High Schools

Pittsburgh Central Catholic 49, Neshaminy 14

PIAA CLASS AAAA FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Vikings dominate in a blowout win

Neshaminy never knew what hit it, as Central Catholic scored early and often for a 49-0 lead en route to the title.

By Jeff McLane
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

HERSHEY, Pa. — In what is usually considered the red part of the battleground state of Pennsylvania, HersheyPark Stadium last night became a sea of blue — navy blue.

Before an estimated 8,000 fans, the navy blue and gold of Pittsburgh Central Catholic won in a landslide over the scarlet red of Neshaminy, 49-14, to win the PIAA Class AAAA state championship and complete an amazing postseason run.

For Neshaminy (13-2), the loss hinted that District 1 — dominating in years past, winning seven of the previous 15 championships — had an off-year.

"I'm sad the year had to go out this way," Neshaminy head coach Mark Schmidt said. "I know we could have done better."

Central Catholic, representing District 7, won the Pittsburgh area's first Class AAAA title since 1995 and may have signaled a rebirth for the district that won six of the first eight title games played.

In its four state playoff games this year, Central Catholic (16-0) outscored its opponents, 165-17, and cemented its place as one of the finest large-enrollment teams ever in the state. The nationally ranked Vikings — No. 6 in one national publication — and their assembly line of athletes made Neshaminy look as if it should have been playing in the earlier Class AA game.

Of course, there are those who feel that the Vikings should be playing in Class AAAAA, if such a level existed.

"What an unbelievable performance they put on against a good football team," Central Catholic head coach Art Walker said. "We peaked at the right moment."

The state title was the second for the western Pennsylvania school — it won the inaugural crown in 1988 — and denied Schmidt and Neshaminy their second title in four years.

Last year, the Vikings lost to North Penn in the championship game, 37-10, with a young, gifted squad. This year's Redskins team left likewise full of talented juniors and sophomores and can take solace in Central Catholic's rebound season.

"We better get our act in gear a little bit," said Schmidt. "Because just thinking you're going to come back here doesn't make it happen."

This game was over before the Redskins knew what hit them. The Vikings scored touchdowns on their first five possessions and outgained the Redskins, 238-9, in total yards in the first half.

The Redskins offense, featuring all-league running back Georg Coleman, was stifled and completely overmarched. Neshaminy didn't gain a first down until 1 minute, 1 second before the break and that was courtesy of a Vikings offsides penalty.

If it wasn't for the game still being in the first half, Neshaminy could have been forced to play under the mercy rule — a running clock — with the score, 35-0, and 1:52 left in the half.

Coleman couldn't even get out of the backfield on most carries. The swarming Vikings defense held the senior to 13 yards on nine tries in the first half. He did manage to gain 163 yards on 17 carries in the game, but 151 of those yards came in the fourth quarter against the Vikings' second team.

"They were blitzing a lot and we weren't really able to pick it up," Coleman said. "They're a very fast team and they were hitting the holes very quick."

His backfield counterpart for Pittsburgh Central Catholic, Eugene Jarvis, meanwhile, got on a rushing and receiving display for the ages. The speedy 5-foot-6, 165-pound senior had 239 total yards — 92 rushing and 47 receiving — and scored five TDs.

"We faced some pretty good backs," Schmidt said. "There were some holes there he ran through that looked pretty darn big to me."

The Vikings didn't waste time burying any Neshaminy hopes of coming back in the second half. They scored on their first two possessions to make the score 49-0, and could celebrate as a mass Redskins exodus headed for the tumpike.

	1	2	3	4		
Neshaminy	0	0	8	14	—	14
Pittsburgh Central Cath.	14	21	14	0	—	49

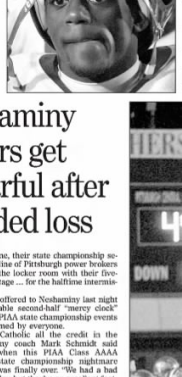
PCC: Murray 1 run (Wilson kick)
PCC: Sanchez Rosa from Murray (Wilson kick)
PCC: Jarvis 3 run (Wilson kick)
PCC: Jarvis 1 run (Wilson kick)
PCC: Jarvis 11 run (Wilson kick)
PCC: Jarvis 7 run (Wilson kick)
PCC: Jarvis 32 run (Wilson kick)
N: Coleman 67 run (Kelly kick)
N: Brooks 1 run (Kelly kick)

Contact staff writer Jeff McLane at 215-854-2746 or jmclane@phillynews.com.

