

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

After Storm, Wagner Quickly Regains Footing

By JONATHAN ZELLER

Even under normal circumstances, last Saturday's game at Albany — the defending Northeast Conference champion and in first place at the time — would have been a tough test for the Wagner football team.

Then the lights went out.

Wagner, Staten Island's lone Division I football team, had to prepare for the game without the benefit of electricity or hot water in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, which wreaked devastation on the borough. The Seahawks (6-3, 6-1) went on to beat the Great Danes, 30-0, and are now in first place in the NEC heading into Saturday's nonconference game at home against Holy Cross. If they beat Duquesne in their regular-season finale on Nov. 17, they will clinch a berth in the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs for the first time.

"We hope that Staten Island will come out and be behind us," the senior running back Dominique Williams said. "But even if they don't, we just want every-

one in Staten Island to know we are behind them."

For much of last week, it was hard to imagine that Wagner would be in this position.

Most of Wagner's students were evacuated on Oct. 28, the Sunday before the storm hit the region. When players reconvened for practice that Wednesday, they found themselves on a mostly empty campus. Other students had been urged to stay away until the weekend. Some players were not able to return, so the Seahawks practiced without a full scout team.

"We had guys in some of our personnel packages having to switch from offense to defense just so both units could get good looks," the senior quarterback Nick Doscher said. "So it was a little bit back to high school days."

Power did not return until last Friday, so the Seahawks changed in a dark, cold locker room.

"It was freezing in the locker room," said Williams, who scored two touchdowns against Albany. "You're all changing together, and you can feel the camaraderie



JOHN MINCHILLO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Member's of Wagner's football team removed debris in New Dorp. Dominique Williams, right, said, "We just want everyone in Staten Island to know we are behind them."

building."

They drained the batteries on their laptops and used a generator in the basketball gymnasium to watch film and used index cards to study their game plan.

"It worked, so I'm thinking maybe this week we should do the same thing with cards," said Walt Hameline, who has coached the team since 1981 and is also the athletic director. "But we probably won't."

Hameline was joking, but the cards certainly did not hurt the Seahawks, who had won only one of 15 games against Albany before last Saturday.

Without much to do at night on the desolate campus, players spent time playing the board game Mouse Trap. The junior tight end Joe Sidaras took advantage of the conditions in the locker room — "You couldn't see two feet in front of your face," Doscher said — by hiding in teammates' lockers and startling them as they approached.

Before the storm, the Seahawks had already turned around their season to be in position for what would be their first playoff appearance since joining the F.C.S. in 1996 — they won the Division III national championship in 1987. After losing their first three games, they have now won six in a row, their longest winning streak in Division I and a stretch in which they have not committed a turnover.



WAGNER ATHLETICS

Though the physical effect of the storm on Wagner's Grymes Hill campus was relatively minor, the toll on Staten Island still seemed close. Doscher, who grew up near the College of Staten Island, said a bar run by a friend's family was swept away. "You wouldn't even know it was there, ever, if you went there right now," he said.

The senior defensive back Patrick O'Connor drove around Staten Island last Tuesday with a few teammates to survey the damage. Later, he realized they had passed the site where two young children, Connor and Brandon Moore, were swept away from their mother by floodwaters.

"It's a horrible thing," he said. "And it will be with me forever."

Before the Albany game, Hameline showed his team footage of the borough's affected areas.

"We just wanted to go out there, let people forget about the storm and give them something to smile about," Doscher said.

Still, O'Connor added, "We're not going to bring back people's houses."

This week, many Wagner players assisted in recovery efforts in the hard-hit New Dorp neighborhood. The senior offensive lineman Steve Cioffi was touched to see how many New Yorkers came to distribute supplies, remove damaged items from houses and provide other help. "Seeing the level of commitment and caring that people have for each other," he said, "it reminded me of our football team."

Even in the midst of the devastation, news about the football team's success was welcome.

"Couples had Wagner sweat-shirts on, and people were asking how we did," O'Connor said. "They don't have power or get the newspaper, so right now that's the way things are."

When they heard about the victory over Albany, he said, "It did put a smile on their face, and it gave them something positive to talk about."

CALENDAR

TV Highlights

More listings are at tvlisings.nytimes.com, under the Sports-Events category.

Basketball / N.B.A.	7:00 p.m.	Nets at Orlando	YES
	7:30 p.m.	Mavericks at Knicks	MSG
	8:00 p.m.	Houston at Memphis	NBTV
	10:30 p.m.	Utah at Denver	ESPN
College Basketball / Men's	5:30 p.m.	Armed Forces Classic, UConn vs. Michigan State	ESPN
	7:00 p.m.	Georgia State at Duke	ESPNU
	7:00 p.m.	Carrier Classic, Marquette vs. Ohio State	NBCS
	7:30 p.m.	St. Peter's at Rutgers	SNY
	8:30 p.m.	Barclays Center Classic, Kentucky vs. Maryland	ESPN
	9:00 p.m.	2K Sports Classic, Alabama vs. South Dakota State	ESPNU
	11:00 p.m.	Indiana State at U.C.L.A.	MSG+
College Basketball / Women	4:00 p.m.	Carrier Classic, Notre Dame vs. Ohio State	NBCS
Football / College	8:00 p.m.	Pittsburgh at Connecticut	ESPN2
Golf	1:00 p.m.	Children's Miracle Network Hospitals Classic	GOLF
	10:00 p.m.	Barclays Singapore Open	GOLF
Soccer / Men's	5:00 p.m.	Big East Tournament, Marquette vs. Georgetown	CBSSN
	7:30 p.m.	Big East Tournament, Notre Dame vs. Connecticut	CBSSN

This Week

HOME AWAY	FRI 11/9	SAT 11/10	SUN 11/11	MON 11/12	TUE 11/13	WED 11/14	THU 11/15
KNICKS	DALLAS 7:30 p.m. MSG				ORLANDO 7 p.m. MSG		SAN ANTONIO 8:30 p.m. MSG
NETS	ORLANDO 7:00 P.M. YES		ORLANDO 3:00 P.M. YES		CLEVELAND 7:30 P.M. YES		BOSTON 8:00 P.M. TNT
GIANTS	CINCINNATI 1 P.M., SUNDAY		FOX	JETS	SEATTLE 4:05 P.M., SUNDAY		CBS