

## FOOTBALL

### Cardinals ready to tackle first goal in UA

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*ThisWeek Staff Writer*

Before the start of the season, Thomas Worthington High School football coach Scott Gordon said the two primary goals for his team were to win the OCC-Central Division championship and defeat Upper Arlington.

The Cardinals don't begin their quest for the league title until Sept. 28 at Central Crossing. Right now, their focus is solely on their matchup with the Golden Bears, who will visit Friday. UA beat Findlay 42-7 last Friday to improve to 3-0, and Thomas lost to Newark 33-21 last Friday to drop to 0-3.

"Our coach just told us that they have a sign in their weight room that says, 'What have you done to beat Upper Arlington today?' and they have to touch that sign every time they come in and lift," UA running back Alex Drake said after last Friday's game. "So we're their target this year."

"It's definitely a big game for us," Gordon said. "It's a rivalry game, but the rivalry has been lopsided."

UA has won all 10 meetings since the teams began playing annually in 1997. But Thomas has come close, falling 20-17 in 2001, 27-20 in 2004 and 20-17 in double overtime last year.

In last season's matchup, UA led 10-3 until Cardinals safety Pat Barren scooped up a fumble and ran 50 yards for a touchdown. The extra point by Alex Moore sent the game to the first overtime, in which the teams traded touchdowns.

The Bears had the first possession in the second overtime and took the lead on a 31-yard field goal by Kevin Schneider. The Cardinals missed an opportunity to force a third overtime when Moore's 44-yard field-goal attempt sailed wide right.

UA went on to finish 10-2 and qualify for the Division I playoffs last year and Thomas finished 2-8.

The Bears don't need to be reminded that the Cardinals nearly pulled off the upset a year ago.

"It shows we can't take anything for granted, that we have to play as hard as we can," Drake said.

#### Next game

UA at THOMAS  
WORTHINGTON

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Last meeting: 2006, UA  
20-17 (2OT)

Thomas (0-3) to date:  
Lost to Big Walnut 41-6; lost  
to Olentangy 23-0; lost to  
Newark 33-21

Top Cardinals: Nick  
Bailey, Kori Banks, Kurt  
Barnhart, Bo Corbin, Nate  
Easley, Brett Hoffman,  
Chad Howell, Chris Rock,  
Thomas Senessie and Jake  
Sharick

Of note: The Bears lead  
the all-time series 43-8-1.

"It's a big rivalry game, so we want to make sure we're up for it," Bears coach Mike Golden said. "We want to go in expecting to get their best effort."

Employing a wing-T offense, UA enters the contest averaging 45.3 points. Leading the way on offense are Drake and running back Tommy Farwick, who leads the team with 460 yards rushing on 44 carries (10.5 yards per carry). Drake ran 110 yards on 11 carries against Findlay.

"They have two real solid junior running backs," Gordon said. "They're scary. And their offensive line is very, very active and strong and quick. Their running game is running on all cylinders. Any time you take the field, you want to stop the run. That will be a tall order this week."

Gordon is hoping his defense can rise to the occasion against the Bears. He was pleased with its play in a 41-6 loss to Big Walnut on Aug. 24 and a 23-0 loss to Olentangy on Aug. 31, but the same cannot be said about last Friday as the Cardinals allowed 501 yards.

"Defensively, we didn't play as well as we hoped," Gordon said. "It was kind of disappointing. We just didn't tackle very well. We can't afford to repeat that performance against Upper Arlington."

UA's defense, which includes linebackers Colin McClain and Tommy Tench, linemen Mikel Berry and Thomas Sauter and backs Adam Donahue and Anthony Finissi, has allowed a total of 28 points.

Thomas' offense practically was non-existent in the first two games, but Gordon was encouraged by what he saw from his spread offense against Newark.

A week after throwing five interceptions against Olentangy, quarterback Brett Hoffman completed 17 of 29 passes for 229 yards and three touchdowns against Newark and ran 17 times for 61 yards. He was intercepted one time by the Wildcats.

"You always hope that competitors bounce back from tough outings," Gordon said. "Brett had his best game of the season. He managed the offense well, he ran well and he threw well."

Thomas Senessie may be emerging as Thomas' go-to wide receiver after catching five passes for 100 yards and two touchdowns against Newark. He is getting more playing time because of injuries to wide receivers Casey Jewett (leg) and Alan Juckett (knee), both of whom are expected to miss the remainder of the season.

The injury list for Thomas also includes tight ends Jarrett Cowgill (leg) and Kyle Carey (back) and running back Michael Stanley (hamstring). Added to that list last week was offensive lineman Mehdi Sabraoui, who is expected to miss the remainder of the season after having an adverse reaction to medication, Gordon said.

Sabraoui has been replaced in the lineup at right guard by Chris Burkett.

"That's another player that we've lost," Gordon said of Sabraoui.

