

PIAA PLAYOFFS

LC looks like team to beat

AMBLER — Make it this deep in the playoffs and there's usually a better player, or a better team, waiting.

Lansdale Catholic traveled many exits on the playoff road in 1995 when the Crusaders made it to the state semifinal. There, they ran into a talented receiver from District Three's Bishop McDevitt, a long and lean fellow by the name of Raki Nelson. Nelson had a scholarship to Notre Dame waiting for him.

Ed Kracz He also helped force LC from the highway that day, derailing the Crusaders' best shot to win a state championship with a 12-7 win.

Best until now, that is. Lansdale Catholic is a win away from playing for the Class AA state championship in Hershey after mauling previously unbeaten Lakeland, 33-0, Friday night at Wissahickon. The Crusaders will await the winner of today's game between District Three champ Littlestown and District Four champ Athens for a date in next week-end's state semifinal.

Lakeland, a three-time District Two champion, had a scary player like McDevitt's Nelson. He was Joe Tuzze, a 6-foot, 230-pound fullback/linebacker and four-year starter who is the school's all-time leading rusher and tackler. He has a scholarship to Akron waiting for him.

Tuzze told one of the Wilkes-Barre papers this week that when his team wins the coin flip they like to defer so they can send their defense out first.

It's a defense that gave up just a hair over eight points per game in rolling to a 12-0 record. So Lakeland wins the coin flip.

But the Chiefs' defense didn't set the tone — or maybe they did, but it was not the tone they wanted.

On the game's first play R.C. Lagomarsino went through Lakeland's defense like it was standing still, streaking to a 69-yard touchdown run.

"They took the outside completely away," Crusaders coach Jim Algeo said. "He went through the middle then cut back, what can you say?"

How about this? There may



David Garrett/The Intelligencer

Lansdale Catholic's Sal Nocchi, filling in at fullback for the injured Brian Cottone, breaks a tackle and heads for the end zone.

be no better player than Lagomarsino left in the Class AA playoffs, and there may be no better team than the Crusaders. Lagomarsino finished with 197 yards, just a few gallops short — 68 to be precise — of eclipsing 2,000 yards for the second straight season.

Unlike Nelson and Tuzze, Lagomarsino doesn't have a scholarship waiting for him. Not yet. He will, though. Northwestern, Villanova, and Princeton are on the elusive, 5-11, 182-pound back's list.

Lakeland's ground game was supposed to be better. In addition to the 1,200-plus yards Tuzze had this year, tailback Colin Striefsky had gained more than 1,600 yards. And their line is mammoth.

Not that the Crusaders didn't know that.

"All we heard for the last three weeks was how big everybody is," said Eric Quinn, LC's 6-foot, 260-pound two-way tackle.

Led by 6-5, 275-pound tackle Kyle Miller, the Chiefs are indeed big, but as Quinn so astutely put it afterward, "big trees fall hard."

Besides, size never truly overcomes heart and true grit.

There was freshman receiver Jim Kelly rising above a Chiefs defender in the end zone to catch a looping, 18-yard throw from quarterback Mike Adams. The TD with 3.5 seconds left in the second quarter gave the Crusaders a 19-0 lead at halftime.

There was linebacker Ben Morano selling out and hurling his body at Striefsky on a fourth-and-two that went for no gain, turning the ball back to LC on Lakeland's first possession

of the second half with the Chiefs trying to climb out of a 19-0 hole.

For his troubles, Morano may have suffered a slight left shoulder separation.

And there was fullback Sal Nocchi, filling in for fullback Brian Cottone who is out for the rest of this run with a fractured fibula, earning carries on third-and-shorts, grinding out tough yards. Finally, he was rewarded with a 22-yard TD burst up the middle to close out the scoring.

Now comes the crossroads — the state semifinals. And there doesn't appear to be a better player or team in sight than Lagomarsino and Lansdale Catholic.

Ed Kracz is a staff writer for The Intelligencer. He can be reached at (215) 345-3069 or ekracz@phillyburbs.com.

Best may lie ahead for NP

LANGHORNE — Haven't we seen this before?

Yeah, it was only two years ago.

On the same field on the same kind of frigid Friday night at Neshaminy High.

North Penn lost that night to Parkland in the PIAA Class AAAA Eastern title game, but signs of what was to come were everywhere.

The Knights also lost this time, to Neshaminy, 51-34, in a contest as wild as the score sounds, but the same signs were there for all to see.

