

# LB Collins leads Neshaminy's charge

By Rick O'Brien

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

LANGHORNE — Taking the field in front of an overflow crowd and competing in a school's first playoff game in 13 years can produce quite a few butterflies in a player's stomach.

It did not take long, however, for Jay Collins to brush aside postseason jitters and provide the type of bone-rattling tackles that would propel Neshaminy High to its biggest football victory in more than a decade.

Collins, a linebacker who lives a stone's throw away from Harry E. Franks Stadium, registered a team-high seven tackles as the top-seeded Redskins downed eighth-seeded Central Bucks East, 24-14, Friday night in the first round of the PIAA Class AAAA subregional playoffs.

"I was a little tight at first," Collins said, "but the nervousness went away after the first hit."

Neshaminy, which is 11-0 and the No. 1 team in The Inquirer's suburban rankings, will host

fourth-seeded Downingtown in a semifinal playoff game Friday at 7:30 p.m. The Whippets (9-2) outlasted fifth-seeded Williamsport, 39-31, in first-round action.

The 5-foot-11, 225-pound Collins made four solo tackles and assisted on three others. Criticized earlier this season by head coach Mark Schmidt for being a spectator at times on defense, the senior was an active participant.

Late in the fourth quarter, a jarring hit by Collins left Central Bucks East junior running back Brian Hogan (100 yards on 15 carries) dazed and in need of a trainer's assistance.

"He's getting better each week," Schmidt said of Collins. "He's stepping up and making big plays."

Collins and fellow senior linebacker Pat Carroll combined to make 13 tackles. The Redskins limited the Patriots (7-4) to 96 yards of offense in the second half and sacked quarterback Josh Felicetti three times.

Neshaminy had nipped East,

15-14, in a Suburban One League National Conference meeting on Oct. 6.

Said Collins, who doubles a full-back: "We knew they had a few weapons on offense and could score some points, but we were pretty confident that our defense could take care of things."

Other key contributors on defense for the Redskins included linebackers Geoff Donahue and Erik Pederson, end Chuck Koch, and safety Devon Swope.

"They stopped a few of the things we planned on doing," said Larry Greene, Central Bucks East's coach. "You have to give their defense a lot of credit."

Senior tailback Jamar Brittingham carried the ball 25 times for 119 yards and a touchdown for Neshaminy. The Division I recruit upped his season rushing total to 1,853 yards.

Brittingham's 24th touchdown of the year, a 2-yard run, came late in the second quarter and gave Neshaminy a 17-7 lead. On the previous play, the hosts faked

a 40-yard field goal and picked up 21 yards and a first down on Jason Wiater's pass to Koch.

"That play knocked us on our heels," Greene said. "It was a good call. Initially, we thought we had it covered, but we were a little too slow in reacting to what they did."

The knockout blow came on the second play of the third quarter. Quick-footed Keith Ennis lined up at wingback, darted over to take a handoff from Wiater, then raced 71 yards for a score and a 24-7 advantage.

"It seemed like they were keying on Jamar, so we tried to mix it up," Ennis said. "Once I got to the [left] sideline and cut back, there was just green grass in front of me."

For the Patriots, senior Bobby Hulmes rushed 11 times for 66 yards and a TD. He made a team-high seven tackles, including four solo stops.

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