesy of three extra-point blocks and forcing Whitworth to miss a fourth extra-point attempt.

Smith explains his coaching staff broke down the film on Whitworth, saw a weakness in their kicking game and attacked it. Normally, extra-point attempts are a formality, but for Linfield they are treated as importantly as any other play in the game, and it paid off in a victory.

“It’s definitely something our defensive coordinator looked at to determine what PAT blocks would be successful against their protection scheme,” Smith says about the Whitworth game. “So, we could put some of our better rushers against some of their weaker blockers. That was intentional. I don’t know if we thought we’d get three (blocks), but we hoped to be competitive on most of those kicks.”

With the large numbers of players on the team, Linfield has a huge talent pool from which to draw its special teams players. Smith uses this unit for talented players who are deserving of playing time, but haven’t cracked the starting lineup.

“We play a lot of non-starters on special teams because we look at special teams as an opportunity to earn more playing time. Our players take great pride in being on the punt team or the kick-return team. It’s a privilege to be on those teams and guys are playing their guts out on them,” Smith explains. “We have a lot of depth, so

that allows you to play a high-quality athlete on those teams.

“We will not play a low-quality athlete there because we want to dominate special teams. We believe we have an advantage in most games from a physical and talent standpoint, as well as a schematic standpoint.”

A Supportive Athletic Department

Beyond the Xs and Os and incredible work ethic of the coaching staff, having a dedicated, supportive athletic department and director standing behind the Linfield football program is a final piece of the puzzle that contributes greatly to the Wildcats’ success.

Athletic director Carnahan says he remains “hands-off” with the team and doesn’t want to “micromanage” the coaches. He knows they are the

experts and sees himself more as being “a facilitator of support.”

“You make hiring decisions that dictate whether or not you are going to have success,” says Carnahan. “If you hire the right people, you put them in a situation where they have the support and you are confident they can do the job. If they have the expertise, the knowledge and the motivation to be at a national level, then they don’t need someone micromanaging their program.

“When you sit in a chair as the athletic director as a previous coach (Carnahan coached the baseball team at Linfield from 1984-2007), you have a better understanding of the coaches’ feelings and how they view support. They don’t view support as telling them how to run their program.

“If there are modifications that need to be made, I’m certainly going

to step in and discuss the issues. But, I’m not going to be calling people in and telling them they need to run this play on this down. They know a lot more about it than I do.” **CAD**

Read about Editor-In-Chief Michael Austin’s week with Linfield College (pages 36-37).

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An in-depth look at what makes Linfield College a successful program. Watch interviews with head coach Joseph Smith and Athletic Director, Scott Carnahan, as well as get a sideline view of the Wildcats in action at practice and during the Nov. 12 home game against the Lewis & Clark Pioneers.



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Preparing For The Conference Title Game

By **MICHAEL AUSTIN**,
Editor-in-Chief

I picked a great week to spend time with the Linfield College (McMinnville, Ore.) football program. Coming off a 42-38 victory over Whitworth College (Spokane, Wash.), the Wildcats spent the week of Nov. 7 preparing for a Saturday afternoon home match-up with Lewis & Clark College (Portland, Ore.).

Linfield entered the game undefeated and Lewis & Clark, relevant in the Northwest Conference for the first time in decades, arrived at Maxwell Field on Nov. 12 with a single conference loss. The conference title would go to the winner.

I attended Linfield's practice Thursday, Nov. 10, after interviewing head coach Joseph

Smith and athletic director Scott Carnahan earlier in the day. Smith said during the interview that if Lewis & Clark played Saturday the same way they showed on tape, Linfield was going to be ready ... and he expected his squad to be victorious.

Afternoon Practice

Linfield's three-hour practice starts at 3 p.m. Thursday and moves at a breakneck pace.

The defense starts by making reads on one end of the field to slow down the mobility of Lewis & Clark's quarterback while the offense works within individual position groups first, then comes together to frame some of their sets and reads.

During this offensive framing, the quarterback reads the "defense" to decide whether to run

or pass. On one handoff, a running back casually holds the ball away from his body.

The drill is moving at a quick pace, but Smith still chides the back for not protecting the ball, which goes back to one thing Smith mentioned in his earlier interview,

"Turnover ratio is something we take tremendous efforts and strides to win. Typically, that is the biggest deciding statistic in the game."