Those signs could have read, "You are watching next year's state championship play."

An over-the-top statement? Not if you think about it.

The 2002 version of the Knights featured promising junior after promising junior doing wondrous things. That team was seeded eighth in the district tournament and proceeded to blitz its way through the field until finally being stopped by Austin Scott one step from Hershey.

This year's team, seeded seventh, nearly duplicated the feat, though the Knights did it even more anonymously because of the circumstances surrounding the team.

While the 2002 juniors — players like Kevin Akins, Jim Casertano and Jim Laky — made names for themselves during the regular season that year, this crop of eleventh-grade standouts did a lot of watching while the weather grew colder and colder.

That's when running backs Pete Stull and Ian Carpenter and stud linebacker Alex Johnson, all juniors, started to emerge.

They were in the shadows because this year's stars, players like quarterback Adam Hearn, wingback Eric Halberstadt, defensive back Peter Lee and linebacker Zach Raffle, were leading the way.

But those four were the latest of what were eight players boot-

ed off the team for their roles in a summer brawl at Central Bucks West.

Without that quarter available to face the Redskins, most thought the Knights had little chance of seeing their season continue. Considering it took overtime for a fully-stocked North Penn team to beat Neshaminy during the season, such thought processes made sense.

Ah, but that was before Stull, doing his best Casertano impersonation, took a simple pitch and bolted 80 yards up the left side untouched to give the Knights a 7-3 lead midway through the first quarter. It was his first of three scores, and it gave the NP sideline not only a booster shot of momentum but a reason to believe it could win.

"Everyone had counted us out," Johnson said. "We lost eight players, but nobody quit and we kept playing hard. We just didn't make the plays in the fourth quarter."

Those final 12 minutes did in the Knights. Neshaminy, the state champ three years ago, piled up 27 fourth-quarter points to erase what was a two-point NP lead after three periods. Senior running back George Coleman did most of the damage, running for 288 total yards (31 carries) and five scores.

Coleman isn't quite Austin Scott, but he's not that far away.

"I thought North Penn would play well, and they did," Coleman said. "It doesn't fall on the backs of those (suspended) players, but on the back of the team, and they played as a team."

Indeed they did. Had the brawl not taken place and those eight suspended players played, would the outcome been different?

We'll never know the answer to that one. What we do know is a year from now, don't look for any fourth-quarter meltdowns.

Just look for kneel-downs as the Knights run out the clock.

Drew Markol is a staff writer for The Intelligencer. He can be reached at (215) 345-3141 or dmarkol@phillyburbs.com

LC

Continued from Page C 1

the Chiefs never really recovered from the blow. The play started out as a sweep right, but Lagomarsino cut it back the other way and was all alone the last 40 yards.

"The first play was definitely key," Lagomarsino said. "Obviously, when you score first, it's definitely going to leave the other team wondering what's going on."

The Chiefs brought their own offensive weapons, but the Crusaders kept running backs Joe Tuzze and Colin Striefsky under control for the most part. The Chiefs' deepest penetration in the first half was the Crusaders' 29 before they eventually lost the ball on downs.

In the second quarter, a botched snap on a punt set up the Crusaders' second score, an 8-yard strike from Mike Adams to tight end Brett Brendan, who ran a drag pattern over the middle to make it 12-0 with 3:42 left in the half.

Before the half was over, the Crusaders were three scores up, thanks to a defensive stand that forced the Chiefs to give up the ball at the LC 39. Adams and Co. covered the 61 yards in just five



David Garrett/The Intelligencer

Lakeland's Joe Tuzze (right) congratulates Lansdale Catholic's R.C. Lagomarsino after the game. Tuzze has already committed to play for Akron and Lagomarsino will surely follow him to a Division I program.

plays, with the help of a pass interference penalty, a screen pass to Lagomarsino and finally, an 18-yarder to freshman Jim Kelly that made it 19-0 at halftime.

"That's our goal every game," Adams said. "Get a quick lead, get them down and just keep going. We didn't want to do what Saucon Valley did, score on their first play and not be able to score again. We wanted to show them we could drive the ball."

The Crusaders spent the second half playing, 'Use The

Clock.' Lagomarsino scored his second touchdown in the third period; he didn't play the last 11 minutes.

Sal Nocchi stepped in at fullback for the injured Brian Cottone and scored a touchdown of his own on a 22-yard burst in the third quarter after spending his evening picking up tough yardage inside.

In short, it was a performance that left Algeo and his troops feeling content. Lakeland finished with just 113 yards in total offense.

