

Suburban One National: Power-Packed Conference

Notes and quotes ... or, trying to sort out another weekend of suburban high school football:

It was business as usual in the Suburban One National Conference. In other words, there was a pivotal game or three, even at this juncture of the season.

But we have come to expect that from a league that has earned its reputation as one of the best around. This year's addition of four former Bux-Mont members only solidified that image, particularly as far as the Liberty half of the 12-team, two-division setup was concerned.

On Saturday, unbeaten Abington handed visiting Neshaminy its first loss, 18-13, while unbeaten Norristown did likewise to host Pennsbury, 20-8. All are ranked in a *Daily News* Suburban Top 10 that also includes another Sub One National team, No. 1 Central Bucks West.

Look at it from the other end. On paper at least, C.B. East and Pennridge, both 3-1, seem to be the weakest (and the term is used very loosely) links in the Liberty Division. Yet in many other leagues, they would be serious contenders, not merely legitimate threats to pull off a minor upset on any given week.

Also consider this: Downingtown, which could very well wind up winning a Ches-Mont race that is shaping up as being pretty rugged itself, has already lost to C.B. West and Neshaminy.

Any way you slice it, we are talking strength.

"By the end of the year, when you look around and start comparing records of teams throughout the area, some of ours might have maybe two or three losses, so they probably don't appear to be as good as those from other leagues in the minds of some people," said Norristown coach **Roger Grove**. "But they've got to keep in mind that we're beating up on each other. And not many teams are going to go unbeaten under those conditions. "I mean, there's no such thing as a breather."

Norristown, which still is missing several injured starters, scored on a 12-yard run by **Dan Boyd** (24 carries, 89 yards), a 42-yard interception return by **Bob Horton** and an 81-yard pass from **Jim Scott** to **Brad Yurick** with 4½ minutes left to clinch it.

Pennsbury, which captured the title the past two years under the eight-team, one-division format, had won 14 in a row going into the game.

"I guess [Pennsbury] would've been viewed as the favorite going in, but we thought we have a good team, too, and this was a chance to prove it," Grove said. "And I'm sure we'll have other opportunities before it's over. That's one of the things that makes high school football so great.

"We hope that winning our league opener sets the tone for the whole season. But up here, your fortunes can swing real fast if you're not careful."

Grove does not have to tell Neshaminy coach **Dick Bedesem**. Last week Bedesem's Redskins were riding an emotional high after beating Downingtown, 26-21, on a last-minute touchdown. But they had precious little time to savor that moment, as Abington quickly brought them back to down to Earth.

Abington Ghosts led at halftime, 12-0, but Neshaminy rallied and finally went ahead, 13-12, with 2:37 left on a 4-yard run by **Tom Knox**.

Chris Roberts, who had completed a 36-yard option pass to set up Abington's second TD, returned the ensuing kickoff 33 yards to the Neshaminy 48. From there it took the Ghosts only seven plays to march down the soggy field for the winning points. Fullback **Larry Waugh** (133 yards on 26 carries), who had scored Abington's first two TDs, accounted for the last 39 yards on six consecutive carries, going over from 3 yards out with 59 seconds to go.

"I came up to the hole and felt something brush off me," said Waugh, who was so physically spent that he had to be literally carried off the field by teammates following that decisive run. "All I could see was the end zone, and I knew I had to get there ... I remember somebody coming up to me and yelling, 'You scored, you scored.' But for a minute, I really wasn't sure."

Hey, competing in this neighborhood can have that effect on a person.

Meanwhile, North Penn, yet another potential Sub One National power, is simply glad to be playing.

The Knights, who were forced to cancel their first three games because of a teacher's strike, played well before losing their opener Saturday at Council Rock, 14-7. But until a settlement is reached, the squad will be coached by four non-union members: defensive line coach **Mike Johnson**, junior high coaches **Rick Smith** and **Scott Long**, and assistant **Bob Wagner**, a former head coach at Roman.

It is not the best of situations. But, as they say, it beats the alternative.

"I thought the kids did a phenomenal job, given the circumstances," said second-year Knights coach **Bill Travers**, whose official input at this point is extremely limited. "They didn't even have pads on from September 1 to September 24. The biggest problem has been the uncertainty. There were at least two times when it looked like we'd be back [at work]. So right now, we have to keep everything in perspective.

"The real tragedy is, we felt we could be a quality team this year. We still can, but it's going to be extra difficult. Even though we're playing, we're not operating at 100 percent."

And it doesn't get any easier. On Thursday, North Penn draws Neshaminy, which should be in a nasty mood.

"Hey, I can't imagine why they'd be excited for you," deadpanned Travers. "I mean, we only beat them last year, the game's at their place, we have a short week to prepare because of the [Jewish] holiday, and they're coming off their first loss. Piece of cake, right?"

In this league? Almost never.



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