

# Powerful Egan Leaves Speed to Burns

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Football's version of the delayed steal.

That's one way — probably the *best* way, considering the background of the young man involved — to describe the play that opened last night's non-league game between Bishop Egan and Neshaminy Langhorne.

Rick Burns first touched the kickoff on Egan's 8. By the time he gained control seven yards and five touches later, two accomplished with his feet, it seemed like even members of Langhorne's band, moving quite fast although some of them had tubas slung over their shoulders, were swooping in for the kill.

"All I could think when I fumbled was, 'They're going to get the ball at the 10,'" Burns said. "Then I looked up and there was a hole as big as a ... I couldn't believe it. I made the one cut, the kicker slipped and that was it."

In the overall scheme, that was far from "it."

Burns, who won Daily News Player of the Year honors last spring for his baseball exploits, highlighted by 51 steals in 53 attempts with 49 straight

to start the season, wasn't close to being finished after his 85-yard touchdown sent Egan on its way to a 24-6 success.

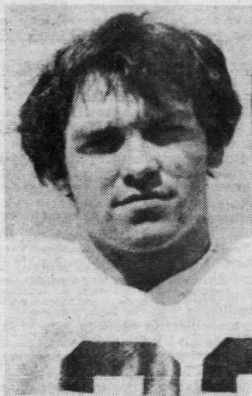
Burns caught a 25-yard scoring pass from junior Bob Zupcic (7-for-14, 91 yards) on the first play of the second quarter and, with 17 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, returned an interception 99 yards for another.

He touched the ball seven times — one rush, seven yards; four receptions, 62; two punt returns, eight — aside from the kickoff and interception and accounted for 261 yards altogether.

People who thrive on off-the-wall stats should take note that Burns needs only 1,269 more yards to match the number of yards he covered last spring while stealing those 51 bases.

One of these weeks, Rick will even be able to lend his undivided attention to the pursuit. He missed Egan's three scrimmages because of injury and sickness after leading Bucks County South to the state Senior Babe Ruth championship and a spot in a regional tourney in Syracuse.

"I had two whole days between the end of baseball and the start of football," Burns said, smiling. "I didn't



**Rick Burns:** torrid debut

get in as much running as I would have liked and I reported a little out of shape. You get a little lazy when you're playing baseball.

"Soon after we started, I pulled a hip muscle. The day I was supposed

to resume practicing after that, I woke up with a temperature of 104. Tonsillitis. I couldn't go hard until yesterday's practice."

You know the old saying, no practice makes perfect.

"Tonight was my night," Burns understated. "But it could have been anybody's night."

Sure, and anyone can steal 65 bases in succession, the number Rick boasted, thanks to 16 steals to finish '81, until he was caught trying to swipe third by Father Judge's Stanley Brach in the stretch run of regular-season Catholic North play.

Last night, Burns was impressive beyond the numbers. He made two of the best defensive plays — leaping tip of pass along sideline, open-field tackle inches in front of the goal line on two-point run after Langhorne's lone touchdown — and helped Egan score when he was nowhere near the ball.

Early in the third quarter, Langhorne's Mark Thomas purposely appeared to steer a punt away from Burns. Tony Ciotti merely steamed 52 yards to the end zone.

"I always wanted to do that," said Burns, speaking of his kickoff score. "I was thinking about doing it all day

today because they'd done it to us last year."

In fact, it was Thomas who scored on last year's opening kickoff and he covered the exact same distance.

"I can remember looking at the scoreboard after that TD and seeing 11:48," said Egan Coach Bill Travers. "That's what it was tonight after Rick's score, too."

Luckily, the night wasn't fraught with *deja vu*. Egan lost last year, 14-7.

"I went both ways in that game," Burns remembered, "and I can remember feeling like I was dead after the first 10 plays. I was more prepared, at least mentally, for the long haul tonight. The way things went helped. It's a lot easier to suck things up when you're winning."

With time running out, meanwhile, Langhorne tried to suck Burns toward the inside as receiver Joe DeVos made a break for the outside, namely the left corner.

"When I made the interception," Rick said, "I told myself, 'I'm going to give it all I have and hope I get there.'"

Meanwhile, Langhorne's defenders resembled throws from various catchers. Some got there too late and others never got there at all.