

Two-minute drill works just right

Neshaminy QB Jason Wiater led an eight-play, 70-yard scoring drive to top C.B. West, 21-19, Friday.

By Rick O'Brien

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

LANGHORNE — Afterward, Neshaminy High quarterback Jason Wiater made it seem as if the Redskins' last-minute drive to victory against Central Bucks West was like a pressure-free, relaxing day at the beach.

"I wasn't really worried," Wiater said. "I had complete confidence in my team. We work on the two-minute drill almost every day in practice. I knew we would pull it out."

In truth, Wiater and his teammates were gasping for air at the conclusion of one of the more thrilling high school football games in recent memory.

The 6-foot-1, 175-pound Wiater tossed a 6-yard touchdown pass to senior tight end Scott Mullin on the game's final play as the Redskins rallied to beat the visiting Bucks, 21-19, Friday night in a Suburban One League National Conference interdivision matchup.

The dramatic victory in front of an overflow crowd at Harry E. Franks Stadium gave Neshaminy (5-0 overall, 4-0 conference), the No. 1 team in The Inquirer's suburban football rankings, its first victory over West (3-2, 2-2) since 1989.

"I'm pretty numb right now," Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt said after earning the biggest win in his seven seasons at the helm. "I'm just awfully proud of these kids."

West, which had trailed, 15-0, at halftime, scored on three of its four second-half possessions and took a 19-15 lead on Clay Lepley's 1-yard scoring plunge with 1 minute, 57 seconds remaining in the game.

With no time-outs remaining, Wiater engineered an eight-play, 70-yard scoring drive to keep the Redskins undefeated and among the leaders for a PIAA Class AAAA playoff berth.

Wiater, a second-year starter, completed passes of 16, 27 and 23 yards to move the Redskins to the West 6-yard line.

From there, the Bucks held firm. After a 3-yard run by fullback Jay Collins, the visitors dropped star tailback Jamar Brittingham for back-to-back losses, of 1 and 2 yards.

With the clock running out, Schmidt hurriedly called a "Waggle Left." Wiater rolled to his left and, with West defenders bearing down on him, softly delivered the ball into the arms of the wide-open Mullin. It was Mullin's first catch of the night.

"Once [Wiater] made the call, I knew I was going out toward the left corner," Mullin said. "I had no idea I was going to be as open as I was. It was like the play was in slow motion. I just tried to look the ball into my hands."

Said Wiater: "I looked at [wide receiver] Keith Ennis first, but then saw Scott standing there alone. All I had to do was hit him in the chest."

After netting only 101 yards of offense in the first half, the Bucks made a near-miraculous turnaround in the second. They opened the second half with a 13-play, 69-yard scoring drive capped by Doug Kniese's 1-yard touchdown run.

Kniese, a junior who has filled in at running back since a season-ending knee injury to James West on Sept. 14, carried the ball 17 times for 60 yards and two TDs. His second score, a 7-yard run early in the fourth quarter, cut Neshaminy's advantage to 15-13.

West senior quarterback Joe DiGiacomo helped spur the comeback by completing 4 of 6 passes for 70 yards in the second half. Lepley, a senior fullback and linebacker, finished the game with 58 rushing yards on 10 carries.

The fleet-footed Brittingham, who entered the game averaging 238 rushing yards per contest, was limited to 118 yards on 24 carries.

"I thought our kids did a great job on Brittingham," first-year C.B. West coach Randy Cuthbert said. "They especially rose to the occasion in the second half."

Wiater connected on 15 of 25 passes for a career-high 222 yards. He completed passes to six receivers, including Ennis (six catches for 73 yards) and Brittingham (four for 85).

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