

# Pennsbury erases doubts about potency of offense

By Phil Sheridan  
Courier Times Sports Writer

There were no questions about the Pennsbury High School football team's offense Friday night. As the Falcons rolled to the Suburban One League National Division title with a 12-0 victory over host Neshaminy, doubts were erased about the Falcons' ability to move the ball.

Bart Szarko and Scott LaBrecque never had any doubts, even when the Falcons failed twice in the first half to score from inside the Neshaminy five.

"We had a game plan and we stuck to it," said LaBrecque. "All I can say is that it worked. We won. We knew if we kept our heads, we could do it. The coaches have been telling us to keep our composure all year. Tonight we showed composure."

LaBrecque gained 121 yards on 26 carries. He scored Pennsbury's only touchdown on a six-yard run in the third quarter. LaBrecque starred early in the year when senior halfback Brian Hickman was injured. Hickman returned and LaBrecque took a step back out of the limelight.

Junior running back Roy Strandberg was injured last week. Hickman moved up and LaBrecque was back in action. "Roy was hurt and the coaches didn't want to risk hurting him for next year. I figured I could fill in and we could go as well as we did with Roy," LaBrecque said.

"It worked well with Scott," Szarko said. "He and Brian did an excellent job."

One play worked twice for LaBrecque. "It (the TD run) was a 25 cutback. Brian and I worked all week on stuff like that. There was nobody there so I scooted by." The same play worked in the final quarter when Pennsbury faced third-down-and-10. LaBrecque took the handoff and bulled 16 yards. That play enabled Pennsbury to hold onto the ball for another three minutes and destroy Neshaminy's hopes.

LaBrecque reeled off a list of offensive linemen: "Tony Sivo, Mike Gibson, Todd Hollings, Bob Burns, Darryl Cagle, Andy Anderson, Paul McMullin. The line was great tonight. Without them, the running game doesn't go. They made holes you could drive a truck through."

"It feels really good. We wanted to win this game so much for the seniors, to give them something to remember high school football. We were really fired up and we did it. We played up to our ability."

LaBrecque and Szarko, in their roles as defensive backs, were instrumental in Pennsbury's second shutout of the year. While Eric Renfors, George Schott, Marc Freeman, Jon Winikur and Lance Hauer excelled on the line, Dave Harrison and Galen Snyder (nine tackles) wrought havoc behind it. Snyder and Renfors recovered Neshaminy fumbles in the first half. LaBrecque, Szarko, Brooks Estadt and Mike Kutsmeda held the "Skins" to two completions in eight passes.

The area's top receiver, Mike



Courier Times photo by Jay Crawford  
Max Homely (left), Bart Szarko (10) and manager Keith Paige celebrate Pennsbury victory



Scott LaBrecque

Downs, was held to one reception, a 33-yarder. "We had confidence we could stop him," LaBrecque said. "The coaches drilled into our heads that he goes deep. We knew we could hold him and we did."

"We had a special defense in for Downs," Szarko said. "Scott and Bob Filotei were on him all game and I shaded him, too. They kept running, so we knew they

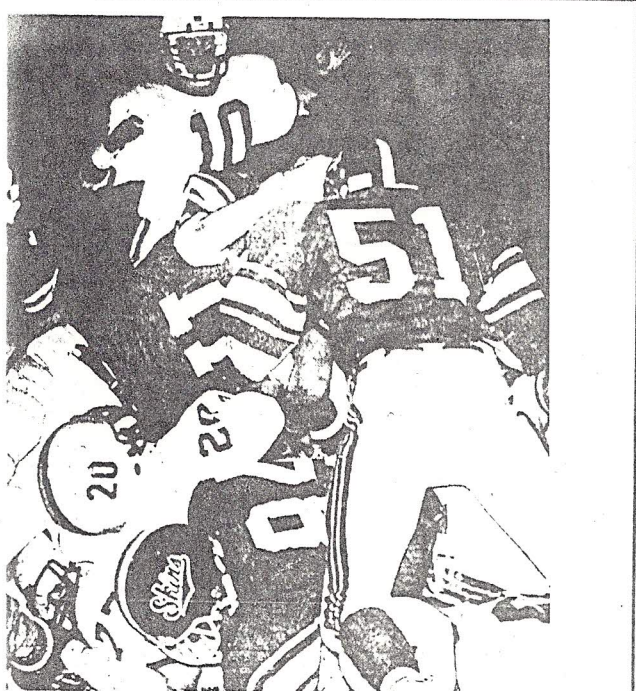
were setting it up to go back to him."

