

Kicker in 'ultimate situation' seals win

By Matt Schuman
Special to The Inquirer

Earlier in the season, Central Bucks West kicker Mark Hartnett booted field goals that proved to be the winning margin in victories over both Downingtown and Council Rock.

But in each instance, the 3-pointer came early in the game, and Hartnett could not help but wonder how he would fare if he was thrust into a situation where he knew for certain that the outcome of the game was riding on his kick.

Now, he has the answer.

With just 37 seconds left in Friday night's Suburban One National thriller against Neshaminy, Hartnett drilled a 22-yarder squarely between the uprights to give West a 16-14 win before a near-capacity crowd at War Memorial Field. The Bucks (5-0 overall, 3-0 in league play) stretched

Cent. Bucks West 16 Neshaminy 14

their win streak to 26 games.

"Mark Hartnett had already won two games for us this season, and I've been saying all along that you shouldn't have to rely that heavily on a kicker. Well, now he's won three," West coach Mike Pettine said. "On that last drive, I was hoping we could score [a touchdown] and not have to put that kind of pressure on the kicker. But he went out there with all of the pressure, and he responded."

Said Hartnett: "I kept hearing how my kicks won the Downingtown and Council Rock games for us. Maybe they did, but I had no way of know-

ing it at the time. This was different. This was the end of the game, not the first or second quarter. For a kicker, this was the ultimate situation."

With that, a group of West students who were not part of the football team hoisted Hartnett onto their shoulders and carried him off the field and into the boisterous Bucks locker room.

For a while, it looked as if the West students might be more inclined to drag Hartnett back to the locker room, face down, by his ankles. After Drew Wholf's 1-yard touchdown run late in the third quarter gave West a 13-7 lead, Hartnett's extra-point try sailed wide left.

Neshaminy (4-2, 1-2), which took a 7-0 halftime lead thanks to a 15-play, 97-yard scoring drive in the second quarter, came storming back with yet another touchdown-producing march. It lasted 15 plays and covered

79 yards, ending in a 2-yard scoring plunge by Redskins' tailback Jim Dougherty. Kicker Pat Jagers booted his second extra point of the evening to give Neshaminy a 14-13 lead.

That lead held up until Hartnett's game-winning field goal.

"I knew it was my fault that we were losing," Hartnett said. "But I tried not to let it get me down too much, because I figured the team might need me again. I'm just glad I got a chance to redeem myself."

From the outset, it was obvious that Neshaminy had no intention of becoming West's 26th victim in a row. A stingy defense and a wish-bone offense led by quick-footed quarterback Bill Vergantino (91 yards rushing, 74 yards passing) gave the Bucks fits throughout the first half. The only score prior to the intermission came on a 17-yard touchdown scamper by Vergantino.

But West, behind Matt Baggett, the quarterback/linebacker/special-teams standout, (12 carries for 151 yards, 50 yards passing, a slew of tackles on defense) came out breathing fire in the third quarter and promptly tied the score with a 46-yard TD run by Baggett.

When the Bucks moved ahead, 13-7, it looked as if Neshaminy might be finished, but coach Dick Bedesem's club had different ideas, as evidenced by the go-ahead scoring drive.

"Tonight, we played some inspired football," Pettine said. "And we had to, because we were up against an outstanding team in Neshaminy."

Neshaminy	0	7	0	7	—	14
Central Bucks West	0	0	13	3	—	16

: Vergantino 17 run (Jagers kick)
CBW: Baggett 46 run (Hartnett kick)
CBW: Wholf 1 run (kick failed)
N: Dougherty 2 run (Jagers kick)
CBW: Hartnett 22 field goal