

Vincent twins look to tackle Dowling

Written by Jim Ecker

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Sam Vincent and his twin brother, Connor, have gone through life side-by-side ever since Sam joined the world a scant 30 minutes before his "younger" brother arrived on the scene.

They've been partners in life and partners on the Cedar Rapids Washington football team, which will be gunning for the first state title in school history when it faces Dowling in the Class 4A finals Friday night at 7:06 at the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls.

The top-ranked Warriors have a perfect 13-0 record and the fourth-ranked Maroons are 12-1, but Dowling is the defending champion and features all-state quarterback Ryan Boyle.

Washington needs to prevent Boyle from stealing the show, which is where the Vincent twins prominently enter the picture. Connor is an all-state linebacker who leads the Warriors in tackles, while Sam also plays linebacker and ranks third in stops.

If they can help stop Boyle, they could finish their prep careers in style. Either way, this probably will be the last time the Connor brothers wear the same football uniform on a field.

They hope to write a memorable ending.

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"It's going to be crazy," said Sam. "You dream about moments like this. It's going to be special."

Connor stands 6-foot-1 and measures 220 pounds, while Sam is a little smaller at 5-11 and 205. Connor has a chance to play college football at a high level. Sam is thinking more along the lines of a small college team, but said he might be tempted to join Connor in college and try to make the team as a walk-on. That could keep them together for another good length of time.

"I think it would be cool," said Sam. "We'll see what happens down the road."

Connor does not want to get too caught up in the sibling angle to the championship game until it's over.

"It will be pretty crazy, pretty emotional I bet," he said. "Maybe not during the game, but after once I realize that was our last game together, or could have been. Hopefully during the game we'll just focus on that."

Boyle destroyed the Xavier Saints in the state finals last year, running for four touchdowns and passing for two others in a 44-13 victory. The University of Iowa recruit has passed for 1,866 yards and 17 touchdowns this season and has run for 979 yards and 16 TDs, which means he could finish the campaign as a 2000-1000 man with any success at all against the Warriors.

Here's another scary part: Boyle has thrown only one interception in 210 passes this year, so he's not prone to making mistakes.

Washington quarterback Reid Snitker passed for 162 yards and two touchdowns in a 28-17 victory over Bettendorf last Friday in the semifinals. He's thrown for 1,015 yards and 14 touchdowns this year. He's also run for 389 yards and nine TDs.

Washington tailbacks Tavian Patrick and Johnny Dobbs have combined for 1,989 yards and 24 touchdowns. Isaiah Nimmers and Landen Akers have 20 catches and eight touchdowns, so the

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Warriors have plenty of weapons of their own.



Even though Washington is ranked No. 1 and undefeated, many people think Dowling is the favorite for the title based on its history, tradition and Boyle at quarterback.

"It's almost like we've got nothing to lose and they've got back-to-back state titles to lose," Connor Vincent remarked. "I almost think in a way it gives us more confidence, not making us nervous."

This is Washington's second trip to the state finals, both times with Coach Paul James. The first trip ended with a 17-7 loss to West Des Moines Valley in 2003 when the Warriors had another strong club that took a perfect record into the championship game.

The Vincent brothers know it will be intense.

"It's unbelievable," Connor said. "I've never been in this situation before. I've never been in a championship game for football, so it's pretty crazy."

"A lot of people are talking about it around school and Cedar Rapids. You hear a lot from the alumni. It's a lot of motivational stuff."

The Vincent twins like to talk about football and watch games at home.

"Our mom (Sue) is a pretty big football fan," said Sam. "We like to hang out with her and watch games on Saturdays and talk about what happened on Friday night and stuff like that."

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They hope to have a lot of good things to talk about this Saturday. They hope to talk about winning a state championship with No. 44 (Connor) and No. 42 (Sam) playing side-by-side on defense.