

FOOTBALL

Redskins' special teams prove themselves

By Tim Panaccio
Inquirer Staff Writer

The mere mention of special teams around Neshaminy football personnel conjured up all sorts of nightmarish visions last fall.

After all, the Redskins had lost three games because of poor special-teams play: botched punts, penalties on returns, fumbles.

That is why Friday night's 14-10 win over Father Judge was that much more satisfying to Redskins coach John Champ.

Special teams won the game. Imagine that. Champ cannot.

"When I saw [Bryan] McGinty running on that fake punt, I said, 'What the hell is he doing?'" Champ said.

"But he was making the play happen. It was his call. But I was concerned."

McGinty's fake-punt run of 20 yards in the fourth quarter gave the Redskins a badly needed first down inside the Crusaders' 23-yard line and enabled Neshaminy to control the football for what turned out to be a 9-minute drive.

Judge (1-1) was trailing, 14-10. By the time the Crusaders got the ball back deep inside their own territory in the final 2:12, Neshaminy (2-0) had a prevent defense downfield and a sack defense at the line of scrimmage, making it all but impossible for quarterback Joe Affet to pull the game out.

"We sort of fell asleep on the fake punt, and then you had that great return with some poor tackling," Judge coach Whitey Sullivan said.

McGinty had a 45-yard punt return in the first half that gave Neshaminy a first down at the Crusaders' 30 and set up tailback Rafael Wrigley's 16-yard touchdown run that accounted for the final score.

"The key to that return was the block I got from Joe Gettis around midfield," McGinty said. "I was able to cut outside and go down the sideline."

"Coach Champ has been emphasizing special teams all summer. He wants us to be more conservative. He'd rather us just catch the ball and protect it than run, but I had room."

McGinty stayed on the field long after the game, somewhat hesitant to cross Champ's path.



Neshaminy's McGinty (17) struggles to hold onto the ball as Judge's Kevin Bradley grabs for it during Friday's Redskins victory.

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"He hasn't said anything to me about the fake punt, and I don't know how he'll react," McGinty said. "They gave me that whole right side, so I took it."

McGinty also had an interception near the goal line in the first half.

"That kid McGinty is a hell of a player," Sullivan said.

Sullivan does not have one of the

better teams in Judge history. Affet was either overthrowing his receivers (6 for 17, 64 yards) or watching them drop the ball. Typical of Judge's frustration was Mike Makara, who slipped behind Redskins safety Mark Stinson and dropped a perfect pass in the end zone.

Had Makara caught the ball, Judge would have gone ahead, with

Neshaminy 14 Father Judge 10

only seconds left in the first half. It was Makara's third touchdown drop this season in just two games.

"The kid can fly, but he can't hold onto the ball," Sullivan said. "At this pace, he is going to drop 12 touchdowns this season."

Judge led briefly, 7-0, as Jacob Bonelli's 12-yard run on the Crusaders' first possession. Bonelli did a yeoman's job of trying to win this game single-handedly for Judge, with 105 yards on 28 carries.

But the dropped balls, overthrows, 2 interceptions and some poor punt coverage cost Judge dearly.

As for Neshaminy, its offense lacked imagination, no doubt because receiver Mark Griffin (pulled muscle) was sidelined. Wright rushed for 93 yards on 15 carries, but quarterback David Welsh (6 for 13, 35 yards) is not the sprintout passer that Cornelius White was last season.

But Champ can relax knowing his special teams probably will not



Redskins tailback Rafael Wrigley (center) runs with the ball.

turn wins into losses this season. "We've got it down right," McGinty said.

Father Judge	7	3	0	0	10
Neshaminy	0	14	0	0	14

F.J.: Bonelli 12 run (Shay kick)
F.J.: FG 36 Shay
NE: Welsh 3 run (Stewart kick)
NE: Wrigley 16 run (Stewart kick)

Neighbors

Neighbors is a section of The Inquirer that provides news about people, events, schools and governments in the Bucks County communities shown on the map. Neighbors is published on Sunday and Thursday. During the school year, Neighbors Sports is published on Monday.

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