

High Schools

"This was a real tough day. I didn't step up today, but the rest of the team did. Next week it could be just the opposite. You never know what can happen."

Kevin Kelly

The Neshaminy kicker missed three field goal attempts as his team scored on a passing play with 40 seconds left in the game to advance to the Class AAAA state title game Saturday.



Players and fans celebrate together after Neshaminy beat Easton, 21-14, to win a spot in next week's Class AAAA state title game against Pittsburgh Central Catholic.

PIAA CLASS AAAA EASTERN SEMIFINALS NESHAMINY 21, EASTON 14

He'll get one more shot

Neshaminy's win means its kicker gets another chance, this time with a state title on the line.

By Rob Parent
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

If Kevin Kelly is going to play football at Penn State, he'll need all the pressure-packed practice he can get. His future team doesn't blow out a lot of teams anymore.

So it was good that Kelly, Neshaminy's kicker with a scholarship to Happy Valley already banked, was practicing his silent act late in yesterday's PIAA Class AAAA Eastern final showdown with Easton.

Like any big-time kicker watching his team drive toward what looked to be a potential game-winning field goal try, Kelly just wanted to be alone. That he was for 3 on the day had Kelly feeling a bit isolated, too. But his teammates were still with him.

"I was trying to give Kevin another chance," Neshaminy quarterback Andrew Fliegel said. "That didn't happen, but it worked out pretty good."

On a third and 9 at the Easton 34, with Kelly in a trance and 40 seconds showing on the fourth-quarter clock, Fliegel rolled right, then floated a pass to George Coleman, who danced into the end zone to give Neshaminy a 21-14 victory and a pass into the Class AAAA state title game Saturday against Pittsburgh Central Catholic at Hershey Park Stadium.

So Kelly merely had an easy extra point to boot straight and true. The wonder is he'll have another chance for personal redemption, maybe with a state title on the line.

"This was a real tough day," Kelly said. "I didn't step up today, but the rest of the team did. Next week it could be just the opposite. You never know what can happen."

Kelly and the Redskins, now 13-1 on a magical season that began with a bevy of inexperienced players, should keep that final thought in mind. For even though less than half a minute remained when Easton took possession at its 36, a crossing pattern completion from Bernard Coon to Jared Holley went for 7 yards, setting up the Red Rovers at the Neshaminy 19.

"Some of the guys were down [after Coleman's touchdown], but we were trying to tell them to get their heads up, that we were still in the game," said Holley. "I just tried to get out of bounds and hope we had a chance to make another big play."

It almost happened on the next play, when Easton's Preston Lockwood got free of defensive back Jared Kinsey in the end zone. But Coon's pass went right through Lockwood's hands.



Neshaminy's George Coleman (left) breaks up a pass intended for Easton's Greg Gierle at the goal line. Coleman was also a big contributor on offense, collecting 152 rushing yards on 23 carries and scoring two touchdowns.

Only when Dominic Cundari intercepted a desperate Con throw near the goal line two plays later could relief be expected in a roar along the Neshaminy sideline.

"The only time we gave up the ball is when we fumbled or screwed up," Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt said. "I'm very happy with the way the guys played. But we have to take advantage of opportunities."

With two Kelly misses amid the swirling wind already in the books, Coleman gave Neshaminy a lead with a 7-yard touchdown run in the second quarter. But Schmidt bypassed a chip shot on third down with eight seconds left in the half only to watch Fliegel throw an interception instead of throwing the ball away on the next play.

That enabled the Red Rovers (13-1) to tie the game on their first drive of the second half, courtesy of a 19-yard touchdown run by Ovid Goubourose (12 carries, 49 yards).

Easton, meanwhile, was keeping Coleman (23 carries, 152 yards) relatively in check. Yet Schmidt, faced with a fourth

and 1 at the Easton 7 at the start of the fourth quarter, left Kelly — fresh off his third miss of the day — looking on from the sideline.

"The wind was tricky down there," said Schmidt. "The footing wasn't great. But if you don't get a first down in a game like this on fourth and half a yard, then you don't deserve to go to Hershey."