For Szarko, a senior who started at safety last season, the title was especially satisfying. "It feels so great. We've worked for this since last year, in the weight room and all summer. It all came together. From the beginning, our goal was to win the championship and we did it."

For most of the season, Pennsbury came from behind to win its games. Szarko said that helped the team. "It was still 0-0 at the half. It was tough getting inside the five and not scoring. Some teams might have given up, but we couldn't do that. We knew we had them and if we could keep it up, with ball control and a tough defense, we would win the ball game."

Szarko is a member of the National Honor Society and vice-president of Interact, a school organization affiliated with the Levittown Rotary Club. To complete the picture, his girlfriend, Barbara Hanle, is a cheerleader. So is his sister Kelly.

"It was a long, hard road," Szarko said. "But I'm going to miss it. I'll get home and it will probably hit me, that it was my last high school game and we won the championship. It couldn't have ended better."



Courier Times photo by Jay Crawford

Neshaminy's Brian Fufts (51), Joe King (11) and Dave Heller (81) put up goal line stand, stopping Pennsbury's Brian Hickman (20) in first half of Pennsbury's 12-0 title win Friday.

## bone buried

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Writer  
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the other line-

backer in Neshaminy's 5-2 alignment who calls the defensive signals along with Fufts, felt Pennsbury's play selection played a key role in its dominance.

"Just when we'd concentrate on stopping their option and sweeps around the end, they'd bust one up the middle and catch us off guard," he said. "I don't think we got overly tired. It just gets mentally frustrating after awhile because they were running the ball down our throat in the second half. We'd stop them on one or two plays and then they'd break one and get another big first down. "Pennsbury's a great team with some great players. I think even though it's a big rivalry there's a lot of respect. I think we brought a lot of respect back to Neshaminy football this year, at least I hope so."

Wagner's hope is well founded. Bedesem, who had won five Philadelphia Catholic League crown and two City Titles (sharing another) while at Bishop Egan, fashioned a remarkable turnaround for the Redskins in his first season at the helm.

Neshaminy, which finished 2-8 in 1983, did an almost complete about-face to 7-3 this year. It marked the best finish for any Neshaminy team since Charlie Schmidt's Langhorne team went 7-4 in 1977.

Maybe in about two weeks, Mike Downs and Tim Ford will put the fine season in perspective. For this weekend, frustration and disappointment are the key words.

Downs, the area's leading receiver with 552 yards on 20 catches coming into the game, managed only one grab, a 33-yard bomb from Tim Ford in the third quarter. It was Neshaminy's one bright moment on offense the entire night.

"I really would have liked to have been in there more to help out," he noted. The Redskins' big-play man injured his shoulder on his team's first possession and sat out the rest of the first half, coming back in the second half despite not being able to lift his left arm above his head.

"Pennsbury is the best team

we've played, but I thought we had a fine year. We owe so much to the coaches. They laid down some rules at the beginning and made you stick with them and it paid off."

Tim Ford, who as usual split time at the quarterback spot with brother Mickey, thought every bit of Pennsbury's defensive reputation was earned. Perhaps, the soundest testimony to its stinginess was the fact the area rushing leader Earl Brown was held to 11 yards on eight carries.

"There was a lot of situations where we couldn't even run the wishbone because we were in the shadow of our own end zone. When we did, they pretty much shut it down. They were bringing their cornerbacks up hard and their ends did a fine job. They just have a lot of quick, talented defensive players who make plays a lot of teams can't," said Tim Ford.

"I'll tell you, this is a super bunch of guys," finished Bedesem. "The kids made a commitment at the beginning of the year and did everything we asked of them. It's a shame we didn't make a better showing in the last game, but hey, there has to be a winner and there has to be a loser."

Dick Bedesem is usually on the other side of the coin. Football excitement is back on the Ridge, and with him at the controls, you have to figure it's here to stay.



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