

October 28, 2012

Vikings fall short of finals

By MIKE MEILER Niagara Gazette

Niagara Gazette — AMHERST — The Grand Island Vikings finally got their shot against division rival Sweet Home on Saturday, but became just another notch in the Panthers' Section VI belt, losing 13-0 in the Class A semifinals.

Sweet Home (9-0), ranked No. 2 large school in Western New York, preserved its 59-game winning streak against Western New York opponents, scoring on its first drive and keeping the Viking offense off the board.

"We couldn't make the big play when we had to," Grand Island coach Dean Santorio said. "But if you would've told me we'd have the ball in the fourth quarter down 7-0 going for the win, I would've been happy with that."

Sweet Home's Jordan Evert opened the scoring on the Panthers' first drive on a 5-yard run, and Mike Torillo's extra point sailed through to give Sweet Home a 7-0 lead.

The Grand Island defense buckled down from their, holding the Panthers' high-powered attack scoreless for the rest of the game. Linebacker Anthony Zogaria recovered a fumble at midfield in the fourth quarter, setting up a chance for the Vikings to score, but junior quarterback Quinn Corrao's pass was intercepted by linebacker Brandon Smiley, who took it back 40 yards for a deflating score.

Santorio said it was a game of missed opportunities for his offense.

"We picked up some first downs here or there running, but we didn't get anything consistent," he said. "We had a few guys open in the passing game, but we missed some throws and dropped a few passes. We had a drop inside their 5. We ran a flea flicker in the third quarter where we had the guy wide open, but the ball came out of our QB's hands weird and fell short.

Seniors Zogaria and Chris Connors, the heart and soul of this year's team, led the defense with eight tackles apiece. Santorio said they went out on top, even in the loss.

"You never want to see kids go out losing a game, but at least they lost a game that you were proud to be in," he said. "You never want to see guys lose like that, but they gave a

great effort (Saturday). There are a couple guys who've played two solid years of varsity for us that you really hate to lose."