Cundari's 2-yard gain made the decision look good, and three plays later, Fliegel rolled in for a 14-7 lead. But Cundari fumbled the ball away as he was struggling toward the end zone one series later, kick-starting Easton to a 30-play, 80-yard drive capped by a 33-yard TD run by Zach Pizzaro.

It was tied again, but with 2 minutes, 46 seconds left, there was plenty of excitement left. For Kelly, the fun still awaits.

Score: Neshaminy 21, Easton 14 — 21
 Time: 12:00
 1. Goubourose 19-yard TD pass (Fliegel kick)
 2. Pizzaro 30-yard TD run (Fliegel kick)
 3. Coleman 23-yard TD pass (Fliegel kick)

Contact suburban staff writer Rob Parent at 215-313-8025 or rparent@phillyinquirer.com.



Neshaminy quarterback Andrew Fliegel threads his way past Easton's Jared Holley (far left) and Todd Kresge to score a tiebreaking TD.

PIAA CLASS AA SEMIFINAL LANSDALE CATHOLIC 25 LITTLESTOWN 7

A full load for fill-in fullback

Sal Nocchi stepped to the offensive side of the ball to help Lansdale Catholic to a state title berth.

By Joe File
FOR THE INQUIRER

Lansdale Catholic football coach Jim Algoe worried that junior nose guard Sal Nocchi might tire out after being pressed into service at fullback against Littlestown in a PIAA Class AA state semifinal playoff game.

Algoe had nothing to worry about. Nocchi spearheaded a suffocating defense and scored a touchdown on offense to spark the Crusaders to a convincing 25-7 win over the Thunderbolts at Coatesville's Multi-Purpose Stadium yesterday.

With the win, Lansdale Catholic (13-1) earned a spot in the state title game Saturday against Grove City, a 21-7 winner over Tyrone, at Hershey Park Stadium. The Crusaders have never won a PIAA state title.

"I wasn't tired," Nocchi said. "Actually I felt real relaxed and really ready to go. A little windy here and there, but I sucked it up and did what I had to do. Amazing. I'm speechless right now. It's an amazing feeling."

Nocchi, along with defensive linemen Eric Quinn, Mike Ople and both Huns, kept pressure on Littlestown quarterback Zach Beaver and Luke Reichart, who combined to complete 10 of 34 passes for 138 yards.

They also stifled the Thunderbolts' vaunted ground game, which featured first stringer, who had gained more than 1,400 yards. Against Lansdale Catholic, Stoops gained 16 of Littlestown's 29 yards rushing. "A great effort by him," Algoe said of Nocchi, who gained 36 yards on 10 carries. "He made big plays defensively and scored. He's a tired young man at the end of the game."

Another tired soul had to be tailback R.C. Lagonomas. He carried the ball 39 times for 217 yards. He went over the 2,000-yard mark for the season when he belted 31 yards on the final play of the second quarter.

"Definitely amazing," Nocchi said of Lagonomas's effort. "It's how he's been all year, bouncing off tackles. It's tough for one man to bring him down. He just showed that today."

The defense, however, showed no fatigue. In the opening series, the Crusaders held the Thunderbolts to three in-completions and forced a 16-yard punt into the wind, leading to a 1-yard keeper that filled 33 yards for a touchdown with 8 minutes, 47 seconds left in the first quarter.

An interception by Drew Lagonomas in the second quarter set up a 30-play, 34-yard drive that Nocchi capped with a 13-yard burst on the middle for a touchdown and a 13-0 Lansdale Catholic lead with 6:14 left in the half.

Nocchi sacked Reichart to end Littlestown's lone threat of the third quarter.

His pressure on Reichart in the final quarter led to an interception by Matt Moneta, which he hauled 60 yards down the left sideline for a touchdown with 9:05 left in the game.

The Crusaders put an exclamation point on the victory when Reverend Huns caught a 7-yard scoring pass from Adams with 33 seconds left.

Algoe, in his 26th season as head coach, will be making his first title-game appearance.

"Well, I'll tell you what, this keeps you young," Algoe said. "It's a great feeling."

Lansdale Catholic	25	7	0	0	0
Littlestown	7	25	0	0	0
PIAA Class AA Semifinal	25	7	0	0	0
PIAA Class AA Semifinal	25	7	0	0	0