LC 33, Lakeland 0

Lakeland 0 0 0 0A-0
Lansdale Catholic 6 13 14 0A-33

SCORING SUMMARY
LC—Lagomarsino 68 run (kick failed)
LC—Brendan 8 pass from Adams (pass failed)
LC—Kelly 18 pass from Adams (Kraynak kick)
LC—Lagomarsino 1 run (Kraynak kick)
LC—Nocchi 22 run (Kraynak kick)

TEAM STATISTICS		Lakeland	LC
First Downs		7	15
Yards Rushing		104	305
Yards Passing		9	53
Total Offense		113	358
Comp. Passes, Int.		1-12-0	4-8-1
Fumbles-Lost		0-0	2-1
Penalties-Yards		4-45	3-25
Punts-Avg.		3-30 0	0-0
Sacked-Yds. Lost		0-0	0-0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
Lakeland
Rushing: Striefsky 16-50, Cuzzoli 7-23, Tuzze 6-20, Chopko 1-9
Passing: Adams 4-7-0, 33 yards, 2 TDs, D Lagomarsino 0-1-1, 0 yards
Receiving: Cuzzoli 1-9
Interceptions: Duchnik

Lansdale Catholic
Rushing: R Lagomarsino 21-197, 2 TDs, Saidou 5-41, Nocchi 6-33, 1 TD
Adams 7-20, Krossner 2-8, Kirk 2-8 Walsh 2 (minus 4)
Passing: Adams 4-7-0, 33 yards, 2 TDs, D Lagomarsino 0-1-1, 0 yards
Receiving: R Lagomarsino 1-21, Kelly 1-18, 1 TD Brendan 1-3, 1 TD, Espada 1-8
Interceptions: None

"We just came out and dominated this game," Lagomarsino said. "We shut them down the second half so they couldn't start up anything."

Rick Woelfel can be reached at (215) 345-3070 or intell_sports@phillyburbs.com.

Local Scoreboard

Schedule

Today
COLLEGE FOOTBALL
NCAA Division III second-round playoff
St. John Fisher (NY) at Delaware Valley noon

Results

Friday
FOOTBALL
PIAA District One Class AAAA championship
Neshaminy 51, North Penn 34
PIAA Class AA quarterfinal
Lansdale Catholic 33, Lakeland 0

Football

PIAA Football Playoffs
Quarterfinals
Class AAAA

Friday
Neshaminy 51, North Penn 34
Pittsburgh Central Catholic 44, Erie McDowell 3

Today
Bishop McDevitt vs. Carlisle, Hersheypark Stadium, Hershey, 7 p.m.
George Washington vs. Easton, Martin Memorial Stadium, Northeast High School, Philadelphia, 7 p.m.

Class AAAA
Friday
Marshall Central 27, Mechanicsburg 7

Today
Benwick vs. Upper Merion, Memorial Stadium, Wilkes-Barre School District, Wilkes-Barre, 1 p.m.
Perry Traditional Academy vs. Erie Strong Vincent, Thompson Stadium, Slippery Rock University Slippery Rock, 1 p.m.
Solisgrove vs. Thomas Jefferson, Marston Park Stadium, Albion Area School District, Albion, 1 p.m.

Class AA
Friday
Grove City 28, Brookville 12
Lansdale Catholic 33, Lakeland 0
Tyrone 28, Seton-LaSalle 7

Today
Littlestown vs. Athens, Hersheypark Stadium, Hershey, 1 p.m.

Class A
Friday
Camp Hill 27, Bethwood-Arts 14
Cunneville 34, Sharpville 6
Rochester 41, Berlin-Brothersvalley 14
Southern Columbia 76, Plus X 47

Soccer

Final Southeastern Pennsylvania Soccer Coaches Association Poll

Boys
1 West Chester Henderson (20-4-1)
2 Downingtown West (20-2-1)
3 Archbishop Wood (17-3-2)
4 Christopher Dock (17-4-3)
5 Haverford School (13-1-2)
6 Council Rock South (18-5-2)
7 North Penn (16-5-2)
8 Council Rock North (17-2-1)
9 St. Joseph's Prep (18-3-2)
10 La Salle (14-4-2)
11 Central Bucks South (15-6-1)
12 Chestnut Hill Academy (15-4-0)
13 Neshaminy (14-6-2)

14 Upper Darby (12-4-4)
15 Radnor (15-8-3)
16 Ursuline (15-3-3)
17 Archbishop Ryan (11-7-4)
18 Hill School (14-2-3)
19 Bartram (11-2-0)
20 Struth Haven (15-4-3)
(tie) Owen J. Roberts (14-5-1)

Others receiving votes: Holy Ghost Prep, Centex, Central Bucks East, Upper Dublin, Great Valley, Sun Valley, Germantown Academy, Wissahickon, Shpley, Friends Central.