SCOTT S. HAMRICK / Inquirer Suburban Staff

Neshaminy head coach Mark Schmidt, arms folded, can only wonder what might have been as the clock ticks down with less than 2 minutes to go in the 49-14 rout by Pittsburgh Central Catholic.

Taylor Sammy, a senior receiver, listens to Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt's postgame speech after the 49-14 loss. "I think they were on their heels instead of on their toes trying to come after people," said Schmidt. "I'm just sad the year had to go out this way. I know we could have done better."

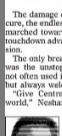


Neshaminy players get an earful after lopsided loss

The damage done, their state championship secure, the endless line of Pittsburgh power brokers marched toward the locker room with their five-touchdown advantage ... for the halftime intermission.

The only break offered to Neshaminy last night was the unstoppable second-half "mercy clock" not often used in PIAA state championship events but always welcomed by everyone.

"Give Central Catholic all the credit in the world," Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt said when this PIAA Class AAAA state championship nightmare was finally over. "We had a bad day, but they're an excellent football team. Their defense is great. Their offense is just as talented. They beat us in all three aspects of the game, and I'm a little surprised that happened."



Rob Parent

Surprised ... and maybe a little embarrassed.

At least that's the way it seemed when Schmidt called his team over at the close of that first half for a group therapy session. Not many encouraging words shared there.

A short while later, with a 49-14 score next to that running clock's triple zeroes a glaring testament to how good Central Catholic is, those pummeled players from Neshaminy were in store for more from their coach.

Schmidt gave it to them again. Short and not-so sweet. Didn't matter how obviously superior the other team was from top to bottom. Oh, he told his players he was proud of them but made it clear that feeling didn't extend to what he saw here.

So you might as well start building for next year by tearing down a team of mostly juniors and sophomores and challenging them to build it back up.

"A couple of guys looked a little wide-eyed out there," Schmidt said. "I think they were on their heels instead of on their toes trying to come after people. I'm just sad the year had to go out this way. I know we could have done better."

It probably wouldn't have mattered. Central Catholic running back Eugene Jarvis often didn't have a glove laid on him while he strolled for 192 yards on 24 carries. By the time Jarvis crossed the goal line for his fifth touchdown of the night and what would be a 49-0 lead with 1 minute, 16 seconds left in the third quarter, those merciless Pittsburgh players had scored on all seven of their possessions and, at that point, had limited Neshaminy to nothing but wide-eyed looks.

They looked that way after the game, too.

Asked if he thought his coach's words were meant as a message to his young-er teammates, senior kicker Kevin Kelly said, "Definitely. We have a bunch of younger kids and I'm not saying that's the reason we lost, but now they know what's expected of them for next year."

Only after Jarvis' fifth TD would the Vikings' scrubs go in, allowing Neshaminy's Georg Coleman to mush through for a 66-yard touchdown run and then another long run to set up another rather meaningless score.

You would think those Pittsburgh scrubs would have had enough experience this year to not have let that happen. For this team, which lost 37-10 to North Penn in its own nightmarish trip to Hershey a year ago, blew out an awful lot of teams this season.

"I think they'll have the mind-set we had last year," said Central Catholic coach Art Walker. "A lot of those kids got a taste of it, and it didn't go the way they wanted. But they'll be hungry in the off-season and don't be surprised if they're back here next year."

Did he tell the other coach that?

"We better get our act in gear, because just thinking you're going to come back here doesn't make it happen," said Schmidt. "If we do get a chance to come back here again we better have an attitude a little better than we had today. I take full blame for that."

What he could do is accept full credit for trying to start next season as soon as possible.

Contact suburban staff writer Rob Parent at 610-313-8025 or rparent@phillynews.com.

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> **Mark Schmidt**
> Neshaminy coach

Neshaminy running back Georg Coleman (1) is tackled just short of the goal line by Pittsburgh Central Catholic's Neal Schubert. The Redskins scored on the next play, but it proved too little, too late.