

Sports Report

FOOTBALL SEASON IN REVIEW

On Suburban Football

Look back at season of twists and turns

It was a high school football season in which little went as planned to form in Southeastern Pennsylvania this year.

Neshaminy, a team many felt was the third-best team in its own conference — the Suburban One National — to start the season, finished No. 1 in the state.

It was a season in which more teams qualified for the postseason from the Suburban One American Conference, four in two classifications, than the powerful Suburban One National, which had two in one classification.

Due to a scheduling quirk, St. Pius X had to play two games in three days Thanksgiving week. The resilient Winged Lions lost one and won one.

Strath Haven lost a game after 44 straight victories. And the Catholic League crowned two champions, St. Joseph's Prep in the Red Division (for bigger schools) and Archbishop Carroll in the Blue Division (for smaller schools).

Here's a look back at the season in the suburbs:

Most improved team. Neshaminy was No. 3 in The Inquirer's preseason suburban rankings. Two teams from the National Conference were ranked ahead of the Redskins at that time, No. 1 Central Bucks West and No. 2 North Penn.

Neshaminy went 15-0 and showed an improvement of nine wins over last season's team, which finished 6-4.

One reason Neshaminy was so successful was the presence of running back Jamar Brittingham. Another was the Redskins' ability to win close games.

To many opponents, the Redskins looked beatable — even nobody could beat them. Except Neshaminy ranked Woodland Hills couldn't keep up with Neshaminy in the Class AAAA state title game, a 21-7 Redskins win. Coach Mark Schmidt did a masterful job in guiding Southeastern Pennsylvania's most improved and best team.

Endurance award. St. Pius X played three games in a week, including two in three days. The Winged Lions were still standing after all the action. After losing to Montgomery, 20-12, on Thanksgiving eve in a Pioneer Athletic Conference game, the Winged Lions had to face Wilkes-Barre Meyers later in a Class AA state quarterfinal on Nov. 23. Final score: St. Pius X 33, Wilkes-Barre Meyers 12.

The playoff system proved to be less than perfect when the area's strongest conference, the Suburban One National, sent just Neshaminy and Central Bucks East into the AAAA postseason and the Suburban American had the same number, Cheltenham and Quakertown. Upper Merion and Upper Merion of the American Conference also qualified in AAA.

Impressive losses. If St. Pius X wasn't the best team to win a championship, surely Conestoga (11-2) was. The Pioneers' losses were to Neshaminy and Strath Haven, teams who finished the season with a combined record of 29-1.

It had to end. Strath Haven's 28-13 loss to West Allegheny in the AAAA state final snapped what had been the district's longest win streak, 44 games. The Panthers were trying to join Central Bucks West as the only District 1 teams to win three straight state titles.

Unfinished business. Carroll (12-1) won the Catholic League Blue Division and St. Joe's Prep (10-3) won the Red Division. But who was the best team in the Catholic League?

Carroll lost to Monsignor Bonner, 4-0, early in the season. The Prep beat Bonner, 31-6, in the Red Division championship game and by 42-21 in the regular season. The comparative scores seem to favor the Prep.

Why not let the champions battle it out for one title? Two champions leave too many unanswered questions.

Brittingham displays power

The electrifying Neshaminy tailback was as good as advertised this year.

By Rick O'Brien

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF
 Prior to Neshaminy High's football games, defensive players on the opposing sideline would try to rid themselves of the butterflies that endlessly swirled in their stomachs.

"He's not that big," one lineman said.

"I don't think he's as fast as a lot of people say he is," stated a pint-sized cornerback.

"If we gang-tackle him, we shouldn't have a problem," said another blunderbuss optimistic line-backer.

It didn't take long, however, for Jamar Brittingham to make believers out of the skeptics.

The 6-foot-1, 190-pound tailback could pile up rushing yardage by springing past would-be tacklers, barreling them over, or leaving them in the dust after making one of his eye-catching moves in the open field.

If that wasn't enough, the Neshaminy standout could even burn foes with a left-handed pass for a touchdown or big gain.

"Jamar Brittingham was everything they said he was," Coach Eddie Jorgensen said. "He had his squad fell to the Redskins, 28-12, in the PIAA District 1 Class AAAA championship game."

"He got through holes that didn't seem to be there."

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Brittingham dashed and darted for 157 yards and two touchdowns on 30 carries as the Redskins topped 74 Woodland Hills, 21-7, on Dec. 8 in the state title game at rain-soaked HersheyPark Stadium.

In 14 games (Neshaminy went undefeated a record 17-0 against Bensalem), the top Division I recruit rushed 364 yards for 11 touchdowns (5.85 yards per carry) and an average of 7.1 yards per carry) and 20 touchdowns.

"I never thought I would be able to put up those numbers," Brittingham said.

"I have to give a lot of credit to our offensive linemen. They opened the holes, and I just ran through them."

The 17-year-old also caught 18 passes for 320 yards and two touchdowns, and he was dangerous whenever opponents dared to send his in his direction on kickoffs.

He even completed three passes, including a 39-yard touchdown toss to wideout Keith Ennis in the playoff win over Conestoga.

Brittingham, who doubled as cornerback, rushed 28 times for a career-high 310 yards and



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All-Suburban Football Team

First Team Offense						The Linebackers					
Player	School	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Player	School	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
Sam Hollenback	Ferrisburgh	QB	6-5	210	Sr.	Maryland	Agnes	RB	5-11	215	Jr.
Jamar Brittingham	Neshaminy	RB	6-1	190	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Zack Price	St. Pius X	RB	5-11	210	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Brent Stranetz	Pottsgrove	RB	5-9	180	So.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Mike Bucalca	Cardinal O'Hara	OL	6-3	295	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Colin DeLuca	Ferrisburgh	OL	6-6	288	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
John Hagan	Lehigh	OL	6-1	225	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
A.J. Mitchell	Downingtown	OL	6-3	295	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Justin Otton	C.B. West	OL	6-3	280	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Keith Ennis	Neshaminy	WR	5-8	178	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Josh Hannum	Strath Haven	WR	6-0	180	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Maurice Spivak	Archbishop Carroll	AP	6-5	205	Sr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.
Chris Schneider	Monsignor Bonner	PK	6-0	170	Jr.	Major	Deaton	RB	5-11	215	Sr.

First Team Defense						Second Team Defense					
Player	School	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Player	School	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
T.J. Catalo	Archbishop Prep	DL	5-11	215	Jr.	Matt	Applebaum	Pennsburg	DL	5-11	Sr.
Brandon Durling	Downingtown	DL	6-5	260	Sr.	Owen	McClarity	Strath Haven	DL	5-11	Sr.
Omar Oullates	Glan Mills	DL	6-3	210	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Gene Rich	C.B. West	DL	6-1	275	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Chase Bowser	Conestoga	DL	6-3	215	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Jay Collins	Neshaminy	LB	5-11	225	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Ed Connor	Strath Haven	LB	6-2	200	So.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
La Selye	La Selye	LB	6-2	225	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
D.J. Driscoll	Malvern Prep	DB	6-3	190	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Kevin LaSage	Monsignor Bonner	DB	5-10	175	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Jesse Patterson	Cheltenham	DB	5-10	178	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.
Brendan Carmy	Malvern Prep	P	6-5	190	Sr.	Kevin	Patrick	Archbishop Wood	DL	5-11	Sr.