Girls
1 Villa Joseph Mare (24-0-0)
2 Downingtown West (21-5-1)
3 Conestoga (21-3-0)
4 Owen J. Roberts (20-4-1)
5 Bishop Shanahan (12-6-5)
6 Struth Haven (14-8-1)
7 Little Flower (18-2-2)
8 St. Hubert (18-2-1)
9 Hill School (15-1-0)
10 West Chester East (17-4-0)
Others receiving votes: Shely, Radnor Nazareth Academy

NP

Continued from Page C 1

players who suited up, especially a talented group of underclassmen, could hang with the best that the district had to offer.

"It was a lot about pride, but we came in thinking we could win this game," said junior Ian Carpenter, who rushed for a score and caught a touchdown pass. "We thought we had a chance to win if we held them. Things didn't exactly work out, but I'm proud of how we played."

Mostly what did in NP at the end was the style of the game. Despite being out-matched without the likes of talented quarterback/defensive back Adam Hearn and two-way playmaker Eric Halberstadt in the lineup, the Knights were drawn into a track meet, and Neshaminy (12-1) had the fastest sprinter.

Neshaminy senior George Coleman had a huge night, rushing for 288 yards and five touchdowns on 31 carries.

"You know what? I think he's one of the most underrated guys around," said Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt about Coleman. "He's racked up some pretty good yards against some pretty good players and good teams."

The inability to slow down Coleman, especially on key fourth-quarter scoring drives after North Penn had briefly taken a 26-24 lead late in the

"Things didn't exactly work out, but I'm proud of how we played."

Ian Carpenter, NP junior

third on junior fullback Peter Stoll's third rushing TD of the night, was the difference.

"(Coleman is) a real quick kid," said Carpenter, who plays linebacker on defense. "He gets through the holes real fast. The thing about him is that he cuts back a lot. You have to be playing him inside out. I don't think we took the best pursuit angles, but he's a great back."

Offensively, the Knights were still quite potent, to the tune of 496 yards of total offense. Sophomore quarterback Jim Levens, making just his second career start, even got into the act with a 73-yard touchdown bomb to Carpenter that cut Neshaminy's lead to 37-34 with 8 minutes, 5 seconds remaining.

"It's believing in ourselves," said Gallagher, who rushed for 106 yards on 17 carries, to complement Stoll's 277 rushing yards. "That's been our motto all year, just to believe."

Todd Thorpe can be reached at (215) 345-3059 or tthorpe@phillyburbs.com.

Neshaminy 51, NP 34

North Penn 14 6 6 7-34
Neshaminy 24 9 0 27-51

SCORING SUMMARY
N — FG Kelly 37
NP — Stoll 80 run (Striefsky kick)
NP — Coleman 6 run (Kelly kick)
N — Coleman 8 run (Kelly kick)
NP — Stoll 76 run (Striefsky kick)
NP — Coleman 5 run (Kelly kick)
NP — Carpenter 8 run (kick failed)
NP — Stoll 43 run (kick failed)
N — Fogel 3 run (pass failed)
N — Coleman 57 run (Kelly kick)
NP — Carpenter 73 pass from Levens (Turner run)
NP — Jared Kinney 15 run (Kelly kick)
NP — Coleman 12 run (Kelly kick)

TEAM STATISTICS		NP	N
First Downs		18	22
Yards Rushing		423	374

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
North Penn
Rushing: Stoll 16-277, 3 TDs, Gallagher 17-106, Turner 1-30, Carpenter 5-21, TD; Levens 34-111
Passing: Levens 1-5-0, 73 yards, TD
Receiving: Carpenter 1-73 TD
Interceptions: Johnson

Neshaminy
Rushing: Coleman 31-288, 5 TDs, Fogel 10-65, TD, Jared Kinney 1-15, Cundan 2-5, Anderson 1-3, Jason Kinney 1-2, Brooks 1-1
Passing: Fogel 4-6-1, 40 yards
Receiving: Jason Kinney 2-13, Coleman 1-18, Cundan 1-8
Interceptions: None