

# SAVING THE BEST FOR LAST

## Driesse goes out with a bang in final outing

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**EAST RUTHERFORD** - Ronnie Driesse had patiently waited for his turn to be the Wayne Hills featured running back. As a freshman and a sophomore, he watched Ray Van Peenen lead the Patriots to State Sectional championships in 2005 and 2006. As a junior, he backed up Dan DeCicco and Carlton Marcin, who were leading Hills to another championship in 2007.

The 2008 season figured to be Driesse's year. His 2007 season ended with a flourish when he returned an interception in the fourth quarter at Giants Stadium in Wayne Hills' State Sectional championship win over Wayne Valley.

Although it was a defensive play, his speed and agility seemed to serve as a sneak peak of what was coming the next season. Unfortunately for him, the 2008 season didn't start out the way he had hoped.

Driesse earned the starting spot, but on the third offensive play of the year, he badly sprained his ankle. He sat out the next four weeks. He was forced to watch his backup, sophomore Brian Dowling, step in and succeed.

Driesse returned in Week 5, but was worked back into the lineup slowly. At first, he only played defense. His offensive role gradually expanded and by the end of the regular season he was the featured back once again. And he saved his best performance for last.

Hills demolished previously unbeaten Lakeland in the Section

I, Group III final, 35-6 as Driesse exploded for 213 ground yard and scored two rushing touchdowns (3 and 10 yards).

He cemented the win with a 53-yard interception return with just four minutes to play. It was strikingly similar to the interception he returned against Wayne Valley in 2007. In fact, it occurred in practically the same exact spot on the Giants Stadium turf.

"What do they say about déjà vu?" he said. "It happened in the same place and in similar circumstances."

Driesse's most significant contribution, though, may have been on Wayne's first possession of the second half. Lakeland had opened the half by scoring on a methodical drive. That made things seemingly close, 14-6.

Hills responded by going almost exclusively to Driesse. He carried the ball nine times on the 11 play, 64-yard drive. He finished it off by scoring from three yards out to make it 21-6.

"The key was answering Lakeland's scoring drive with a scoring drive of our own," Driesse said. "I was carrying the ball, but I couldn't have done it without my line (Ryan Salerno, Paul Drake, Chris Avedissian and Nick Tumminello). I felt like Lakeland gave up after that."

"You can't ask for anymore from Ronnie," said Salerno. "He's a real good player. We told him to just follow us and we'll carry him though this game with a lot of big plays. He came through."

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NORTH I, GROUP III STATE CHAMPIONSHIP  
WAYNE HILLS 35 LAKELAND 6  
SATURDAY, DEC. 6  
GIANTS STADIUM, EAST RUTHERFORD

