

PIAA Class AAAA

Ridley grits its way to win

By Shannon Ryan

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Never let them see you tired.

Although he was exhausted, playing nearly every down of No. 4 Ridley's PIAA District 1, 2 and 4 subregional playoff game against visiting Neshaminy yesterday, Green Raiders quarterback Steve Clarke took his coach's advice and kept his fatigue a secret from No. 5 Neshaminy.

In Ridley's 17-16 first-round win against a deeper and bigger opponent, Clarke energized his team by scrambling for first downs, crafting brilliant plays from broken ones, helping his defense from his position in the secondary, and playing on special teams.

Next weekend, Ridley will play No. 8 North Penn, a 35-12 upset winner over No. 1 Downingtown on Friday night.

Clarke, a 5-foot-9, 185-pound senior, completed 13 of 18 pass attempts for 153 yards. He also rushed for Ridley's two touchdowns from short yardage.

"When Steve came to the sideline, it was evident he was exhausted," Ridley coach John Waller said. "But I told him, 'You can't let them see you tired.'"

Ridley was in control in the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth. But Neshaminy (8-3) was not about to go down without a fight.

Trailing by 17-3 three minutes into the final quarter, Neshaminy scored on two touchdown passes in the last 10 minutes.

With 9 minutes, 3 seconds remaining, quarterback Joe Crostarosa connected with Devon Swope for a 60-yard touchdown. After Kevin Kelly's extra point, the Redskins trailed by 17-10.

Crostarosa and Swope hooked up again with 2:47 remaining on a 24-yard touchdown pass. But the Redskins could not execute a successful snap on the extra point. Although they tried to make a play out of it, the pass attempt fell incomplete.

Neshaminy went for an on-side kick, but Ridley recovered and ate away at the clock until the Raiders were forced to punt with 39 seconds remaining. It was not enough time for Neshaminy to drive down the field.

Ridley took a 2-0 lead in the first quarter on a safety after a botched punt attempt by Neshaminy.

The Redskins led by 3-2 at halftime after Kelly kicked a 52-yard field goal, a District 1 playoff record. He held the previous record, 40 yards, set last year against Downingtown.

"We knew we had to pick it up to beat this team," Clarke said. "[Waller] gave us a pep talk. He went kind of nuts. We came out and blew it up."

Neshaminy	0	3	0	13	—	16
Ridley	2	0	8	7	—	17

R: Safety (ball fumbled out of end zone)
N: Kelly 52 FG
R: Clarke 1 run (Oliver pass from Clarke)
R: Clarke 2 run (Burgwald kick)
N: Swope 60 pass from Crostarosa (Kelly kick)
N: Swope 24 pass from Crostarosa (pass failed)

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