



DAN Z. JOHNSON / Inquirer Suburban Staff

"We tried not to hang our heads at halftime," said Neshaminy's Jamar Brittingham, who was brought down by Josh Oswalt (32) and Dan Lawlor in the Redskins' 25-19 triumph. Brittingham carried the ball 26 times for 155 yards and two second-half touchdowns.

# Redskins bounce back

Strong defense led them to a come-from-behind victory over Cumberland Valley.

**By Rick O'Brien**  
INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

Players out of position. Poor tackling. Missed assignments. Too many men on the field. An illegal substitution.

It was no wonder Neshaminy High coach Mark Schmidt was about to blow a gasket when he walked into his team's locker room at halftime of Saturday's PIAA Class AAAA state semifinal playoff game against Cumberland Valley.

Starting at a 12-0 deficit at intermission, the Redskins' defense had allowed the Eagles to drive 92 and 81 yards for touchdowns. Fullback Dan Lawlor had bulled his way to 80 yards on 16 carries, including jaunts of 10, 12 and 15 yards.

"We weren't exactly doing what we had to do on defense," Schmidt said. "We were running around, getting crazy, doing stupid things. We had to make some adjustments at halftime."

Responding to the gauntlet thrown down by Schmidt, Neshaminy's defense repeatedly stymied Cumberland Valley's offense in the second half and sparked a 25-19 victory at HersheyPark Stadium.

"We knew we had to play better," said senior cornerback Keith Ennis. "We had come too far for this to be our last game."

Neshaminy (14-0) moved to within one win of the school's first state championship. The Redskins will face another unbeaten squad, Woodland Hills (14-0), for the title at 5 p.m. Saturday at HersheyPark Stadium.

Against Cumberland Valley, the Redskins held the District 3 champions to 125 yards (95 rushing, 30 passing) and four first downs in the last two quarters.

That effort was in stark contrast to the team's performance in the first half, when the Eagles' ground attack was operating on all cylinders. Both of their scoring drives took 17 plays and lasted more than six minutes.

"They stuffed us on the run in the second half," said Tim Rimpfel, Cumberland Valley's coach. "They took it to us."

Neshaminy's defense caved in only once in the final 24 minutes, letting junior halfback Ca-



The victory complete, Brittingham takes a few moments to field questions. The senior has tallied 28 touchdowns this season.



Neshaminy's Dave Gates (on ground) and Brian Kennelly combine to bring Cumberland Valley's Brandon Stanford down. The Cumberland Valley offense was held to 125 yards.



Stephanie Tichenor of Carlisle, formerly of Penn del, waves a seat cushion to celebrate the Redskins' arrival on the field.

sey Milligan score on a 41-yard reverse in the third quarter. "I was very upset with how we played in the first half, but

I knew we could play better football," said Pat Carroll, a senior linebacker for the Redskins. "Once we got on our game, we started gang-tackling, getting to the ball a lot faster, and making plays."

Neshaminy's defense was anchored by Carroll, fellow senior linebacker Jay Collins, and junior defensive end Geoff Donahue. The 5-foot-11, 225-pound Collins was slowed all week and during the game by the flu.

"The defense really took a stand in the second half, especially in the third quarter," Schmidt said. "They got us the ball back in a hurry."

Trailing by 25-19, the Eagles (13-1) reached the Neshaminy 44-yard line with less than two minutes to play in the game. But following a short completion to Scott Orris, safety Devon Swope stripped the receiver of the ball, and cornerback Jamar Brittingham pounced on it.

"We tried not to hang our heads at halftime," Brittingham said. "We knew, in just a few plays, that we could get right back in the game. We believed in ourselves."

Brittingham sparked the offense, carrying the ball 26 times for 155 yards and two second-half touchdowns. His 12-yard burst off right tackle midway through the fourth quarter was the winning score.

For the season, Brittingham has rushed 332 times for 2,391 yards and 28 touchdowns.

"He's good, very good," Rimpfel said. "He broke a couple of big runs on us."

Rick O'Brien's e-mail address is robrienr@phillynews.com.