

One Of Fischer's Finest Coaching Jobs Ends With Red Dragons Back At Carrier Dome

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Maple Grove head coach Curt Fischer celebrates with assistant coach Dan Greco. P-J photo by Scott Reagle

At each stop along his team's journey to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class D championship game last fall, Maple Grove coach Curt Fischer seemed a little surprised that the Red Dragons were still alive.

Fischer knew what a state champion looked like and it seemed that he felt this year's version of the Red Dragons might not have enough to keep going.

He knew even better what a Section VI champion looked like, and yet he thought the Red Dragons might not have that in them either.

Time after time in postgame interviews, Fischer and assistant coach Dan Greco would admit that this season had been one of their toughest coaching jobs, having to teach a younger roster than usual fundamentals rather than coaching scheme.

But the Red Dragons persevered.



Head coach Curt Fischer's Maple Grove Red Dragons ran for 3,312 yards this season. P-J photo by Scott Reagle

After a dominating Week 3 performance by Franklinville/Ellicottville put the Titans in the Class D driver's seat and Maple Grove in chase mode for the remainder of the regular season, the Red Dragons found their groove.

Finishing up their regular season 6-1, Fischer and the Red Dragons' focused on a rematch with Franklinville/Ellicottville in the Section VI championship game at New Era Field.

Maple Grove opened the playoffs with a 40-21 victory over longtime rival Randolph/Frewsburg, leading 14-7 at halftime before 26 straight second-half points put the game away.

Next up was a semifinal date with Clymer/Sherman/Panama, itself mentioned in the New York State Sportswriters Association Class D rankings throughout the season. The Red Dragons led 14-0 at halftime before the Wolfpack answered with back-to-back touchdowns in the third quarter to make a game of it. Missed 2-point conversions after both scores left the Red Dragons in the lead and Nick Fabrizio, a New York State Sportswriters Association First-Team Class D All-State running back, put the game away with a 21-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter.

That win set up a title game rematch with Franklinville/Ellicottville. The Titans led 8-6 at halftime and 15-13 entering the fourth quarter before quarterback Easton Tanner, a Second-Team All-State defensive back, found wide receiver Zach Fischer, a Third-Team All-State selection, for a 13-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter. Fabrizio tacked on a 3-yard touchdown run midway through the quarter, sending the Red Dragons to their ninth sectional title.

Maple Grove had its way with Section V champion Clyde-Savannah in the Far West Regional game at SUNY Brockport, running up 495 total yards of offense, including 462 on the ground, on its way to a stunning 61-28 victory.

The Red Dragons pulled out a dramatic 32-27 win over Tioga in the state semifinals at Union-Endicott High School before losing to Cambridge for the second straight season in the state title game at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse.

Joining Fabrizio, Tanner and Fischer on the Class D All-State team were senior defensive lineman Carter Russo (First Team), senior linebacker Zak Trim (First Team), senior running back Nash Nelson (Second Team), senior defensive lineman Truman Purslow (Honorable Mention) and junior linebacker Taige Jones (Honorable Mention).

For taking Maple Grove on one of its most surprising sectional championship runs in the Red Dragons' history after losing several all-state performers from its 2016 state championship game appearance, Fischer is the 2017 Post-Journal Coach of the Year.