

For a coach on strike, patience is key

By Rob Parent

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On days that he should have been teaching this week, Galen Snyder was walking. On a night when he should be coaching, Snyder will simply be sitting in a grandstand this evening.

It's not easy being a coach on the picket line and on the sidelines.

"No, it's not," said Snyder, Pennsbury's head football coach who, like his fellow teachers in the district, is on strike. "But it is what it is."

Although negotiations with the Pennsbury teachers union were scheduled to resume last night with the assistance of a mediator, Snyder might be facing more

7 a.m. to 9 a.m. picketing shifts. He is also prepared to miss his second straight game when the 10th-ranked Falcons host No. 2 Neshaminy tonight, with the Suburban One National crown and PIAA playoff seeding at stake.

"I'll be there," said Snyder, "but I'll be up in the stands."

While the union is on strike, Snyder has followed rules regarding his relationship with students and players.

"I've tried to avoid contact with them," said Snyder. "You're not supposed to [have contact during the strike]. I think it's OK talking to them, but you can't cross over the line with coaching the kids in a situation like this."

Federal law mandates limita-

tions on the number of school days striking teachers are permitted to miss. But even if the teachers are ordered back to work before the playoffs end for Pennsbury, Snyder said he doesn't know if that means he could return to his coaching duties.

So for the foreseeable future, defensive coordinator Shawn Neely, an assistant principal in the district and not a member of the union, is serving as head coach. He survived along with the players last week, when Pennsbury squeezed past Abington, 21-20, keeping its league title and postseason hopes alive.

The win was ensured when the Galloping Ghosts failed to con-

vert on a two-point conversion from the 1½-yard line near the end of the game.

"That was tough [to watch], but the kids did a great job, and the coaching staff did a great job getting them ready," Snyder said.

That job gets a lot more difficult with Neshaminy, which has reeled off eight straight impressive victories after opening the season with a loss to St. Joseph's Prep.

"Regardless of who's coaching them," Snyder said of his players, "they should be up for this game."

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