The team has three different special teams segments during the three-hour practice, all lasting 10 minutes each, which shows Smith's insistence that his team "dominate special teams."

There also are several 25-minute sessions where the offense is running against the scout team. This serves

as what Linfield wants to accomplish in certain situations against Lewis & Clark. Coaches bark out the situation ("3rd and 4" for example) and players are instructed as to what play to run.

There is a coach on the sideline constantly signaling the play, just as he does during the game, to make the segment more game-like.

Loud music begins blaring from the speakers with about four minutes left in an offensive practice segment just prior to the field-goal kicking segment. The coaches put on headsets to combat the noise, and the quarterback is forced to offer a loud cadence so the entire team hears him. The music, at first, sounds like the inspirational notes being played during any NFL Films video.

Players start nodding their heads. The music then turns into what sounds like a traditional score during an action movie. At this point, the music almost acts as a sense of urgency. Players appear even more focused.

Practice eventually ends with a two-minute drill as the offense moves quickly up and down the field. With music still roaring out of the stadium speakers, the clock on the scoreboard running and players hustling, Linfield looks poised for its Saturday contest.

Game Day

About an hour prior to kickoff on Saturday, a light rain begins to fall in McMinnville, which is typical for November in Oregon. The rain doesn't seem to pour down here as it does in other parts of the country, but serves more as a distraction for fans, cheerleaders and reporters. Linfield's players don't bat an eye at the precipitation.

The first offensive play of the game for Linfield features QB Mickey Inns out of the shotgun, rolling to his right and firing a strike to wide receiver Deidre Wiersma crossing over the middle, who then turns the pass-and-catch into a 41-yard gain. A Lewis & Clark defender grabs Wiersma's facemask, which adds to the total yardage after the penalty.

Four plays later, Linfield boots a 25-yard field goal, takes a 3-0 lead and never looks back. I actually watched Linfield run this exact pass play at practice on Thursday, so it's fascinating to see it work so effectively in live action.

Despite forcing Lewis & Clark into a couple of third-and-long situations early in the game, the Linfield coaches are not satisfied.

The Pioneers are getting their receivers behind the Linfield defenders as the Lewis & Clark QB scrambles out of the pocket. This point is driven home in the defensive huddle by coordinator Jackson Vaughan.

"He's going to run, so you have to cover all the way across the field," Vaughan implores his team on the sideline in the first quarter. "We have all the speed in the world, but we have to be patient and play smart." As the game wears on, Linfield's defenders do a much better job sticking with their receivers even as plays break down.

Despite coming out in a shotgun formation quite a bit and running a no-huddle (not a hurry-up as the players all look to the sidelines for the play call) for part of the game, Linfield hammers Lewis & Clark with the run, especially in the first half. Linfield's first touchdown drive features eight rushes and only three passes.

The second touchdown, which extends the lead to 20-0 in the second quarter, is more balanced with four rushes and four passes.

(On the subsequent two touchdown drives of the first half, Linfield runs the ball to set up the scoring pass. Both touchdown passes came from inside the 10-yard line.)

by scores of 52-3, 73-7, 49-6 and 45-7.

"Game-in and game-out, our guys are pretty good at focusing on themselves and that's how you stay consistent."

It's clear this message is not lost on the players. In the third quarter with a 37-0 lead, Linfield loses a fumble. Inns comes to the sideline and addresses the



Despite cold, wet conditions in Oregon during football season, Linfield College attracts strong home crowds.

When Linfield led 27-0 with seven minutes remaining in the first half, the offensive coaches issued a challenge to their players to "get two more scores" before halftime. This is the kind of manufactured motivation the Wildcats need during some stretches of their season.

"We don't want to worry about the score or those outcome-based measures, but truly our own self-referent measures — if you can do that, then it keeps you focused for the entire game," Smith said earlier in the week about his team that has won games this year

offensive players by yelling, "We can't let up on 'O'!" Offensive coordinator Doug Hire pushes his team to "finish the game and don't give them any life."

As the rain falls a little harder deep in the fourth quarter and leading 47-14, Linfield's starting units on offense and defense don't let up despite their day being over. With the second unit playing hard, the starters remain standing on the sideline emphatically cheering every successful Wildcat play.

Final Score: Linfield 47, Lewis & Clark 14. It is Linfield's 35th conference title in team history.